Mixing Mind with Space

A Study of the Chogyam Trungpa's Unique System of Meditation And An Exploration of its Roots in *The Treasury of Knowledge* and the Mahamudra, Maha Ati and Chod Traditions

SOURCEBOOK OF READINGS

RIME SHEDRA CHANTS

ASPIRATION

In order that all sentient beings may attain Buddhahood,
From my heart I take refuge in the three jewels.

This was composed by Mipham. Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee

MANJUSHRI SUPPLICATION

Whatever the virtues of the many fields of knowledge
All are steps on the path of omniscience.
May these arise in the clear mirror of intellect.
O Manjushri, please accomplish this.

This was specially composed by Mangala (Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche). Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee

DEDICATION OF MERIT

By this merit may all obtain omniscience
May it defeat the enemy, wrong doing.
From the stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness and death,
From the ocean of samsara, may I free all beings

By the confidence of the golden sun of the great east
May the lotus garden of the Rigden's wisdom bloom,
May the dark ignorance of sentient beings be dispelled.
May all beings enjoy profound, brilliant glory.

Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee

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The Prajnaparamita Upadesa
by Aryadeva
http://www.empty-universe.com/prajnaparamita/prajnaparamita.html

Through awareness free of artifice and corruption,
Recognize your mind as the root of both samsara and nirvana.
It's not produced by causes or conditions,
Unborn, naturally serene, its nature is emptiness.

So with regard to all phenomena with form or formless,
Whether the karmic impact is positive or negative,
Don't turn anything into a fixed reference or support,
Not even so much as an atom.

The meaning of the Prajnaparamita
Is not to be looked for elsewhere: it exists within yourself.
It's neither real nor endowed with characteristics,
The nature of the mind is the great clear light.

Neither outer nor inner, neither god nor demon,
Not existent within samsara's cycles nor nirvana's beyond,
And neither manifest nor empty:
Mind is free from any such dual appearances.

This is the Buddha's true intention, his flawless view.
If looking for a simile, one could say it is like space.
The supreme method to realize the nature of mind
Is to unite space and awareness.

When thus mixing space and awareness,
You spontaneously purify all fixed notions
Such as a reality and characteristics, negating and establishing,
And you abide in the truth of suchness, dharmata,
Free from dualistic subject-object cognition.

With both body and mind thus in their natural state,
Without further intervention fresh awareness arises,
Extending just as far as the reach of empty space,
Within this vast expanse remain absorbed without constraints or limits.

At that time you will experience a state of consciousness
Free from any support or from any sort of foundation,
An awareness abiding nowhere,
Not absorbed in either the aggregates or any outer object.

Having moved to desolate places,
When magical displays of gods or demons, grasping or aversion arise,
Separate awareness from the gross material body.
The physical body is like a stone--nothing can harm it--
And mind has no real existence, being similar to space.
So who or what could then possibly be harmed?

Pondering this, remain in suchness, with no anxiety, no fear.
Attachment to a philosophical tenet is obscuration.
Nondual, self-liberated is the ultimate nature of mind.
So take refuge in the essence of reality
And constantly generate the bodhi mind.

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Tsadra Foundation is a U.S.-based nonprofit organization that contributes to the ongoing development of wisdom and compassion in Western minds by advancing the combined study and practice of Tibetan Buddhism.

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Chöd

The Sacred Teachings on Severance

THE TREASURY OF PRECIOUS INSTRUCTIONS:
ESSENTIAL TEACHINGS OF THE EIGHT
PRACTICE LINEAGES OF TIBET
VOLUME 14

Compiled by Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Taye

TRANSLATED BY
Sarah Harding

SNOW LION
BOULDER
2016

Boundless devotion, vast compassion, and reversing and taking on adverse conditions
become the enhancement of all qualities.

Whoever grasps this supreme Object Severance, the victors' intent,
finds the treasure of the path to freedom and vast, immeasurable qualities.

Profound and vast, this precious holy teaching that benefits everyone
is especially elevated in its adherents, tenets, continuity, harmony, and renunciations.

Uphold this priceless precious teaching with devotion,
like someone who grasps the value when finding a real gem.

Through the arrangement of this Severance source text *Heart Essence of Profound Meaning*, distilled from the huge ocean of manifold and profound [teachings], may all migrators realize the meaning of severance in consummating Object Severance and attain the supreme mother perfection, the totally pure space of phenomena.

This completes the esoteric instruction pertaining to Severance of Evil Object, the intention of the perfection of wisdom, the personal advice of the gurus and adepts, the esoteric instructions pertaining to Severance of Evil Object called *Heart Essence of Profound Meaning*, a teaching difficult to find in the world.[25]

Note: This is the root of most of the later instructions. There are many commentaries and guidebooks and such.

4. Pure Honey

A Commentary on the Source Text of Severance, "Esoteric Instructions on the Perfection of Wisdom"[1]

Drung Sarupa Kunga Paljor

The author of *Pure Honey*, the commentary to Āryadeva's *Grand Poem* (see chapter 1), is named in the colophon as Kunga Paljor. Tashi Chöpel's *Record of Teachings Received* gives his full name as Drung Sarupa Kunga Paljor (Drung Sa ru pa Kun dga' dpal 'byor) and states that Kongtrul received the cycle of empowerments and transmissions of all the source scriptures directly from Machik Lapdrön in a visionary experience.* "Drung" may indicate the Trungpa lineage, and "Saru" appears to be a place name, since in Kongtrul's catalog his immediate predecessor in the lineage of transmission of Āryadeva's text is called the Great Adept of Saru, Sönam Paljor.† The latter was active in the fifteenth century, which gives us an approximate date for Kunga Paljor. He is quoted from an unknown source in *Collected Histories of the Glorious Zurmang Kagyu* to support the theory that Severance is based on the teachings of buddha nature (*sugatagarbha*) as well as those of the perfection of wisdom, despite his own classification of it as a middle-turning teaching in *Pure Honey*.‡ Other than this, and that according to Kongtrul he also authored the commentary to an important text attributed to Machik called *A Hair's Tip of Wisdom* (see chapter 6), not much information has been discovered. Yet these two commentaries together provide important supplemental

*Tashi Chöpel, *Record of Teachings Received*, p. 778.
†Sa ru grub chen bSod nams dpal 'byor, *DNZ*, vol. 18, f. 71b.
‡*Collected Histories of the Glorious Zurmang Kagyu*, p. 542.

Therefore, emptiness and the view and even the ultimate just have no frame of reference. As Shāntideva says:

> The habit of real entities will disappear
> when you get used to the habit of emptiness.
> Through getting used to saying "nothing whatsoever,"
> that too will gradually disappear.[31]

F) Exemplifying the Reason for the Five Perfections of Method as the Preliminaries

> *Nonetheless, wisdom that is not founded*
> *on method will not become manifest.*
> *It is similar to the harvesting of crops* {35}
> *that will not grow without cultivation.*

Turning away from everything in the end only means being free from fixation. It [does not mean] that one does not accomplish the virtue of the unity of the two accumulations. The ground is the unity of the two truths, the path is the unity of the two accumulations, and the result is the unity of the two kāyas. Based on arousing the relative [awakening] mind, the accumulation of merit as the method serves as the substantial cause[32] and the accumulation of timeless awareness serves as the cooperative condition for the qualities of the ten stages to arise and finally the attainment of the form kāyas. Based on the arousing of the ultimate awakening mind, the accumulation of timeless awareness as wisdom serves as the substantial cause and the accumulation of merit serves as the cooperative condition for the qualities of the five paths to arise and finally the attainment of the dharmakāya.

One can understand this from the example of worldly crop cultivation and autumn harvest. The two definite paths—this definite path of method and the wisdom that will [be explained] below—should be taken into practice in unity.

ii. Wisdom, Which Must Be Practiced

This is presented in eight parts: without the perfection of wisdom, the five alone will not accomplish the path; not an external condition since one has it oneself; meditation on recollecting the Buddha; the actual enlightened

intention of the Buddha; the method to realize that; the place to practice; the method of practice; and the benefits of such practice.

A) Without the Perfection of Wisdom, the Five Alone Will Not Accomplish the Path

> *If you do not resolutely engage*
> *in the meaning of the perfection of wisdom,*
> *then even if you engage in generosity, ethical discipline, patience,*
> *diligence, and meditative stability,*
> *you are like a blind person without a cane.*
> *How could you possibly find your way?*

Since the five other perfections—generosity and so on—are just the accumulation of merit, without the eyes of wisdom they will not become the path of unity [of the two accumulations] and one will not arrive at the city of great freedom.

B) Not an External Condition Since One Has It Oneself

> *The meaning of the perfection of wisdom—*

{36} It appears that this line of verse was out of order, according to the note. This source text should have fifty quatrains, and since there must be an extra line, it could well be this. However, since it contributes some meaning that is helpful to understand, it was left.[33]

> *do not seek it elsewhere; you have it yourself.*
> *That is the meaning of inherent great lucid clarity,*
> *not established as an entity or with characteristics.*

You may wonder whether you have the ability to find such sublime perfection of wisdom. Since the phenomenal nature (*chos nyid*) of one's own mind is free of all obscuring covers, it is precisely its very own lucid clarity [that's the thing]. The sutra says:

> Mind is no-mind;
> the inherent nature of mind is lucid clarity.[34]

And from Lord Maitreya:

> The inherent nature of mind is lucid clarity
> that, like space, is unchanging.
> Adventitious stains, such as desire that comes of improper thoughts,
> do not change it into afflictive emotions.[35]

C) Meditation on Recollecting the Buddha

> *Meditate on recollecting the Buddha,*
> *naturally clear[36] of thoughts and memories,*
> *free of all mental engagement.*

The path to actualize that lucid clarity is taught in the Mother:

> With no mental activity, not remembering anything,
> that is recollection of the Buddha, dharma, and sangha.[37]

The method to cultivate that is the blending of space and awareness described below.

D) The Actual Enlightened Intent of the Buddha

> *Outer/inner, gods/demons, samsara/nirvana,*
> *appearance/emptiness, and so forth;*
> *free of dualistic appearances,*
> *Buddha's intent is unmistaken and uncontrived,*
> *similar, for example, to the expanse of space.*

In that way, the meaning of cultivating the recollection of the Buddha is [to realize] that freedom from all dualistic fixation is the Buddha's intent. It goes beyond falling into limits and partiality, and all thoughts of characteristics. It is like the expanse of space, the inherent nature of the realm of phenomena. That, then, is the special method for an ordinary person to experience the Buddha's intent in practice.

E) The Method to Realize That

This has four parts: blending space and awareness, the results of blending space and awareness, {37} the actual method for blending space and awareness, and the reason for blending space and awareness.

1) Blending Space and Awareness

> *The most sublime method*
> *is to blend space and awareness.*

This is the method to actualize the meaning of the perfection of wisdom right now. The sublime special feature of this teaching, not well known in other traditions, is the blending of space and awareness. This is the reason: The two—space and awareness—made out to be subject and object, result in dualistic fixation. The entire confusion of samsara comes from that. The ultimate result of meditating on blending space and awareness as the path is that, presently, space and awareness become totally pure and the consciousness groups are transformed [in] awareness. Then the three kāyas are attained after the fourfold timeless awareness mixes inseparably. Thus it is profound in having the threefold relationship of ground, path, and result, in keeping with the path of Secret Mantra.

2) The Results of Blending Space and Awareness

> *At the times of mixing space and awareness,*
> *things and characteristics, rejecting and accepting—*
> *fixation on referents—are naturally cleared up.*
> *Abide in the ultimate nature of phenomena*
> *without subject-object dualistic fixation.*

When the result is actualized, the power of mixing space and awareness clears away (*sangs*) the fixation of all dual phenomena and then expands (*rgyas*) the phenomenal nature of nondual timeless awareness.[38] Now, at the time of meditating, one can rest in a concordant experience.

