

**The Three Qualities of Shamatha**  
**From *Comments on Longchenpa's Final Testament, Immaculate Light***  
**In *The Fearless Lion's Roar: Profound Instructions on Dzogchen, the Great***  
***Perfection*, by Nyoshul Khenpo Jamyang Dorje**  
**Translated by David Christensen, pp. 39**

The subsequent verses teach us how to meditate with mindfulness (dran pa), attentiveness (shayzhin; shes bzhin), and conscientiousness (bag yod).

Mindfulness, moreover, is like a virtuous hook  
That catches the crazed rampant elephant of the mind,  
Leading it away from all faults and toward what is virtuous.  
Rely on this from now on!

Attentiveness is like an undistracted watchman  
Who affords the thief of nonvirtue no opportunity,  
And protects the supreme wealth of virtue.  
Let your mind rely on it with certainty from now on!

Conscientiousness is like a well-constructed moat,  
Which prevents brigand bands of afflictive emotions from striking.  
It leads an army to victory over the foes of karma.  
Strive to guard your mind from now on!

We must keep the virtuous practices of love, compassion, rejoicing, and so forth, in our minds. Mindfulness is like a hook that can subdue the wild elephant of mind, and attentiveness is like a guard who protects the wealth of our virtuous practice. So we should never separate from them. In essence, we must always practice with mindfulness, attentiveness, and conscientiousness.

**Explanation of How to Rest without Support**  
**From *The Royal Seal of Mahamudra, Volume One:***  
***A Guidebook for the Realization of Coemergence***  
**The Third Khamtrul Rinpoche, Ngawang Kunga Tenzin**  
**Translated by Gerardo Abboud, pp. 152-158**

By means of the above divisions in regard to focusing the mind, you may have found some degree of stillness or of a core meaning. At that time, you should continue by training in the superior shamatha without attributes consisting of constantly fostering the nondistraction of the mind itself. As before, adopt the posture and practice guru yoga, make supplications, and take the four empowerments, after which the guru dissolves into you. Then, do not engage in fixations by focusing the mind on an outer object, the breath, or any other support. Without having any support whatsoever for the mind, and without stirring it up with thought processes, rest it directly in the continuity of its own nature.

.....there are three techniques for resting:

- don't engage in diversions with inner or outer objects and situations, but rest in natural freshness without wandering;
- don't fetter yourself in any way by tightening the three doors too much, but rest loose in the natural effortless flow;
- and don't hold mindful awareness and the essence of thoughts as being two unconnected, separate things as if you were applying an antidote, but rest in the natural lucidity of self-knowing awareness.

These three are synonymous with nondistraction, nonmodification, and nonmeditation.

.....

Summing up, don't search for so-called meditation anywhere else; instead, look at your mind. That the mind is simply undeluded is sufficient. Apart from this, do not apply the many patches of making a lot of corrections and manipulating the meditation. Merely by being undeluded, the mind is open and free. If it's still, simply don't forget its essence and rest serene. Even when all kinds of thoughts arise, without losing the sharpness of your mindfulness yet always keeping it present, identify everything that arises and loosely relax within that recognition. If again you forget the determination to be mindful and become distracted, once more identify that distraction through mindfulness and stabilize a vivid undistracted mindfulness. Never lose the sharpness of your mindfulness. If you often forget and regularly wander in confusion, this is a sign that your exertion in being mindful is feeble. So if you are always losing sight of being careful, mindful, attentive, and

apprehensive of forgetting, over and over again foster the mindfulness that prevents forgetfulness from proliferating.

.....

Nonmodification is to rest comfortably and at ease in the true nature of your mind without thinking in any of the above ways at all, remaining in the continuity of the unfabricated natural flow, free of a lot of stirring thoughts.

.....

“Nondistracted” is when, as previously described, the mind is resting naturally and without modification in its basic nature, and it simply does not forget itself, keeping to a mindfulness that just does not wander. Then, “to sustain” means that no matter in what state the mind is, whether still or moving, you keep recognizing the identity of all these mental occurrences through the determination of mindfulness. If you wander, forget, and fall into delusion, rely on mindfulness again and again. This is how it should be understood.

Let us see the meaning of the triad stillness, movement, and awareness (gnas ‘gyu rig gsum). It is necessary to recognize your mind when it stays or leaves. These two, staying and leaving, are respectively called “stillness” and “movement.” The mind that stays without leaving is stillness; while the mind that leaves without staying is movement. That which sustains the recognition of these two, stillness and movement, is awareness. This is how you should understand the way of designating and determining this triad known as stillness, movement, and awareness.