3) The Actual Method for Blending Space and Awareness

With body and mind thus uncontrived,
wherever empty sky pervades
empty[39] *direct awareness also pervades.*
Rest in the extent of the great pervasive expanse.

When the instructions are bestowed on the disciples, the blending of space is based on the three bases to prepare that were presented before. The energy of direct awareness (*rig rtsal*) blends into space. The aspects of physical tension, verbal restraint, and mental focus should all be relaxed. With body and mind uncontrived, wherever the sky pervades, direct awareness also pervades. Wherever direct awareness pervades, dharmakāya pervades.[40] {38} Rest evenly in the state of the great pervasive expanse of dharmakāya. Whether or not one continues practice with Opening the Sky Door[41] does not matter: rest evenly in the state of knowing that space and awareness are inseparable since forever.

4) The Reason for Blending Space and Awareness

At that time there is an experience
of awareness free of basis or root.
Awareness does not dwell anywhere
in the five senses or their objects.

After one rests in inseparable space-awareness, all phenomena are realized to be the essential awareness of one's own mind, yet the essence of that very awareness is not established and is without basis and free of a root. At that time, awareness—the five sense organs such as eyes and so on, and the five objects such as form and so on—have no frame of reference whatsoever. As it says in the *Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom*, "no eyes, no ears . . ." and so on.[42] In that very state, the view is of the unborn, empty, and nonexistent inherent nature. The meditation is on the great pervasive expanse. The integration on the path is the threefold abiding, arising, and liberating. The conduct is to conquer fear directly. The result is the perfection of buddha. In terms of gods, that is the stainless pure god. In terms of absorptions, it is the absorption of suchness. In terms of recitation, it is the recitation of the genuine meaning. So it is taught.

F) The Place to Practice

Meditate without dualism in the sites
of rock houses,[43] *cemeteries,*
haunted places, towns and big cities,
caves, and secluded caverns.[44]

Abandon distracting fears and meditate in those kinds of places in order to savor the bliss of meditative stability. The removal of obstructors and enhancement of practice will happen automatically through meditation in the nonduality of the problem and its remedy and the nonduality of the regional spirits and the yogin.

G) The Method of Practice

The actual method of how to practice has two parts: what teaching to practice and the method by which to practice it.

1) What Teaching to Practice

The meaning of the unborn taught by the guru—

2) The Method by Which to Practice {39}

practice it during the four daily activities.

Blend the subsequent attainment of equipoise with daily activities by maintaining mindful awareness constantly.

H) The Benefits of Such Practice

If it is put into practice this way,
the blessings of the perfection of wisdom
and the realization that all phenomena are empty
will prevent obstacles from arising.
How would it be possible for emptiness
to pose a threat to emptiness?[45]

Absolute Bodhicitta: Samatha and Vipashyana

From
To Dispel the Misery of the World
Whispered Teachings of the Bodhisattvas
Ga Rabjampa Kunga Yeshe
Foreword by Khenpo Appey
Translated by Rigpa Translations

A. HOW TO PRACTICE VIPASYANA

This has three parts:
(I) Eliminating conceptual constructs through the view
(II) Taking to heart through meditation, and
(III) Enhancing through conduct.

(I) Eliminating conceptual constructs through the view

This has three parts:
(a) Eliminating conceptual constructs regarding outer objects
(b) Eliminating conceptual constructs regarding the mind, and
(c) Eliminating conceptual constructs regarding the antidote of meditation practice.

(a) Eliminating conceptual constructs regarding outer objects

The root text says:

1. Consider all things and events as dreamlike.

The meaning of this is explained in *Stages of Meditation II:*

> "Things and events" (or *dharmas),* in short, are comprised of the five aggregates, twelve sense sources *(ayatana),* and eighteen elements *(dhatu).* The physical aspects of the aggregates, sense sources, and elements are, in an ultimate sense, nothing other than aspects of the mind. When they are broken down into subtle-most particles, and these are examined to determine the nature of their parts, no real nature can be definitively identified.

> Therefore, through the force of age-old clinging to forms and so on, which are in fact unreal-just like the appearances in a dream-visual forms and the like appear to ordinary beings as if they were external to the mind. Yet we must examine them, because on the ultimate level, these forms and such are nothing other than aspects of mind.

As this says, as a result of our habitual tendencies from waking life and through the contributing circumstance of being asleep, we may experience all manner of things in our dreams, yet nothing that we experience in the dream has even the slightest reality. In just the same way, through the habitual tendency-which has developed throughout beginningless time-of perceiving things as real, and through the contributing circumstance of our own karma, we experience a variety of objects. Although these appear to us to be more than just aspects of mind, it is certain that they do not have even the slightest reality.

(b) Eliminating conceptual constructs regarding the mind

The root text says:

> **2. Examine the nature of unborn awareness.**

Stages of Meditation II says:

> When you consider how all the three realms are merely the mind, and you realize that this is so and that all imputed phenomena are really nothing other than the mind, then by examining the mind, you are examining the nature of all phenomena. Then analyze along the following lines. On the ultimate level, the mind too cannot truly exist. How can the mind that perceives the aspects of forms and so on-which are essentially unreal-and that appears in these various aspects ever be real? Just as physical forms and so on are false, since the mind is not separate from them, it too is false.
>
> When we examine the nature of mind with wisdom in this way, we find that ultimately mind is perceived neither inside nor outside. Nor is it perceived somewhere else. The mind of the past is not perceived; nor is that of the future. The mind that arises in the present too is not perceived. When the mind is born, it comes from nowhere, and when it ceases, it goes nowhere. Mind is not apprehensible, it cannot be pointed out, and it is not physical.

As this says, when we understand that all appearances are the magical manifestation of mind, and we examine the essence of mind using ultimate analysis, we arrive at the certain conclusion that it is beyond all conceptual constructs, such as outer and inner; past, present, and future; arising and ceasing; and so on.

(c) Eliminating conceptual constructs regarding the antidote of meditation practice

The root text says:

> **2. Let even the antidote be freed in its own place.**

Stages of Meditation II says:

> If, in this way, the fire of the awareness of things as they are can be ignited through precise investigation, then just like flames sparked by rubbing sticks together, it will consume the wood of conceptual thought. This the Buddha himself has said.
>
> In the noble *Cloud of Jewels Sutra,* he said, "In order to be free of all conceptual constructs, the one who is skilled in discerning faults practices the yoga of meditation on emptiness.
>
> Such a person, through repeated meditation on emptiness, when searching thoroughly for the identity and nature of the objects of mind's distraction and delight, realizes them to be empty. When the mind itself is also examined, it is realized to be empty. When you search in every way for the nature of what is realized by the mind, this too is realized to be empty. Through realization such as this, you enter into the yoga of signlessness."

As this explains by drawing upon the Sutras, when we meditate, having analyzed both outer objects and the mind, if we become attached to the meditation that is the antidote, we must thoroughly investigate its essence, cause, and result and become certain that it is, and always has been, empty.

(II) Taking to heart through meditation

The root text says:

> **4. Rest in the alaya, the essence of the path.**

Generally, there are many explanations of the *alaya* (or "universal ground") as one of the eight collections of consciousness, but here, as in the teachings of the Lamdre tradition, it refers to *sunyata,* meaning the nature of awareness and emptiness, inseparably united. It is called the "universal ground" because it is the basis for all the phenomena of samsara and nirvana. Therefore, as Lord Atisa said:

> In the nature of things, beyond all conceptual elaboration, consciousness too comes to rest, beyond all concepts.

In other words, when it is directed toward the "object;' the nature of reality beyond the limitations of fixed ideas, the mind that is the "subject" enters a mode of utter simplicity, or freedom from concepts, by cutting through any fixed ideas in the way described above. When we enter this state of simplicity, we simply rest in meditative equipoise without any further analysis or evaluation, projection or absorption, effort and exertion, or the like.

Stages of Meditation II says:

> When entering in this way into the reality of the selflessness of individuals and phenomena, since there is no further analysis to be done, you gain freedom from concepts and evaluation. Mental activity enters, naturally and spontaneously, into a single experience that is beyond expression.
>
> Without conceptualizing, remain in meditation with exceptional clarity regarding reality itself. And while abiding in that state, do not allow the flow of mind to be distracted.

The way to dispel dullness and agitation has already been described.

(III) Enhancing through action

The root text says:

> **5. The seven and their processes are conceptual, so forsake them.**

The seven, meaning the consciousness associated with the six senses, and the rigid idea of "I" and "mine" which is referred to as the emotional mind (Skt. klistamanas), together with their accompanying thought processes, are all said to be *false conceptual patterns,* as we find in Maitreya's *Distinguishing the Middle ftom Extremes (1:8):*

> False conceptual patterns are the mind
> and mental processes of the three realms.

Whenever our minds are like this, and we are caught up in thinking about various things or reacting to objects, we must avoid the tendency to perceive things as real or to cling to their reality. Instead, by thoroughly examining the essence of the objects that mind is directed toward and the thoughts themselves, we must decide that they are beyond any conceptual constructs. If we can familiarize ourselves with this and with the technique, by practicing it again and again, then all proliferation of conceptual thoughts will become a support for the arising of nonconceptual wisdom. That is why this is referred to as *enhancement.*

B. THE MEASURE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

Stages of Meditation II says:

> While focused in that state of samatha, to analyze reality is vipasyana.

And:

> Once we have achieved physical and mental pliancy, when abiding in that, having eliminated every other mode of thought, whatever is contemplated by the mind within the realm of samadhi is considered to be like a reflection. Within that domain of samadhi meditation, to regard these reflections and discern the meaning of these objects of knowledge, to discern them thoroughly, understand them fully, analyze them fully, endure them, take delight in them, discern their distinctive features, observe them, and understand them is what is known as vipasyana. Thus the bodhisattva is skilled in the practice of vipasyana.

As this says by drawing upon the *Samdhinirmocana Sutra,* vipasyana is discerning wisdom that is built upon physical and mental pliancy. It is called *vipashyand* (superior insight) because, with a capacity exceeding that of other states of mind, it sees the nature of objects.

Samatha and vipasyana, which have now been explained, must be practiced as a unity. This is because each of them by itself will not fulfill the purpose of eliminating the destructive emotions, realizing the nature of things, and so on. We must therefore acquire a detailed understanding, including the knowledge of how they are to be combined. This has already been explained elsewhere.

C. PRACTICE BETWEEN SESSIONS

The root text says:

> **6. Between sessions, be a conjurer of illusions.**

As this indicates, during all our activities between sessions, having first aroused great compassion, we must work for the benefit of others, while maintaining illusory mindfulness and vigilance. *Stages of Meditation II* says:

> Should you suffer from physical harm and the like, regard the whole world as similar to an illusion, a mirage, a dream, a reflection of the moon in water, or an optical illusion. And think: "Since they do not understand the profound teachings, these beings are overwhelmed by their emotions in sarpsara." And by thinking, "However I can, I must help them to understand reality;' arouse great compassion and bodhicitta.

And:

> Then slowly rise from the cross-legged position and prostrate yourself before the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions. Make offerings to them and recite praises. Then make vast prayers of aspiration by reciting *Samantabhadra's Prayer of Good Actions* and so on.

This is the clear advice given by the great pandit Kamalasila through his great compassion in these and other such sacred glimpses of the path to liberation.

Appearances, in all their variety, are mind's magical manifestation,
and the nature of mind is and always has been unborn.
To those with wisdom beyond duality and transcending concepts,
in whom this is realized genuinely and with certainty, I prostrate.

A SHAMBHALA SUN BOOK

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO

Meditation

Practical Advice and Inspiration from Contemporary Buddhist Teachers

Edited by Rod Meade Sperry
and the Editors of the *Shambhala Sun*

SHAMBHALA
Boston & London 2014

Pliancy is a direct antidote for dysfunction, as well as a remedy for what are sometimes called the five faults. Beyond that, pliancy acts as an antidote for both afflictive and cognitive obscurations.

As the body and mind become more and more stable, mental pliancy arises quite naturally, without any forceful effort. It is a *mental state* accompanied by immense joy. Physical pliancy follows quickly. The body is truly "serviceable"; it takes on a suppleness that enables one to assume any posture and sit for hours and hours without feeling the slightest fatigue.

Actually, all of us are endowed with both mental and physical pliancy, but it is not in a manifest state. When conditions are ripe and they actually do manifest, the joy that accompanies this blissful state increases to a peak and then tapers off. After this tapering-off there arises a more stable, nonfluctuating kind of subtle pliancy which is the most effective.

Sitting in the proper posture, one can engage in this introductory practice. Following the breath in and out, one may count up to seven or twenty-one. Most important is seeing how much of the conceptual mind has been quieted by this technique. If that mind is still rambunctious even after a series of twenty-one breaths, continue counting from one again. If the conceptual mind is quiet after just seven breaths, the introductory practice of counting breaths has served its function. There is no need to go on. This is pertinent to all shamatha techniques.

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How to Practice Insight Meditation

Sayadaw U Pandita

Through his answers to fifty-two questions that arc through the stages and concerns of meditation practice, vipassana *master Sayadaw U Pandita tells us precisely what to do every step of the way, from how to place our legs to what to do with our attitude—invaluable guidance for the absolute beginner as well as the longtime meditator.*

1. *Which place is best for meditation?*

   The Buddha suggested that either a forest place under a tree or any other very quiet place is best for meditation.

2. *How should the meditator sit?*

   He said the meditator should sit quietly and peacefully with legs crossed.

3. *How should those with back troubles sit?*

   If sitting with crossed legs proves to be too difficult, other sitting postures may be used. For those with back trouble, a chair is quite acceptable. In any case, sit with your back erect, at a right angle to the ground, but not too stiff.

4. *Why should you sit straight?*

   The reason for sitting straight is not difficult to see. An arched or crooked back will soon bring pain. Furthermore, the physical effort to remain upright without additional support energizes the meditation practice.

5. *Why is it important to choose a position?*

   To achieve peace of mind, we must make sure our body is at peace. So it's important to choose a position that will be comfortable for a long period of time.

6. *After sitting down, what should you do?*

   Close your eyes. Then place your attention at the belly, at the abdomen. Breathe normally—not forcing your breathing—neither slowing it down nor hastening it. Just a natural breath.

7. *What will you become aware of as you breathe in and breathe out?*

   You will become aware of certain sensations as you breathe in and the abdomen rises, and as you breathe out and the abdomen falls.

8. *How should you sharpen your aim?*

   Sharpen your aim by making sure that the mind is attentive to the entirety of each process. Be aware from the very beginning of all sensations involved in the rising. Maintain a steady attention through the middle and the end of the rising. Then be aware of the sensations of the falling movement of the abdomen from the beginning, through the middle, and to the very end of the falling.

   Although we describe the rising and falling as having a beginning, middle, and end, this is only in order to show that your awareness should be continuous and thorough. We don't intend you to break these processes into three segments. You should try to be aware of each of these movements from beginning to end as one complete process, as a whole. Do not peer at the sensations with an over-focused mind, specifically looking to discover how the abdominal movement begins or ends.

9. *Why is it important in this meditation to have both effort and precise aim?*

   It is very important to have both effort and precise aim so that the mind meets the sensation directly and powerfully.

10. *What is one way to aid precision and accuracy?*

    One helpful aid to precision and accuracy is to make a soft, mental note of the object of awareness, naming the sensation by saying the word gently and silently in the mind, like "rising, rising . . . ," and "falling, falling. . . ."

11. *When the mind wanders off, what should you do?*

    Watch the mind! Be aware that you are thinking.

12. *How can you clarify your awareness of thinking?*

    Note the thought silently with the verbal label "thinking," and come back to the rising and falling.

13. *Is it possible to remain perfectly focused on the rising and falling of the abdomen all the time?*

    Despite making an effort to do so, no one can remain perfectly focused on the rising and falling of the abdomen forever. Other objects inevitably arise and become predominant. Thus, the sphere of meditation encompasses all of our experiences: sights, sounds, smells, tastes, sensations in the body, and mental objects such as visions in the imagination or emotions. When any of these objects arises you should focus direct awareness on it, and silently use a gentle verbal label.

14. *During sitting meditation, what is the basic principle to follow? If another object impinges on the awareness and draws it away from the rising and falling, what should you do?*

During sitting meditation, if another object impinges strongly on the awareness so as to draw it away from the rising and falling of the abdomen, this object must be clearly noted. For example, if a loud sound arises during your meditation, consciously direct your attention toward that sound as soon as it arises. Be aware of the sound as a direct experience, and also identify it succinctly with the soft, internal, verbal label "hearing, hearing." When the sound fades and is no longer predominant, come back to the rising and falling. This is the basic principle to follow in sitting meditation.

15. *What is the best way to make the verbal label?*

There is no need for complex language. One simple word is best. For the eye, ear, and tongue doors we simply say, "seeing, seeing . . . ," or "hearing, hearing . . . ," or "tasting, tasting. . . ."

16. *What are some ways to note sensations in the body?*

For sensations in the body we may choose a slightly more descriptive term like "warmth," "pressure," "hardness," or "motion."

17. *How should you note mental objects?*

Mental objects seem to present a bewildering diversity, but actually they fall into just a few clear categories, such as "thinking," "imagining," "remembering," "planning," and "visualizing."

18. *What is the purpose of labeling?*

In using the labeling technique, your goal is not to gain verbal skills. Labeling helps us to perceive clearly the actual qualities of our experience, without getting immersed in the content. It develops mental power and focus.

19. *What kind of awareness do we seek in meditation, and why?*

We seek a deep, clear, precise awareness of the mind and body. This direct awareness shows us the truth about our lives, the actual nature of mental and physical processes.

20. *After one hour of sitting, does our meditation come to an end?*

Meditation need not come to an end after an hour of sitting. It can be carried out continuously through the day.

21. *How should you get up from sitting meditation?*

When you get up from sitting, you must note carefully, beginning with the intention to open the eyes: "intending, intending"; "opening, opening." Experience the mental event of intending, and feel the sensations of opening the eyes. Continue to note carefully and precisely, with full observing power, through the whole transition of postures until the moment you have stood up, and when you begin to walk.

22. *Besides sitting and walking, what else should you be aware of throughout the day?*

Throughout the day you should also be aware of—and mentally note—all other activities, such as stretching, bending your arm, taking a spoon, putting on clothes, brushing your teeth, closing the door, opening the door, closing your eyelids, eating, and so forth. All of these activities should be noted with careful awareness and a soft mental label.

23. *Is there any time during the day when you may relax your mindfulness?*

Apart from the hours of sound sleep, you should try to maintain continuous mindfulness throughout your waking hours.

24. *It seems like a heavy task to maintain continuous mindfulness throughout the day.*

    This is not a heavy task; it is just sitting and walking and simply observing whatever occurs.

25. *What is the usual schedule during a retreat?*

    During a retreat it is usual to alternate periods of sitting meditation with periods of formal walking meditation of about the same duration, one after another throughout the day.

26. *How long should one walking period be?*

    One hour is a standard period, but forty-five minutes can also be used.

27. *How long a pathway do retreatants choose for formal walking?*

    For formal walking, retreatants choose a lane of about twenty steps, and then walk slowly back and forth along it.

28. *Is walking meditation helpful in daily life?*

    Yes. A short period—say ten minutes of formal walking meditation before sitting—serves to focus the mind. Also, the awareness developed in walking meditation is useful to all of us as we move our bodies from place to place in the course of a normal day.

29. *What mental qualities are developed by walking meditation?*

    Walking meditation develops balance and accuracy of awareness as well as durability of concentration.

30. *Can one observe profound aspects of the dhamma [dharma] while walking?*

    One can observe very profound aspects of the dhamma while walking, and even get enlightened!

31. *If you don't do walking meditation before sitting, is there any disadvantage?*

    A yogi who does not do walking meditation before sitting is like a car with a run-down battery. He or she will have a difficult time starting the engine of mindfulness when sitting.

32. *During walking meditation, to what process do we give our attention?*

    Walking meditation consists of paying attention to the walking process.

33. *When walking rapidly, what should we note? Where should we place our awareness?*

    If you are moving fairly rapidly, make a mental note of the movement of the legs, "left, right, left, right," and use your awareness to follow the actual sensations throughout the leg area.

34. *When moving more slowly, what should we note?*

    If you are moving more slowly, note the lifting, moving, and placing of each foot.

35. *Whether walking slowly or rapidly, where should you try to keep your mind?*

    In each case you must try to keep your mind on just the sensations of walking.

36. *When you stop at the end of the walking lane, what should you do?*

    Notice what processes occur when you stop at the end of the lane, when you stand still, and when you turn and begin walking again.

37. *Should you watch your feet?*

    Do not watch your feet unless this becomes necessary due to some obstacle on the ground; it is unhelpful to hold the

image of a foot in your mind while you are trying to be aware of sensations. You want to focus on the sensations themselves, and these are not visual.

38. *What can people discover when they focus on the sensations of walking?*

For many people it is a fascinating discovery when they are able to have a pure, bare perception of physical objects such as lightness, tingling, cold, and warmth.

39. *How is walking usually noted?*

Usually we divide walking into three distinct movements: lifting, moving, and placing the foot.

40. *How can we make our awareness precise?*

To support a precise awareness, we separate the movements clearly, making a soft mental label at the beginning of each movement, and making sure that our awareness follows it clearly and powerfully until it ends. One minor but important point is to begin noting the placing movement at the instant that the foot begins to move downward.

41. *Is our knowledge of conventional concepts important in meditation?*

Let us consider "lifting." We know its conventional name, but in meditation it is important to penetrate behind that conventional concept and to understand the true nature of the whole process of lifting, beginning with the intention to lift and continuing through the actual process, which involves many sensations.

42. *What happens if our effort to be aware of lifting is too strong, or alternatively, too weak?*

If our effort to be aware of lifting the foot is too strong it will overshoot the sensation. If our effort is too weak it will fall short of this target.

43. *What happens when effort is balanced?*

Precise and accurate mental aim helps balance our effort. When our effort is balanced and our aim is precise, mindfulness will firmly establish itself on the object of awareness.

44. *What mental factors must be present for concentration to develop?*

It is only in the presence of three factors—effort, accuracy, and mindfulness—that concentration develops.

45. *What is concentration?*

Concentration is collectedness of mind: one-pointedness. Its characteristic is to keep consciousness from becoming diffuse or dispersed.

46. *What will we see as we get closer and closer to the lifting process?*

As we get closer and closer to this lifting process, we will see that it is like a line of ants crawling across the road. From afar the line may appear to be static, but from closer up it begins to shimmer and vibrate.

47. *As we get even closer, what will we see?*

From even closer the line breaks up into individual ants, and we see that our notion of a line was just an illusion. We now accurately perceive the line of ants as one ant after another ant after another ant.

48. *What is "insight"?*

"Insight" is a mental factor. When we look accurately, for example, at the lifting process from beginning to end, the mental factor or quality of consciousness called "insight" comes nearer to the object of observation. The nearer insight comes, the clearer the true nature of the lifting process can be seen.