The stages of meditation with support like the pebble and so forth are skillful means to gradually lead ordinary people. Since in the main body of the practice this triad itself is what sustains your mind—from unsupported meditation until its true nature is revealed—it is an excellent practice, so you should arouse strong diligence without slipping into laziness and sloth.

**Preventing the Strayings of Blank Shamatha**  
**From *The Royal Seal of Mahamudra, Volume One:***  
***A Guidebook for the Realization of Coemergence***  
**The Third Khamtrul Rinpoche, Ngawang Kunga Tenzin**  
**Translated by Gerardo Abboud, pp. 199-201**

In this connection, regarding mindful knowing, mindfulness prevents the mind from wandering from the object; and knowing makes it recognize agitation or dullness and whether it has wandered or not. In other words, after strongly arousing the determination that decides, “I shall not wander from the object even for an instant,” extend the continuity of mindfulness on the object, and constantly keep this concern in your mind by dint of the mindfulness that prevents the object from being forgotten. In this state, knowing recognizes if there is distraction or not, or if there are faults of dullness and agitation. Apart from this, don’t analyze too much; simply be vigilant, watching closely.

In the sutra section, mindfulness and knowing are separated and there are many explanations in this regard. However, many of the pith instructions of the practice lineage condense them into mindful presence or simply mindfulness. If you wonder how this is you should know that there is nothing wrong with that. As said in *The Way of the Bodhisattva*:

When mindfulness remains with the purpose  
Of guarding the doorway of the mind,  
Then knowing comes about.

The mindfulness and knowing explained in this quotation are distinguished from each other in terms of subtle and gross or fine and [200] coarse because within a mindfulness strong in clarity, knowing is included. Thus, in the commentary to the *Center and Boundary* as well we find:

If mindfulness is fully present, it will possess knowing.

At this point it may happen that scholars think as follows. When the mind is held one-pointedly on the object through mindful knowing, if a subtle thought were produced discerning whether it remains on the object or not, or whether there is dullness or agitation, then there wouldn’t be nonthought. On the other hand, if it were not produced, the knowing that notices that there is dullness, agitation, etc. would not occur. So what should we do? Unskillful people, regarding a subtle thought such as this one as a fault, in

the absence of the sharp brightness of knowing, sustain a lucidity of the mind consisting of whatever sense of clarity there may have been before. However this kind of subtle thought is not a thought as such, it is knowing or cognizance similar to vipashyana and therefore it ought to be produced. As said in the intermediate *Stages of Meditation*:

Thus, after placing the mind on the chosen object, you should subsequently place it right there all the time. Once it settles completely, you should mentally cultivate the following questions by examining and thinking, “Is the mind properly fixed on the object? Or is there dullness? Or is it completely fascinated by outer objects and thus distracted?”

The way to produce this type of thought is not by first abandoning the stream of undistracted mindfulness, but rather by simply being watchful while the continuity of samadhi is not lost. Further, if this thought is repeatedly aroused with too much strength, it will lead to the fault of mindfulness slipping away; and that thought would then become a fault. Each instant simply watches over the next one, while the confidence of the preceding one is just strong enough to not disappear. In short, these ways of balancing tightness and looseness and sustaining [201] the practice are excellent key points among the many ways of maintaining concentration. By sustaining in this way, the meaning of shamatha concurrent with vipashyana will unmistakably be realized. According to Lord Yangtonpa, the distinction between these is as follows:

There is the danger of confusing dullness with shamatha. Shamatha, or calm abiding, is when once the movement of subtle and coarse thoughts has grown *calm*, the mind *abides* in a continuity. Dullness is failing to recognize and being in a dark area with no idea of what is happening. The nature of vipashyana, insight, is to nakedly see one’s original face of emptiness. The analytical cognizance is such that based on verbal conventions a mental image arises in the field of the conceptual mind.

Thus, in the samadhi of shamatha, there are two aspects: stillness—the mind calmly resting one-pointedly without thoughts—and the undiminishing sharpness of mindfulness and knowing, including confidence. These two must be present no matter what.

**The Instruction on Stillness, Occurrence,  
And Awareness in Mahamudra by Mipham Rinpoche**  
*From Perfect Clarity: A Tibetan Buddhist Anthology of Mahamudra and  
Dzogchen, Translated by Erik Perna Kunsang, Pages 69-70*

If you can simply practice mahamudra and experience stillness, occurrence, and awareness according to the vital instruction of that practice, you will ultimately perceive the truth of reality. This is because the nature of your mind has the sugata essence.

Apply the related key instruction. The basis of all things is mind. After understanding the mind's secret, seek the vital point of your mind and you will become skilled in all things and realize the meaning of egolessness.