49. *What is the progress of insight?*

It is an amazing fact about the human mind that when insight arises and deepens through vipassana, or insight meditation practice, particular aspects of the truth about existence tend to be revealed in a definite order. This order is known as the progress of insight.

50. *What is the first insight that meditators commonly experience?*

Meditators comprehend, not intellectually or by reasoning but quite intuitively, that a process such as lifting is composed of distinct mental and material phenomena occurring together, as a pair. The physical sensations, which are material, are linked with, but different from, the awareness, which is mental.

51. *What is the second insight in the classical progress of insight?*

We begin to see a whole succession of mental events and physical sensations, and to appreciate the conditionality that relates mind and matter. We see with the greatest freshness and immediacy that mind causes matter, as when our intention to lift the foot initiates the physical sensations of movement, and we see that matter causes mind, as when a physical sensation of strong heat generates a wish to move our walking meditation into a shady spot. The insight into cause and effect can take a great variety of forms. When it arises, though, our life seems far more simple to us than ever before. Our life is no more than a chain of mental and physical causes and effects. This is the second insight in the classical progress of insight.

52. *What is the next level of insight?*

As we develop concentration, we see even more deeply that these phenomena of the lifting process are impermanent and impersonal, appearing and disappearing one by one at fantastic speed. This is the next level of insight, the next

aspect of existence that concentrated awareness becomes capable of seeing directly. There is no one behind what is happening; the phenomena arise and pass away as an empty process, according to the law of cause and effect. This illusion of movement and solidity is like a movie. To ordinary perception it seems full of characters and objects, all the semblances of a world. But if we slow the movie down we will see that it is actually composed of separate, static frames of film.

3.28.2. The Seven Contemplations

From *The Chapter on the Mundane Path (Laukikamarga) in the Sravakabhumi*

Annotated Translation and Introductory Study by Florin Deleanu

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3.28.2.1. THE PRACTICE OF THE SEVEN CONTEMPLATIONS FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF THE FIRST ABSORPTION

3.28.2.1.1. Enumeration of the seven contemplations

The yogi intent upon achieving detachment from sensual pleasures attains it by means of the seven contemplations. Which are these seven contemplations? They are the contemplation perceiving characteristics, the contemplation leading to conviction, the contemplation engendering separation, the contemplation comprising delight, the investigating contemplation, the contemplation attaining the culmination of the practice, and the contemplation which represents the fruit of the culmination of the practice.

3.28.2.1.2. Contemplation perceiving characteristics

3.28.2.1.2.1. Definition

What is the contemplation perceiving characteristics? It is that contemplation by means of which the ascetic perceives the coarse characteristic of the sensual pleasures as well as the serene characteristic in the first absorption. And how does the ascetic perceive the coarse characteristic? By examining the six aspects of the sensual pleasures, to wit, meaning, thing, characteristic, category, time, and reasoning.

3.28.2.1.2.2. Meaning

To start with, he examines[466] the meaning of coarseness. The sensual pleasures are detrimental, fraught with much misfortune, much calamity, much plague. The fact that the sensual pleasures are fraught with much detriment, and so on, up to being fraught with much plague, this is the meaning of coarseness.

3.28.2.1.2.3. Thing

He also examines the things connected with sensual pleasures. That is, he examines that there is lust for sensual pleasures inwards, and there is lust for sensual pleasures outwards.

3.28.2.1.2.4. Characteristic

He also examines the specific characteristic as follows. Those are defilement sensual pleasures, and those are object sensual pleasures. Furthermore, they are sensual pleasures giving rise to pleasure, giving rise to suffering, and giving rise to neither suffering nor pleasure. Those giving rise to pleasure are the basis of passion as well as the basis of the perversion of ideation and of mind. Those giving rise to suffering are the basis of hatred as well as the basis of wrath and enmity. Those giving rise to neither suffering nor pleasure are the basis of concealment of one's faults, stubborn adherence to one's views, deceit, dissimulation, lack of sense of shame, shameless behavior as well as the basis of the perversion of view. These sensual pleasures are .thus accompanied by specific depraved feelings and depraved defilements. In this way, he examines the specific characteristic of the sensual pleasures.

How does he examine the general characteristic? All these sensual pleasures are equally associated and connected with the suffering of birth, the suffering of old age, and so on, up to the suffering of one's wishes remaining unfulfilled. Even those hedonists who achieve the greatest gratification of their sensual pleasures are not free from the law of birth, and so forth. Short-lived indeed is their achievement of sensual gratification. Thus he examines the general characteristic of the sensual pleasures.

3.28.2.1.2.5. Category

How does he examine the category? These sensual pleasures fall into the black category. They are like a skeleton, like a chunk of meat, like a torch of hay, like a pit of embers, like a venomous snake, like a dream, like a borrowed ornament, and like a tree fruit. Even while striving to gratify their sensual pleasures, sentient beings experience the suffering generated by the hardships associated with this striving, as they also experience the suffering generated by the effort required for the protection of their belongings, by disruption of affective relations, by non-contentment, by servitude, and by wrong deeds. All these should be understood just as previously explained.

Likewise, the Exalted One said that he who indulges in sensual pleasures is bound to meet with five detriments: 'Sensual pleasures have little flavor, beget much suffering, much detriment. Surely, when indulging in sensual pleasures, there is no sufficiency or satisfaction or satiation. In such a way have sensual pleasures been censured by the Buddhas and Buddha's disciples, wise beings, rightly accomplished, true men. Surely, indulging in sensual pleasures leads only to accumulating fetters. I therefore declare that there is no evil and unwholesome act whatsoever which one will not commit for the sake of sensual pleasures.'

Thus these sensual pleasures cause non-satiation, are common to many, are the cause of unrighteous and wicked deeds, increase the thirst for further sensual pleasures, are to be avoided by the wise, swiftly come to extinction, are dependent upon conditions for coming into being, constitute the basis of carelessness, are hollow, impermanent and vain, their nature is falsehood and trickery, are like an illusion deceiving only the fools. Whether pertaining to this present life or to a future one, whether divine or human, sensual pleasures are the very domain of the Evil One, the very crop sown by the Evil One, where divers bad, unwholesome mental

factors arise, to wit, covetousness, malice, violence, or whatever further factors which constitute obstacles for the noble disciple practicing spiritual cultivation. In various ways do these sensual pleasures fall, for most part, into the black category. Thus he examines the category.

3.28.2.1.2.6. Time

How does he examine the time? Whether in the past, future, or present, these sensual pleasures are constantly and incessantly thus fraught with much misfortune, much plague, much detriment. Thus he examines the time.

3.28.2.1.2.7. Reasoning

How does he examine the reasoning? The objects of sensual pleasures are gathered, achieved, and accumulated with great struggle, great eagerness, great pains, by various and manifold skills. Furthermore, even when successfully accumulated and achieved, they merely serve to counteract only suffering whenever it arises, outwards, for the sake of one's household, to wit, one's mother and father, child and wife, female and male slaves, servants, day-laborers, friends, companions, kinsmen and relatives; or inwards, for the sake of one's own body, material, coarse, made of the four elements, growing upon boiled rice or coarse gruel, always requiring ointment, bathing, and massage, yet bound to breaking, splitting, scattering, and destruction. Food is but a remedy ·for the suffering of hunger. Clothes are but a prevention of the suffering of cold and heat as well as being meant to cover one's shameful private parts. A sleeping place or a seat is but a prevention of the suffering of drowsiness and fatigue or walking and standing respectively. The medicine needed by the sick is but a prevention of the suffering of disease. These sensual pleasures are thus but remedies for suffering. Therefore, they should be not enjoyed with passion or attachment but rather be experienced like a medicine taken by a sick person afflicted with disease only in order to alleviate the illness.

This is also taught in the Trustworthy Tradition of Buddhist scriptures which say that these sensual pleasures are coarse in this or that way. Inwardly, intuition also arises confirming me this fact. The inferential type of reasoning also shows the same. And the nature of these sensual pleasures existing from beginingless times, their generally accepted essence, the essence beyond thinking, is like this, too. Neither should it be thought of nor reflected upon. In such a way should reasoning be examined.

3.28.2.1.2.8. Concluding remarks

Having perceived the characteristic of coarseness of the sensual pleasures in this way, to wit, through the six aspects, he then perceives the characteristic of serenity in the first absorption in the following way: in the first absorption, there is absolutely no such coarseness which exists in the realm of sensual pleasures; being free from this coarseness, the first absorption is serene. He perceives the characteristic of serenity in the first absorption in this way. Thus, with his attention pertaining to the concentrated level of thought, he perceives the coarse characteristic

in sensual pleasures and the serene characteristic in the first absorption. This is called the contemplation perceiving characteristics. Verily, this contemplation should be known as being mixed with listening and reflection.

3.28.2.1.3. Contemplation leading to conviction

Having thus ascertained the sensual pleasures and the first absorption by means of respectively the coarse and the serene characteristic correctly examined, he transcends the level of listening and reflection and becomes convinced of these two characteristics exclusively in the form of meditative cultivation. He cultivates tranquility and insight, each having the characteristic of coarseness and serenity as its meditative object. And cultivating in like manner, he repeatedly concentrates on and consequently becomes convinced of the coarseness and serenity examined in such a way. This is called the contemplation leading to conviction.

3.28.2.1.4. Contemplation engendering separation

Because of assiduous practice, cultivation, and zealous exercise, for the first time is the path leading to the elimination of defilements generated by him. And upon kindling the path leading to the elimination of defilements, the contemplation which accompanies it is called contemplation engendering separation.

3.28.2.1.5. Contemplation comprising delight

For the first time, because of the abandonment of the defilements belonging to the realm of sensual pleasures which should be abandoned in the beginning and also because of the elimination of the noxiousness corresponding to these defilements, he thereupon becomes able to rejoice at this abandonment and separation. And seeing benefit in the abandonment of defilements, he experiences some joy and pleasure born of this separation. Just for the purpose of eliminating torpor, drowsiness, and agitation, he repeatedly gladdens/encourages his mind through the contemplation conducive to cheering up, and makes his mind loathe through the contemplation conducive to loathing. This is called the contemplation comprising delight.

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3.28.2.1.6. Investigating contemplation

He who thus rejoices at abandonment as well as at spiritual cultivation and meditates correctly, due to being firmly grounded in the practice of wholesome categories, is not possessed / ensnared by the defilements associated with sensual pleasures, whether he wanders about or dwells in one place. At this moment, it occurs to him: 'Could it be the case that I do not experience lust for the objects of the sensual pleasures, though it actually still exists within my mind? Or can it be that I do not experience it because it does not exist anymore?' Wishing to investigate this, he directs his attention to this or that pleasing, agreeable image /characteristic. Since the latent proclivities have not been completely abandoned by him, as he directs his attention to this image /characteristic, he experiences a mental state of fondness for it, intentness upon it, indulgence in it. Thus his equanimity does not stand firm, nor does his

disgust, dislike, aversion, and repulsion towards sensual pleasures function. It then occurs to him: 'My mind is not properly freed, nor is it liberated from sensual pleasures; my mind is restrained by effort, as water is held by a dam, it is not yet restrained by its very nature. Let me dwell even more in rejoicing at abandonment and spiritual cultivation for further approaching the complete abandonment of these· latent proclivities.' This is called the investigating contemplation.

3.28.2.1.7. Contemplation attaining the culmination of the practice

He dwells still more in rejoicing at abandonment and spiritual cultivation, intent upon the practice of tranquillity and insight, and repeatedly investigates the defilements. And while he cultivates the antidote, and time after time investigates the defilements which have been abandoned and those which have not been abandoned yet, his mind is temporarily freed from all the defilements of the realm of sensual pleasures. But this does not amount to a complete eradication 1 1 4 of their seeds for ever. At this point, the contemplation at the end of the preparatory path of the first absorption, which serves as an antidote for all these defilements, is generated. This is called the contemplation attaining the culmination of the practice.

3.28.2.1.8. Contemplation representing the fruit of the culmination of the practice

Immediately following it, (the ascetic reaches the first absorption proper having the (previous contemplation as its condition and cause. It is the contemplation which accompanies the first absorption proper. This is called the contemplation representing the fruit of the culmination of the practice.

3.28.2.1.9. Additional clarifications

3.28.2.1.9.1. Experience of joy and pleasure in the contemplations

The ascetic abiding in the contemplation engendering separation and in the contemplation comprising delight gladdens his body with joy and pleasure born of separation in such a way that they faintly manifest themselves from time to time. At the time of abiding in the contemplation attaining the culmination of the practice, he suffuses his body with them in such a way that they profusely and amply manifest themselves from time to time. Furthermore, for the ascetic abiding in the contemplation which represents the fruit of the culmination of the practice, there is no part whatsoever of the entire body which is not suffused or could be still suffused with joy and pleasure born of separation. At this moment, he dwells having attained the first absorption which is separated from sensual pleasures, is separated from bad and unwholesome factors, is possessed of rough examination, is possessed of subtle investigation, has joy and pleasure born of separation, and is endowed with five limbs. The ascetic is now called one who stands firm in the fruit of the practice of the path of the antidote for the realm of sensual pleasures as well as one who has reached detachment from sensual pleasures.

3.28.2.1.9.2. Elimination of the defilements through the practice of the contemplations

By means of the contemplation perceiving characteristics, the ascetic correctly ascertains what is to be abandoned. He also correctly discerns what is to be attained. And he directs his mind towards the abandonment of what is to be abandoned and towards the attainment of what is to be attained. And by means of the contemplation leading to conviction, he embarks upon the correct practice for abandonment and attainment. By means of the contemplation engendering separation, he eliminates the strong defilements. By means of the contemplation comprising delight, he eliminates the middling kind of defilements. By means of the investigating contemplation, he makes his mind abide in freedom from the conceit /vain misapprehension of attainment. By means of the contemplation attaining the culmination of the practice, he eliminates the weak kind of defilements. By means of the contemplation which represents the fruit of the culmination of the practice, he enjoys the very fruit of the cultivation of these types of contemplations which have thus been cultivated, indeed well cultivated.

3.28.2.1.9.3. Relation with the set of four contemplations

Furthermore, both the contemplation perceiving characteristics and the contemplation leading to conviction are called the suitable contemplation which accompanies the antidote of reviling the defilements. Both the contemplation engendering separation and the contemplation attaining the culmination of the practice represent the antidote contemplation which accompanies the antidote of abandoning the defilements. Herein, the contemplation comprising delight constitutes both the antidote contemplation and the contemplation which engenders cheering up. Herein, the investigating contemplation is called the examining contemplation. It should thus be known that the four contemplations, to wit, the suitable one, the one which is antidote, the one which engenders cheering up, and the examining one, are included in the six contemplations above, i.e., from the contemplation perceiving characteristics to the contemplation attaining the culmination of the practice.

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The Stages of Meditation II by Kamalashila
Translated and edited in Tibetan
By the Indian abbot Prajna Verma and the monk Yeshe De
From *Stages of Meditation* By The Dalai Lama

Translated by Ven Geshe Lobsang Jordhen, Losang Choephel Ganchenpa, and Jeremy Russell

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(All headings have been added for use in Rime Shedra)

8. The Practice of Calm Abiding

Definitions of Calm Abiding and Special Insight

Calm abiding meditation should be achieved first. Calm abiding is that mind which has overcome distraction to external objects, and which spontaneously and continuously turns toward the object of meditation with bliss and pliancy.

That which properly examines suchness from within a state of calm abiding is special insight. The *Cloud of Jewels Sutra* reads,

> "Calm abiding meditation is a single pointed mind; special insight makes specific analysis of the ultimate."

Also, from the *Unraveling of the Thought Sutra*:

> "Maitreya asked, 'O Buddha, how should [people] thoroughly search for calm abiding meditation and gain expertise in special insight?" the Buddha answered, 'Maitreya, I have given the following teachings to Bodhisattvas: sutras, melodious praises, prophetic teachings, verses, specific instructions, advice from specific experiences, expressions of realization, legends, birth tales, extensive teachings, established doctrine, and instructions.
>
> 'Bodhisattvas should properly listen to these teachings, remember their contents, train in verbal recitation, and thoroughly examine them mentally. With perfect comprehension, they should go alone to remote areas and reflect on these teachings and continue to focus their minds upon them. They should focus mentally only on those topics that they have reflected about and maintain this continuously. That is called mental engagement."
>
> 'When the mind has been repeatedly engaged in this way and physical and mental pliancy have been achieved, that mind is called calm abiding. This is how Bodhisattvas properly seek the calmly abiding mind.'"
>
> "When the Bodhisatta has achieved physical and mental pliancy and abides only in

> them, he eliminates mental distractions. The phenomena that has been contemplated as the object of inner single-pointed concentration should be analyzed and regarded as like a reflection. This reflection or image, which is the object of single-pointed concentration, should be thoroughly discerned as an object of knowledge. It should be completely investigated and thoroughly examined. Practice patience and take delight in it. With proper analysis, observe and understand it. This is what is known as special insight. Thus, Bodhisattvas are skilled in the ways of special insight.'"

How to Practice Calm Abiding

The yogis who are interested in actualizing a calmly abiding mind should initially concentrate closely on the fact that the twelve sets of scriptures-the sutras, melodious praises, and so forth-can be summarized as all leading to suchness, that they will lead to suchness, and that they have led to suchness.

One way of doing this meditation is to set the mind closely on the mental and physical aggregates, as an object that includes all phenomena. Another way is to place the mind on an image of the Buddha. The *King of Meditative Stabilization Sutra* says:

> With his body gold in color,
> The lord of the universe is extremely beautiful.
> The Bodhisattva who places his mind on this object
> Is referred to as one in meditative absorption.

In this way place the mind on the object of your choice and, having done so, repeatedly and continuously place the mind.

Obstacles and Antidotes

Having placed the mind in this way, examine it and check whether it is properly focused on the object. Also check for dullnes and see whether the mind is being distracted to external objects.

If the mind is found to be dull due to spleepiness and mental torpor or if you fear that dullness is approaching, then the mind should attend to a supremely delightful object such as an image of the Buddha, or a notion of light. In this process, having dispelled dullness the mind should try to see the object very clearly.

You should recognize the presence of dullness when the mind cannot see the object very clearly, when you feel as if you are blind or in a dark place or that you have closed your eyes. If, which you are in meditation, your mind chases after qualitities of external objects such as form, or turns its attention to other phenomena, or is distracted by desire for an object you have previously experienced, or if you suspect distraction is approaching, reflect that all composite phenomena are impermanent. Think about suffering and so forth, topics that will temper the mind.

In this process, distraction should be eliminated and with the rope of mindfulness and alertness the elephant-like mind should be fastened to the tree of the object of meditation. When you find that the mind is free of dullness and excitement and that it naturally abides on the object, you should relax your effort and remain neutral as long as it continues thus.

You should understand that calm abiding is actualized when you enjoy physical and mental pliancy through prolonged familiarity with the meditation, and the mind gains the power to engage the object as it chooses.

9. Actualizing Special Insight

The Motivation

After realizing calm abiding, meditate on special insight, thinking as follows: 'All the teachings of the Buddha are perfect teachings, and they directly or indirectly reveal and lead to suchness with utmost clarity. If you understand suchness with utmost clarity, you will be free of all the nets of wrong views, just as darkness is dispelled when light appears. Mere calm abiding meditation cannot purify pristine awareness, nor can it eliminate the darkness of obscurations. When I meditate properly on suchness with wisdom, pristine awareness will be purified. Only with wisdom can I realize suchness. Only with wisdom can I effectively eradicate obscurations. Therefore, engaging in calm abiding meditation, I shall then search for suchness with wisdom. And I shall not remain content with calm abiding alone.'

What is suchness like? It is the nature of all phenomena that ultimately they are empty of the self of persons and the self of phenomena. This is realized through the perfection of wisdom and not otherwise. *The Unraveling of the Thought Sutra* reads,

> "O Tathagatha, by which perfection do Bodhisattvas apprehend the identitylessness of phenomena?" "Avalokiteshvara, it is apprehended by the perfection of wisdom."

Therefore, meditate on wisdom while engaging in calm abiding.

The Selflessness of Persons

Yogis should analyze in the following manner: a person is not observed as separate from the mental and physical aggregates, the elements and sense powers. Nor is a person of the nature of the aggregates and so forth, because the aggregates and so forth have the entity of being many and impermanent. Others have imputed the person as permanent and single. The person as a phenomena cannot exist except as one or many, because there is no other way of existing. Therefore, we must conclude that the assertion of the worldly "I" and "mine" is wholly mistaken.

The Selflessness of Phenomena

Meditation on the selflessness of phenomena should also be done in the following manner: phenomena, in short, are included under the five aggregates, the twelve sources of perception, and the eighteen elements. The physical aspects of the aggregates, sources of perception, and elements are, in the ultimate sense, nothing other than aspects of the mind. This is because when they are broken into subtle particles and the nature of the parts of these subtle particles is individually examined, no definite identity can be found.

The Emptiness of the Mind

In the ultimate sense, the mind too cannot be real. How can the mind that apprehends only the false nature of physical form and so forth, and appears in various aspects, be real? Just as physical forms and so forth are false, since the mind does not exist separately from physical forms and so forth, which are false, it too is false. Just as physical forms and so forth possess various aspects, and their identities are neither one nor many, similarly, since the mind is not different from them, its identify too is neither one nor many. Therefore, the mind by nature is like an illusion.

The Emptiness of All Phenomena

Analyze that, just like the mind, the nature of all phenomena, too, is like an illusion. In this way, when the identity of the mind is specifically examined by wisdom, in the ultimate sense it is perceived neither within nor without. It is also not perceived in the absence of both. Neither the mind of the past, nor that of the future, nor that of the present, is perceived. When the mind is born, it comes from nowhere, and when it ceases it goes nowhere because it is inapprehensible, undemonstrable, and non-physical.

If you ask, "What is the entity of that which is inapprehensible, undemonstrable, and non-physical?" *The Heap of Jewels* states:

> "O Kashyapa, when the mind is thoroughly sought, it cannot be found. What is not found cannot be perceived. And what is not perceived is neither past nor future nor present."

Through such analysis, the beginning of the mind is ultimately not seen, the end of the mind is ultimately not seen, and the middle of the mind is ultimately not seen. All phenomena should be understood as lacking an end and a middle, just as the mind does not have an end or a middle. With the knowledge that the mind is without an end or a middle, no identity of the mind is perceived.

The Emptiness of Emptiness

What is thoroughly realized by the mind, too, is realized as being empty. By realizing that, the

very identity, which is established as the aspect of the mind, like the identity of physical form, and so forth, is also ultimately not perceived.

In this way, when the person does not ultimately see the identity of all phenomena through wisdom, he will not analyze whether physical form is permanent or impermanent, empty or not empty, contaminated or not contaminated, produced or non-produced, and existent or non-existent. Just as physical form is not examined, similarly feeling, recognition, compositional factors, and consciousness are not examined. When the object does not exist, its characteristics also cannot exist. So how can they be examined? In this way, when the person does not firmly apprehend the entity of a thing as ultimately existing, having investigated it with wisdom, the practitioner engages in non-conceptual single-pointed concentration. And thus the identitylessness of all phenomena is realized.