Since I am teaching according to the oral instructions of the realized ones, I will leave out various logical investigations:

- Stillness is when you look into your mind, direct yourself inward, and remain devoid of any kind of thinking.
- Occurrence is when various kinds of thoughts arise.
- Awareness is your mind being conscious of either of these.

If you maintain this continuously, you will come to understand the following vital point: Various feelings such as joy and sadness arise from your own mind and dissolve back into your mind. Understanding this, you will come to recognize that all experiences are the personal experiences of your mind.

Subsequently, by looking directly into the essence of your mind, whether it is still or thinking, you will understand that it is empty and, even though it perceives many things, it does not possess any entity whatsoever. This so-called emptiness is not a blank void like space. Rather, you will come to understand that it is an emptiness endowed with all supreme aspects. This means that it does not possess any self-nature, yet it has an unceasing clarity that is fully conscious and cognizant.

When realizing this secret point of mind, although there is no separate watcher or something watched, to experience the naturally luminous and innate mind-essence is known as recognizing awareness. This is what is pointed out in both mahamudra and dzogchen. According to Saraha, if you can sustain it, "By looking again and again into the primordially pure nature of space, seeing will cease." As stated in the Prajnaparamita, "Mind is devoid of mind; the nature of mind is luminous."

There is nothing easier than this, but it is essential to practice.

**Path Mahamudra**  
**From The Path of Instructions: Mahamudra Shamatha**  
**In *Wild Awakening: The Heart of Mahamudra & Dzogchen***  
**By Dzogchen Ponlop, Excerpts from pp. 83-87**

In the second stage of path Mahamudra, which is the actual arising of Mahamudra meditation, the main path consists of three instructions known as the pointing-out instructions of coemergent mind:

1. Pointing out coemergent mind as dharmakaya
2. Pointing out coemergent thought as the display of dharmakaya
3. Pointing out coemergent appearance as the light of dharmakaya

These are the three fundamental instructions given on this path. The first pointing out instruction, pointing out coemergent mind as dharmakaya, has two aspects: one that relates to the instructions on shamatha practice and one that relates to the instructions on vipashyana practice. The second and third pointing-out instructions relate wholly to vipashyana. Accordingly, this chapter focuses on the shamatha aspect of the first pointing-out instruction, and the following chapter, on Mahamudra vipashyana, presents the vipashyana aspect of all three of these fundamental instructions.

Pointing out may also be understood as being introduced to the reality of mind's nature. Having received these instructions, we begin to practice them through the two techniques of shamatha and vipashyana. No other techniques are involved. In all of the Buddha's meditations from beginning to end, the basic techniques are shamatha and vipashyana. There are, however, slight variations between the earlier and later stages of both shamatha and vipashyana.

**Pointing Out Coemergent Mind as Dharmakaya**

This instruction points out that the coemergent mind is the dharmakaya, the unborn, basic space or state of freedom. In the context of ground Mahamudra, it is said that the nature of things is the unborn dharmakaya, which is the same statement. The point is that, from the very beginning, the nature of mind-how mind really is-has been inseparable from the dharmakaya. Mind and dharmakaya have always been together; there is no "mind" that exists apart from dharmakaya. This is the meaning of "coemergent mind." If we look at the mind that we take to be a self, then we will see that it is unborn. Furthermore, if we look at the kleshas, which are a basis of our fixations, then we will see that their nature is also unborn.

Of the two aspects connected with the first pointing-out instruction, shamatha and vipashyana, shamatha must come first and is in a sense the more essential. Shamatha is sometimes translated as "tranquility" or "calm abiding," and vipashyana as "insight." In this context of Mahamudra, shamatha has a specific meaning. It is defined as "the natural pacification of the coming and going of thoughts." This means that the mind comes to rest in its natural condition, which is a state of bliss, clarity, and nonthought. Another distinguishing feature of this type of shamatha is that the object upon which we focus in order to develop tranquility is the mind itself. There is no other object, such as the breath or a statue. We simply rest the mind in its own nature, which is the coemergent dharmakaya.

How do you bring the mind to rest in its own nature?

1. Do not prolong the previous thought.
2. Do not beckon the next or future thoughts.
3. Rest nakedly in the nature of fresh awareness of the present moment.

That is the definition of shamatha in the Mahamudra context. Additionally, there are three ways of resting the mind:

1. Rest the mind in freshness without distraction.
1. Rest the mind naturally and expansively.
2. Rest the mind in such a way that it is self-illuminating and clear to itself.

Resting the mind in freshness without distraction means that we rest in a state of awareness of the present moment-the present instant of experience-without our mind becoming distracted by either external or internal conditions.