The Necessity of this Meditation

Those who do not meditate with wisdom by analyzing the entity of things specifically, but merely meditate on the elimination of mental activity, cannot avert conceptual thoughts and also cannot realize identitylessness because they lack the light of wisdom. If the fire of consciousness knowing phenomena as they are is produced from individual analysis of suchness, then like the fire produced by rubbing wood it will burn the wood of conceptual thought. The Buddha has spoken in this way.

The Cloud of Jewels also states,

> "One skilled in discerning the faults engages in the yoga of meditation on emptiness in order to get rid of all conceptual elaborations. Such a person, due to his repeated meditation on emptiness, when he thoroughly searches for the object and the identity of the object, which delights the mind and distracts it, realizes them to be empty. When that very mind is also examined, it is realized to be empty. When the identity of what is realized by this mind is thoroughly sought, this too is realized as empty. Realizing in this way one enters into the yoga of signlessness."

This shows that only those who have engaged in complete analysis can enter into the yoga of signlessness.

It has been explained very clearly that through mere elimination of mental activity, without examining the identity of things with wisdom, it is not possible to engage in non-conceptual meditation. Thus, concentration is done after the actual identity of things like physical form and so forth has been perfectly analyzed with wisdom, and not by concentrating on physical forms and so forth. Concentration is also not done by abiding between this world and the world beyond, because physical forms and so forth are not perceived. It is thus called the non-abiding concentration.

[Such a practitioner] is then called a meditator of supreme wisdom, because by specifically

examining the identity of all things with wisdom he has perceived nothing. This is as stated in *The Space Treasure Sutra* and *The Jewel in the Crown Sutra*, and so forth.

In this way, by entering into the suchness of the selflessness of persons and phenomena, you are free from concepts and analysis because there is nothing to be thoroughly examined and observed. You are free from expression, and with single-pointed mental engagement you automatically enter into meditation without exertion. Thus, you very clearly meditate on suchness and abide in it.

Working with Obstacles to this Meditation

While abiding in that meditation, the continuity of the mind should not be distracted. When the mind is distracted to external objects due to attachment, and so forth, such distraction should be noted. Quickly pacify the distraction by meditating on the repulsive aspect of such objects and swiftly replace the mind on suchness. If the mind appears to be disinclined to do that, reflecting on the advantages of single pointed concentration, meditate with delight. The disinclination should be pacified by also seeing the defects of distraction.

If the function of the mind becomes unclear and starts sinking, or when there is a risk of it sinking due to being overpowered by mental torpor or sleep, then as before, quickly attempt to overcome such dullness by focusing the mind on supremely delightful things. Then the object suchness should be held in very tight focus. At times when the mind is observed to be excited or tempted to become distracted by the memory of past events of laughter and play, then as in the earlier cases, pacify the distractions by reflecting on such things as impermanence, and so forth, which will help subdue the mind. Then, again endeavor to engage the mind on suchness without applying counter forces.

If and when the mind spontaneously engages in meditation on suchness, free of sinking and mental agitation, it should be left naturally and your efforts should be relaxed. If effort is applied when the mind is in meditative equipoise, it will distract the mind. But if effort is not applied when the mind becomes dull, it will become like a blind man due to extreme dullness and you will not achieve special insight. So, when the mind becomes dull, apply effort, and when in absorption, effort should be relaxed. When, by meditating on special insight, excessive wisdom is generated and calm abiding is weak, the mind will waver like a butter lamp in the wind and you will not perceive suchness very clearly. Therefore, at that time meditate on calm abiding. When calm abiding mediation becomes excessive, meditate on wisdom.

10. Unifying Method and Wisdom

When both are equally engaged, keep still, effortlessly; so long as there is no physical or mental discomfort. If physical or mental discomfort arises, see the whole world like an illusion, a mirage, a dream, a reflection of the moon in water, and an apparition. And think: “These sentient beings are very troubled in the cycle of existence due to their not understanding such

profound knowledge." Then, generate great compassion and the awakening mind of bodhichitta, thinking: "I shall earnestly endeavor to help them understand suchness." Take rest. Again, in the same way, engage in a single pointed concentration on the non-appearance of all phenomena. If the mind is discouraged, then similarly take rest. This is the path of engaging in a union of calm abiding meditation and special insight. It focuses on the image conceptually and non-conceptually.

Thus, through this progress, a yogi should meditate on suchness for an hour, or half a session in the night, or one full session, or for as long as is comfortable. This is the meditative stabilization thoroughly discerning the ultimate, as taught in the *Descent into Lanka Sutra.*

Then, if you wish to arise from the concentration, while your legs are still crossed think as follows: "Although ultimately all these phenomena lack identity, conventionally they definitely exist. If this were not the case, how would the relationship between cause and effect, and so forth, prevail? The Buddha has also said,

> "Things are produced conventionally, but ultimately they lack intrinsic identity. Sentient beings with a childish attitude exaggerate phenomena, thinking of them as having an intrinsic identity when they lack it. Thus attributing intrinsic existence to those things that lack it confuses their minds, and they wander in the cycle of existence for a long time. For these reasons, I shall endeavor without fail to achieve the omniscient state by accomplishing the unsurpassable accumulations of merit and insight in order to help them realize suchness."

Then slowly arise from the cross-legged position and make prostrations to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions. Make them offerings and sing their praises. And make vast prayers by reciting the *Prayer of Noble Conduct,* and so forth. Thereafter, engage in conscious efforts to actualize the accumulations of merit and insight by practicing generosity and so forth, which are endowed with the essence of emptiness and great compassion.

If you act thus, your meditative stabilization will actualize that emptiness that possesses the best of all qualities. The *Jewel in the Crown Sutra* states,

> "Donning the armor of loving-kindness, while abiding in the state of great compassion, practice meditative stabilization that actualizes the emptiness possessing the best of all qualities. What is the emptiness possessing the best of all qualities? It is that which is not divorced from generosity, ethics, patience, effort, meditative stabilization, wisdom, or skillful means."

The Stages of Meditation Of Shamatha and Vipashyana
The General Basis of All Samadhis

The Treasury of Knowledge
Chapter Eight: The Progressive Classification Of the Training in Superior Samadhi, Part One

By Jamgon Kongtrul

Translated by Kiki Ekselius and Chryssoula Zerbini
Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche

Translator's Note

This text has been translated under the guidance of Kbenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpocbe, a scbolar and accomplished meditator, The notes are given by him in order to clarify this very condensed text. The first draft of the translation was done by Kiki Ekselius. Robert Lowman did a word by word translation, based on this first draft. A revised version of the part dealing with shamatha has been used for this present translation. We would like to thank all our friends in Brussels and Dhagpo Kagyu Ling whose help and encouragement made this work possible. It is hoped that this translation will be of some help for those striving to accomplish shamatha and vipashyana.

Kiki Ekselius - Chryssoula Zerbini
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AN OUTLINE OF THE TEXT

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The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana
The General Basis of All Samadhis

Through the superior knowledge arising from reflection, one eliminates misconceptions and finds certainty regarding the deep view ant the general and specific character of phenomena; this understanding should then be applied to one's own being through meditation. Thus, the eighth chapter deals with the progressive classification of the training in superior samadhi.

Part One: The Necessity of Practicing Samadhi

One needs to practice by meditating on the meaning of what one has listened to and reflected upon, just as a farmer needs to make use of a good crop. One needs to practise, focusing inwardly on what one has understood through the superior knowledge arising from listening and reflecting. No matter how deeply one listens and reflects, if one does not also meditate, one will not be freed from bondage, just as a farmer needs to make use of his crop, since no matter how good it is, if it is not used for food, it will not dispel hunger. Similarly, no matter how skillful one may be in reading and understanding medical treatises, one cannot dispel the pain of a sick person unless one actually applies one's knowledge.

Identifying the Samadhi to be Practiced

> **One should gain certainty in both shamatha and vipashyana, which comprise the ocean of samadhis of both the greater and lesser vehicles.**

The Sutra Unravelling the Thought states,

> "As the Bhagavan has said, one should know that the many types of samadhi of the Sravakas, Bodhisattvas and Tathagatas are all included in shamatha and vipashyana."

Thus, since it is said that shamatha and vipashyana comprise all the samadhis of both the greater and lesser vehicles, and since it is impossible for anyone striving for samadhi to fathom the great number of divisions, this ocean of samadhis is classified into just shamatha and vipashyana. Therefore, one should first gain certainty in these two. This is necessary because, as stated in the same Sutra, all the qualities ensuing from the practice of the greater and lesser vehicles, whether mundane or supramundane, are the fruit of shamatha and vipashyana. Also Maitreya has said,

> "One should know all mundane and supramundane virtues of the Sravakas, Bodhisattvas or Tathagatas to be the fruit of shamatha and vipashyana."

The Detailed Explanation

The Essential Nature of Shamatha and Vipashyana

The essential nature of these is: one-pointedness and individual analysis which fully discriminates phenomena.

Shamatha is to rest the mind one-pointedly, using a correct object of observation, and vipashyana is to completely analyze suchness by means of superior knowledge that fully discriminates and individually analyses phenomena. *The Cloud of Jewels Sutra* says,

> "Shamatha is one-pointedness, vipashyana is individual analysis."

Also, Vasubandhu's *Commentary* on this says,

> "One should know shamatha and vipashyana respectively as resting the mind in mind and fully discriminating phenomena on the basis of perfect samadhi; without samadhi there is neither. These are the defining characteristics of shamatha and vipashyana."

Kamalashila's *Stages of Meditation II* says,

> "Having calmed distraction towards external objects, one abides in a state of mind which is supple and delights in focusing inwards continuously and naturally; this is called shamatha. While focused on this calm, abiding mind, one thoroughly analyses its suchness; that is called vipashyana."

Etymology

Having calmed distraction, one completely abides, and the superior nature is seen with the eyes of wisdom.

The etymological definition of shamatha and vipashyana is as follows: 'shama' means 'calms' and '-tha' is 'abiding' so "shamatha" means 'calm abiding'. It is thus called since distraction towards objects such as form etc. Has been calmed, and the mind abides one-pointedly in whichever concentration one is practicing. In the word 'vi(shesa)pashyana,' 'vishesa' means 'special or superior,' and 'pashyan means 'seeing' or 'observing' so 'vi(shesa)pashyana' means 'superior seeing.' It is thus called since one sees 'the superior,' i.e. the nature of phenomena, with the eyes of wisdom.

The Necessity of Both

Just as in the example of the bright oil lamp not blown by the wind, one realizes the true nature by bringing both together.

In order to understand the necessity of both shamatha and vipashyana, consider the example of an oil lamp: if the flame is bright and there is no wind, one will see clearly; however, if the flame is bright but it is being blown by the wind, one will not see by it. Similarly, if one has both

the superior knowledge which is certain and unmistaken concerning suchness, and the concentration which stays at will on the object of observation, one will see suchness clearly.

However, if one has undistracted concentration but lacks the superior knowledge that realizes the true nature, it will not be possible to realize the nature of mind. Also, if one has the view which comprehends selflessness but lacks the samadhi in which the mind rests one-pointedly, it will not be possible to see the true nature clearly. Therefore, since it is considered that by bringing both shamatha and vipashyana together one will be able to realize suchness, it is advised in all the Sutras and Tantras to combine these two.

The Progressive Order

The progression is from the support to that which is supported.

The progression from shamatha to vipashyana is such that one depends on the other, like the oil and the flame of an oil lamp. In *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* it is said, "Having understood that the afflictions are completely overcome by vipashyana which fully incorporates shamatha, one begins by practicing shamatha." Thus, having first accomplished shamatha, one proceeds to practice vipashyana. The reason for this is that vipashyana is seeing the nature of the mind as it is by observing it through discriminating knowledge; and in order to see it, one must start with shamatha, since it is absolutely necessary to have control over the mind to be observed, by making it workable.

Part Two Shamatha

The Prerequisites for Shamatha:

> **To rely on the conditions for shamatha is to reject everything unfavorable, to stay in a favorable area, to have few desires, to be content, to adopt pure ethics, and to give up distraction and discursive thoughts.**

Since one wishes to accomplish shamatha, it is very important to rely on the causes or prerequisites for it. In the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, Atisha says:

> "If the conditions for shamatha deteriorate, even if one meditates with great effort for a thousand years, one will not accomplish samadhi."

Therefore, it is also said in the chapter dealing with the prerequisites for samadhi:

> "Keep well the previously mentioned conditions and settle the .mind in virtue, by means of any correct object of observation. If a yogi thus accomplishes shamatha, he will also gain the supersensible cognitions."

What are these prerequisites? According to Kamalashila's *Stages of Meditation II*, they are:

> "To stay in a favorable area, to have few desires, to be content, to forsake excessive activity, to adopt pure ethics, to give up distraction due to desire as well as discursive thoughts."

Further, in the *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras*, it is said:

> "The wise person practices wherever he can have good facilities, a wholesome environment, a healthy place, good friends and the requisites for yogic happiness."

1. Staying in a favorable area means:
    - to have good facilities, i.e. to easily obtain food and clothing;
    - a wholesome environment, with no danger from robbers, thieves, etc.;
    - a healthy place, free from disease;
    - good friends of like view and conduct;
    - and the requisites for happiness, i.e. freedom from commotion and disturbing noises.
2. Having few desires refers to food and clothing.
3. Being content is being satisfied with just the bare essentials.
4. Forsaking excessive activity refers to buying and selling etc.
5. Adopting pure ethics means not transgressing one's vows of personal liberation or bodhicitta.

6. Giving up discursive thoughts refers to that mental activity which, arising out of desire, results in many shortcomings in both this and future lives.

Furthermore, one should also rely on the conditions and prerequisites for shamatha mentioned by Atisha in the chapter dealing with the prerequisites for samadhi, and avoid their opposites.

The Progressive Classification

> **When classified, it comprises the mind of the desire realm, the concentrations, the formless absorptions and the absorption of cessation.**

When shamatha is classified according to individuals or categories, there are four types; the shamatha which corresponds to the mind of the desire realm, to the levels of the concentrations, to the formless absorptions and to the absorption of cessation. These are explained in the previous and following chapters.

The Way to Meditate: Posture

> **During meditation one should be seated comfortably in the eightfold posture.**

When meditating on shamatha, at the beginning, one's posture is very important. Therefore, one should be seated comfortably and adopt the eight-fold posture, described here according to the *Stages of Meditation*:

1. The legs should be in vajra posture or half-crossed.
2. The eyes should be half-closed.
3. The body should be held straight.
4. The shoulders should be level.
5. The gaze should be in the direction of the nose.
6. There should be a slight gap between the teeth and between the lips.
7. The tongue should be touching the palate.
8. The breathing should be natural and effortless.

The Methods for Setting the Mind: The Objects of Observation

> **There are generally four types of objects of observation, in accordance with the individual: pervasive objects, objects for purifying deeds, objects that render skillful and objects for purifying afflictions.**

Generally, the Bhagavan taught four types of objects of observation for the yogi:

1. *The pervasive objects* refer to
   - non-analytical setting,
   - analytical focusing,

- observing the “limits of phenomena”, i.e. their varieties and their mode of being, and
- achievement of the purpose, which is the transformation obtained by meditating on the two aspects of phenomena mentioned above.

2. *The objects for purifying deeds* are the remedies to whichever is greatest of the tendencies coming from deeds committed in former lives out of desire, hatred, obscuration, pride, and discursiveness. Respectively these remedies are; meditation on repulsiveness, love, dependent arising, the division of the (6) elements, and the rising and falling of the breath.

3. *The objects that render skillful* are of five types, namely the aggregates, the (18) elements, the entrances, the twelve links of dependent arising, and the appropriate and the inappropriate.

4. *The objects for purifying afflictions* are of two kinds: the levels, of which the higher are more peaceful and the lower more coarse; and the four truths, together with their sixteen attributes such as impermanence etc.

The object of observation chosen should be in accordance with the individual: depending on whichever affliction is strongest, from desire to discursiveness, the object of observation should be the corresponding remedy, from repulsiveness to the rising and falling of the breath. If the tendencies are of equal strength or the afflictions are weak, it is permissible to use any of the above objects of observation, according to one's faculties.

The Progression of the Actual Meditation

Setting the mind with a concrete support

> **The particular method for setting the mind is to focus on an impure and a pure support.**

In the beginning, it is important to train using a support. An impure support refers to any small object such as a piece of wood or a pebble, which one uses as an object of concentration. A pure support refers to a statue or relief of the Buddha, a seed syllable or the attributes of a deity etc. The manner of concentrating should be similar to the way a Brahmin twines his cord, i.e. neither too tight nor too loose.

Setting the mind without concrete support

> **“Without concrete supports” refers to setting the mind on individual parts; on the complete form; outwardly; and inwardly on the body and on that which depends on the body.**

Once one is able to rest even slightly on a concrete support, one can proceed to meditate without concrete support, i.e. using a mental image of a statue of a deity, etc. First one

concentrates on the individual parts such as the face, hands, etc.; this is known as meditation with a *partial support*. Then, having become familiar with that, one concentrates on the complete form; this is known as meditation with a *complete support*. The former and latter are summarized as follows by the master Jangchub Zangpo in *The Prerequisites for Samadhi*:

> "Shamatha is classified into *observation*, which is directed outwards, and *attainment*, which is directed inwards. Observation is of two kinds; *special*, which refers to statues and seed syllables, and *ordinary*. Attainment can be either *directed towards the body* or *towards something dependent on the body*. The former is of three types: visualizing the body as a deity, as an attribute of a deity or as a skeleton etc. The latter is of five types: concentrating on the breath, on subtle parts, on bindu, on light and on joyful bliss."

Although there are indeed many ways of enumerating objects of observation in other texts, they are all included in the two categories of with concrete support and without concrete support.

Setting the Mind in the Essential Nature

> **Strive to remain absorbed in the essential nature, waves of thought having dissolved into the ocean of the all-basis.**

Having familiarized oneself with the methods mentioned above, one settles into the state in which all notions of subject and object are completely pacified, with no concept of a support. By this, the endless flow of thought waves is completely dissolved into the ocean of the all-basis, and one arrives at a state of absorption in the essential nature. This is ultimate shamatha, therefore, strive for it!

Identifying the Experiences Arising From Meditation

Brief Explanation

> **There are two ways of identifying the experiences arising from these.**

There are two ways of identifying the experiences arising from meditating on the three kinds of shamatha: with a concrete support, without concrete support and in the essential nature.

Detailed Explanation

The tradition of the great treatises - the eight antidotes to the five faults

> **According to the treatises, there are five faults: three types of laziness, forgetting the instructions, laxity and agitation (each with two aspects), non-application, and over-application.**

The eight antidotes to these are: aspiration, exertion, faith and suppleness which counteract the first; the samadhi of not forgetting with three particularities; examination; application; and equanimity when resting in a balanced state.

According to the tradition of-the great treatises, one must rely on the eight antidotes in order to remove the five faults which hinder the arisal of experiences. The *Discrimination of the Middle Way and the Extremes* says:

> "Abiding in that gives rise to workability and accomplishes all aims. This comes about through relying on the eight antidotes to the five faults which are laziness, forgetting the instructions, laxity and agitation, non-application and over-application. The basis, abiding in that, the cause, the effect, not to forget the object, to examine the mind for laxity and agitation, actual application which removes them, and resting naturally when calm are the eight antidotes."

Here, "abiding in that" means abiding in joyous effort in order to dispel unfavorable conditions. From this, the samadhi of workability arises. This samadhi achieves all aims, since it is the foundation of miraculous powers, such as the supersensible cognitions etc. Such a samadhi results from the elimination of the five faults by means of the eight antidotes.

As for the five faults, they are as follows:

1. At the time of engaging in samadhi, laziness is a fault, since it prevents application to the practice. There are three types of laziness: the laziness of neutral activities such as sleep etc.; attachment to negative activities; and lack of self-confidence.
2. Forgetting the instructions when exerting oneself in samadhi is a fault, since if one forgets the object, one is unable to rest in equipoise.
3. When resting in equipoise, laxity and agitation are hindrances, since they make the mind unworkable. Each of these has two aspects, coarse and subtle. Coarse laxity refers to obscurity of mind, the object being unclear through loss of firmness in one's awareness of it; subtle laxity refers to weak apprehension of the object even though clarity is present. Coarse agitation cannot be suppressed even by remedies, due to very strong attachment to sense objects; subtle agitation refers to slight movement of thought, the mind being unable to rest undisturbed.
4. Non-application of remedies when laxity and agitation have arisen is a fault, since then one is unable to pacify them.
5. Application of remedies when one is free from laxity and agitation is a fault since then one is unable to rest in equanimity.

If, as here, laxity and agitation are counted as one, this makes five faults; if they are counted separately, as in the Stages of Meditation it makes six.

The remedy to these live faults is to rely on the eight antidotes which remove them:

- The first four, namely aspiration, exertion, faith (the cause), and suppleness (the effect) remove the first fault of laziness.
- The remedy to forgetting is the samadhi of not forgetting the instructions, which has three particularities: strong clarity of mind, non-discursiveness, i.e. resting one-pointedly on the object, and a resulting experience of bliss which is accompanied by a sensation of well-being.
- The sixth remedy is introspection, which examines whether laxity and agitation have arisen or not; if they have arisen, one counteracts them by means of appropriate visualizations, gazes, and physical activities.
- The antidote for non-application of the remedies to laxity and agitation is to exert oneself in their application.
- If when resting undisturbed in a balanced state, one is still making effort in application, the remedy is to train in equanimity, without application.

The Six Powers, the Four Mental Engagements and the Nine Mental Abidings

> **The nine mental abidings such as setting the mind on the object etc, arise through the six powers of listening, reflecting, mindfulness, introspection, joyous effort and familiarity. To these mental abidings correspond four mental engagements: forcible, interrupted, uninterrupted and spontaneous.**

The six powers, which are the means for developing shamatha, are:

1. the power of listening,
2. the power of reflecting,
3. the power of recollection,
4. the power of introspection,
5. the power of joyous effort and
6. the power of familiarity.

Through relying on the first power, the first mental abiding is accomplished; through the second power, the second; through the third power, the third and fourth; through the fourth power, the fifth and sixth; through the fifth power, the seventh and eighth; and through the sixth, the ninth.

There are four mental engagements corresponding to the nine mental abidings:

1. forcible engagement, which corresponds to the first and second mental abidings;
2. interrupted engagement, which corresponds to the third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh mental abidings;
3. uninterrupted engagement, corresponding to the eighth'; and
4. spontaneous engagement, corresponding to the ninth.

These describe the manner in which the mind engages in samadhi.

The nine successive mental abidings arising from the six powers mentioned above are as follows:

1. Setting the mind: having withdrawn from outer objects, the mind is directed towards an inner object of observation.
2. Continuous setting: having turned inwards, the mind is able to remain continuously on its object without being distracted elsewhere.
3. Re-setting: having become aware of distraction towards outer objects, the mind is set once again on its object of observation.
4. Close setting: setting the mind on its object, having refined it by withdrawing it again and again from its natural coarseness.
5. Disciplining: rejoicing in the qualities of samadhi, having reflected on them.
6. Pacifying: having seen distraction as a fault, one pacifies dislike of samadhi,
7. Thorough pacifying: here, attachment and mental discomfort are pacified.
8. Making one-pointed: making effort in order to be able to rest effortlessly.
9. Setting in equipoise: resting in equanimity when the mind is already balanced.