Resting the mind naturally and expansively means that while meditating, we remain in a state free of contrivance or free of effort or exertion. A traditional analogy for this quality of attentive effortlessness is that of a Brahmin spinning yarn. If one spins the yarn too tightly, then it will break. If one twists it too loosely, then its strands will not adhere so as to become thread or cord. Similarly, when we rest our mind naturally and expansively, our three faculties of body, speech, and mind are neither too tight nor too loose.

Resting the mind in such a way that it is self-illuminating and clear means that we do not separate the nature of the thoughts that arise from the nature of the mindfulness and awareness that apprehends them.

This is Mahamudra shamatha as it relates to the first instruction, pointing out coemergent mind as dharmakaya.

## ***Resting in Ordinary Mind***

In Mahamudra shamatha meditation, we simply relax and click into the unconditional state of our fundamental mind. In Mahamudra language, this basic state of mind is called ordinary mind, or unborn mind. Ordinary mind is the wisdom of Buddha and the state of liberation. The great yogi Tilopa said, "One should allow the mind to relax in this unconditional state. When the mind becomes relaxed, one achieves liberation."

Resting in that ordinary mind is what we call shamatha. When we click into that unconditional state, we are resting without any sense of hope and fear. We are not hoping to achieve the state of resting, and at the same time, we are not fearful of becoming disturbed, distracted, or agitated by our klesha mind. If we can simply rest without hope and fear, then we are truly resting.

For example, when a pool of fresh spring water is stirred up, the agitated water mixes with the sediment at its bottom, and this causes the pool to appear muddy. If we try to clear up this little pool by stirring the water, then what we are actually doing is making the water even muddier. However, if we leave the water alone and let it rest, it will clear up by itself. The pool will naturally return to its own state of freshness and purity because the dirt that mixes with it when it is agitated never pollutes it fundamentally.

Similarly, natural mind has always been as pure as spring water. Although we see our mind as murky and unclear when it is churned up by potent emotions, the nature of mind has never been polluted by these emotions. It is only because of our constant struggle to clear up and purify our mind that we see it as murky. This is like struggling to clean a pool of water by constantly stirring it up. Our mind never has the chance to clear itself up naturally because we never give it a chance. Thus, the instruction for shamatha meditation at this stage is simply to rest without any hope and fear.

## **Three Stages of Resting**

The state of resting is described as having three basic characteristics or levels: nondistracted, nonmeditation, and nonfabrication.

### **Nondistracted**

Nondistracted, which is the definition of shamatha meditation, refers to the state of being totally free from all distractions, outer or inner. That is to say, we are not distracted by the outer world or outer appearances, and at the same time we are not distracted by the inner world or by our discursive thoughts. Ordinarily, we experience a variety of states of discursive thinking, such as gossiping, dreaming, fantasizing, and so forth, which

may be either conscious or unconscious. We may experience a whole range of distractions without noticing that we are sliding into states of discursiveness. Becoming free from all this is called nondistractedness.

## **Nonmeditation**

It is said that when we prepare to practice meditation, we need the simple thought, "Right now, I am going to sit down and meditate." However, we do not need any more thoughts about meditation after that because then we are actually meditating. If after we have sat down and begun meditating, we are still having thoughts such as, "I have to meditate. I am meditating. I am doing great. I am practicing Mahamudra," then we are not meditating. At that point we are still at the level of preparation—we are thinking about meditation instead of doing it. Sitting meditation has to be totally free of any state of thought; even the thought of meditation has to be released. It should not haunt us.

Nonmeditation is letting go of the thought of meditation. In order to let go of the thought of meditation when sitting, we must know how to rest our body, our speech, and our mind. We must know the method of entering into the meditative state, not just physically but with mind and speech as well. In the stage of nonmeditation, there is a total sense of resting, and this resting requires a certain quality of relaxation. Our physical posture should not make us feel stiff, irritated, uncomfortable, or different in any way. It should be completely natural and relaxed and at the same time we should remain in a correct posture, such as the Sevenfold Posture of Vairochana, which refers to the seven points of physical posture commonly assumed during meditation practice. 3 The reason for the emphasis on posture is that the position of one's body has a direct and powerful effect on the state of one's mind. Assuming a correct and upright posture causes one's mind to come to rest naturally in a state of tranquillity, or peace.

## **Nonfabrication**

Nonfabrication is a state of shamatha meditation that is free from any conceptual labeling. At this stage, there is no process of labeling our experience as one thing or another, such as thoughts of "resting" or "not resting" or "This is Mahamudra shamatha" or "This is not Mahamudra shamatha." We must be totally free from these fabrications. When we rest in that state of mind, there is a great sense of freedom. We are free not only from the states of discursiveness and distraction, as well as from the thought of meditation, but we are also unfettered by concepts and fabrications of any kind. We are not bound by the thought of sitting. There is no sense of pushing and no stress. There is a total sense of freedom.