Thus the succession of the nine mental abidings reaches its perfection.

The nine mental abidings have been taught in the *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras* while the six powers and four mental engagements are explained in the Levels of Hearers.

The Tradition of Oral Instructions.

> **In the oral tradition, the five experiences of agitation, attainment, familiarity, stability and perfection are illustrated by examples.**

In the oral tradition, the experiences which accompany the development of shamatha are summarized into five:

1. The first experience is that of mental agitation, which is compared to a waterfall;
2. the second is that of attainment, compared to a river flowing through a gorge;
3. the third is that of familiarity, compared to a large river flowing leisurely;
4. the fourth is that of stability, compared to an ocean free from waves; and
5. the fifth is that of perfect stability, compared to an oil lamp not blown by the wind, resting bright and clear, unmoved by anything.

Thus the different experiences are illustrated by individual examples.

The Measure of Accomplishment of Shamatha and its Benefits

The Way Shamatha is Accomplished and the Signs of Correct Mental Engagement

Shamatha is accomplished when suppleness is brought to perfection. The signs are bliss, clarity and no concepts of designations, as if merged with space.

Even if one has accomplished the fourth mental engagement and the ninth mental abiding, if one has not also attained suppleness of body and mind, it is not perfect shamatha. The *Sutra Unraveling the Thought* says:

> "Oh Bhagavan, from the moment a Bodhisattva turns his mind inwardly, focusing on mind, until he attains suppleness of body and mind, what is this mental engagement called? Maitreya, this is not shamatha, but should be known to be the associated mental factor of belief, which is a similitude of shamatha."

And the *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras* says:

> "From familiarity with shamatha comes non-application; from this comes the attainment of great physical and mental suppleness, which is known as 'having mental engagement'."

Mental engagement is, in this context, shamatha. In short, shamatha is explained as being suppleness, which is workability of body and mind. Therefore, until that is attained, the samadhi is not actual shamatha, but is included in the levels of the desire realm and is known as "the one-pointedness of a mind of the desire realm."

Suppleness is referred to in the *Compendium of Knowledge* as follows:

> "What is suppleness? It is that which dispels all hindrances to workability of body and mind, since it breaks the continuity of physical and mental rigidity."

"Physical and mental rigidity" refers to the inability to use body and mind for whatever virtuous purpose one wishes. The remedy to this is suppleness, where the body and mind, being free from rigidity, are completely workable, when employed in virtue.

Furthermore, if one exerts oneself to remove the affliction of obstructing physical rigidity, one becomes free from unworkable states such as heaviness etc. and the body becomes light, as if made of cotton-wool. This is workability of body. Similarly, it one makes effort to remove the affliction of mental rigidity, one becomes free from the inability to take joy in correct meditation and one can concentrate without hindrance, which is workability of mind.

Mental suppleness arises first, and by its power, a particular prana flows throughout the body, causing the overcoming of physical rigidity and the attainment of physical suppleness. This is the explanation given in the Levels of Hearers. This physical suppleness is a particular and extremely pleasant inner physical tactile sensation, but not a mental factor.

As to the manner of development of suppleness, it is explained in the Levels of Hearers as follows: First a subtle experience of suppleness arises, which is difficult to recognize, and then a more obvious one, which is easier to recognize; after this, great bliss and joy pervade both body and mind. At that point, one feels very confident due to this joy and, by continuing to meditate without attachment to it, eventually the 'shadow-like suppleness" will arise, by the power of which one attains shamatha.

Having perfected suppleness, the measure of accomplishment of shamatha is that one abides free from laxity and agitation, unhindered by inner or outer distraction, the concentration being naturally stable and clear. The attainment of this mental engagement results in the attainment of the lesser level of a mind of the form realm, as well as the physical and mental suppleness and the one-pointedness of that same realm; and by means of the path of the truths and they attributes or of the coarse and subtle levels of the concentrations, one is able to purify the afflictions. When resting in equipoise, suppleness of body and mind arises very quickly and the five obstructions such as longing for sense objects, sleep, etc. for the most part do not occur. Upon rising from meditation, one may occasionally experience suppleness of body and mind. This is explained in the Levels of Hearers.

The signs of correct mental engagement are: the bliss of physical and mental suppleness; extraordinarily clear appearances, such as visibility of subtle particles; and no concepts of the ten designations — the five sense objects such as form etc., the three times, male and female — as if mind had merged with space. Due to this experience, there is no feeling of the body during the absorption phase and mind is merged with space; upon rising from meditation, one feels as if the body had suddenly reappeared.

The Necessity of Accomplishing Shamatha

> **It is the foundation of all the concentrations taught in the Sutras and Tantras, and it suppresses all suffering and afflictions.**

This ultimate shamatha, which is the attainment of suppleness, is the foundation of all the concentrations, whether with or without an object, taught in the Sutras and Tantra, just as a fertile field is the ground for the desired crop. This samadhi has also the power to suppress and pacify all evident suffering and afflictions. Furthermore, the realization of the genuine suchness or selflessness just as it is depends solely on the phase of absorption.

It is said in the *Stages of Meditation I*:

> "A mind not resting in equipoise will not know the genuine, just as it is. The Bhagavan also has said that by resting in equipoise, the genuine will be known just as it is."

Part Three: Vipashyana

The Prerequisites for Vipashyana

The prerequisites for vipshyana are to rely on a wise person and to seek the view by listening extensively and reflecting accordingly.

In his *Stages of Meditation II*, Kamalashila says:

> "What are the prerequisites for vipashyana? To rely on a wise teacher, to spare no effort in listening extensively, and to reflect accordingly."

Relying on a scholar who has full knowledge of the meaning of the teachings, one listens to authentic treatises and develops the view, i.e. the understanding of suchness, through the superior knowledge arising from listening and reflecting; such are the indispensable prerequisites for vipashyana. This is because without an unmistaken view, it is impossible to give rise to the realization of vipashyana. Moreover, it is necessary to rely on the definitive rather than on the provisional teachings in order to develop such a view; thus, an understanding of the deep definitive teachings must be preceded by a knowledge of the differences between these two levels of teaching. Furthermore, one should seek the view, that is, the understanding of profound emptiness, by relying on the genuine traditions founded by Nagarjuna and Asanga.

The Particular Types of Vipashyana

The types are:

- **The non-buddhists' contemplation of the peaceful and coarse levels;**
- **The shravakas' and pratyekabuddhas' contemplation of the four noble truths and their attributes;**
- **And the paramitayana's contemplation of emptiness, which in the mantrayana is taught to be endowed with bliss.**

The common preparatory stages are similar to those of the mundane path; however, those who have entered the mantrayana and the others do not strive for them.

The classification of vipashyana in terms of types is as follows;

i) Mundane vipashyana, which suppresses evident afflictions, and consists in contemplating the higher and lower levels as peaceful and coarse respectively—this is common to both buddhist and non-buddhist systems;
ii) The Shravakas' and Pratyekabuddhas' practice of contemplating the four noble truths and their sixteen attributes such as impermanence, etc.;

iii) The Paramitayana's contemplation of emptiness; and
iv) The Mantrayana teaching according to which emptiness is endowed with bliss.

The latter three types are supramundane vipashyana, which completely eradicates afflictions. The way to accomplish the actual concentrations, common to buddhist and non-buddhist systems, by means of the seven preparatory stages of which the first is shamatha, has been described in the chapter dealing with the mundane path. However, those who have entered the Mantrayana and those who have realized the outstanding view of the Paramitayana do not particularly strive for these.

The Classification According to the Essential Nature

The classification is into:

- **The *four types of vipashyana investigating the essence*: discriminating, fully discriminating, examining, and analyzing;**
- **The *three gateways*: designations, thorough investigation, and individual analysis;**
- **And the *six investigations*: meaning, thing, character, direction, time and reasoning, the latter being of four kinds: the reasoning of dependence, of function, of logical proof, and of nature. Through these six, discrimination is applied to each and every phenomenon from form up to omniscience.**

What is mainly taught here is not the vipashyana of the high levels and paths, but the vipashyana to be practiced by ordinary persons. There are three main types of classification for this:

1. Firstly, according to the *Sutra Unraveling the Thought*, there is a classification known as the four types of vipashyana investigating the essence. These are discriminating and fully discriminating, each of which is divided into thoroughly examining and analyzing.

   - Discriminating involves focusing on the varieties of phenomena, distinguishing them into categories such as the aggregates, the elements and the entrances, and proceeding to a detailed subdivision of each.
   - Fully discriminating involves focusing on their mode of being and realizing the absence of a self of persons and of phenomena.
   - Examining and analyzing refer to the coarse and subtle aspects of discrimination respectively.

   The way of examining is described in the *Sutra Unraveling the Thought* as “fully examining, definitely examining, fully understanding and closely understanding.” This also applies to analyzing. Thus, the extensive classification involves sixteen subdivisions. The detailed presentation of these can be found in the *Levels of Hearers:*

"A classification similar to the one given in the *Sutra Unraveling the Thought* was given in the *Compendium of Knowledge*: "What is vipashyana? It is discriminating, fully discriminating, thoroughly examining and thoroughly analyzing phenomena; it is the remedy to rigidity and conceptuality, draws the mind away from the erroneous and settles it in that which is not erroneous."

2. Secondly, there is a three-fold classification of vipashyana known as the three gateways. The *Sutra Unraveling the Thought* says:

   "O Bhagavan, how many types of vipashyana are there? Maitreya, there are three: the one arising from designations, the one arising from thorough investigation, and the one arising from individual analysis.

   If one identifies those three in relation to meditation on selflessness, they are as follows:

   - One focuses on the recognition of selflessness, concentrating on its attributes, without making use of much logical argumentation;
   - One uses reasoning in order to ascertain what one formerly could not understand; and
   - One analyses repeatedly as before the meaning which has been ascertained.

3. Finally, there is a six-fold classification of vipashyana known as the six investigations. Here one thoroughly investigates the six aspects of phenomena, which are meaning, things, character, direction, time and reasoning; this is also a case of vipashyana arising from individual analysis:

   a. Investigation of meaning entails finding out the sense of a given word or phrase;
   b. Investigation of things entails classifying them as either internal or external;
   c. Investigation of character entails identifying the general (or abstract) and the specific (or concrete) character of phenomena, referred to as common and uncommon investigation respectively;
   d. Investigation of direction entails investigating what is unwholesome by considering its faults and shortcomings, and what is wholesome by considering its qualities and benefits;
   e. Investigation of time entails considering what has happened in the past, what will happen in the future and what takes place in the present;
   f. Investigation of reasoning is of four types:

      i. The reasoning of dependence refers to the investigation of the dependence of an effect upon causes and conditions for its arisal. In this context one investigates the deceptive, the ultimate and their basis of imputation individually;
      ii. The reasoning of function refers to the performance by each phenomenon of its own particular function: for example, fire burns, etc. Here one investigates by identifying the phenomenon, the function and their mutual relationship;

iii. The reasoning, of logical proof refers to establishing the validity of propositions in accordance with valid cognition. Here one investigates phenomena with respect to three types of valid cognition, namely, direct valid cognition, inferential valid cognition and the valid cognition of trustworthy scriptures;
iv. The reasoning of nature refers to investigating phenomena in terms of their conventional nature, e.g. fire being hot, water wet, etc.; their inconceivable nature; and, their abiding nature. One accepts these natures as such and does not look for other reasons for their being so.

Thus, by means of the six investigations, one discriminates and comprehends each and every phenomenon, from form up to omniscience, whether afflicted or pure.

The six investigations should be known as three: the meaning, the mode of being and the varieties.

The six investigations should be known as three: the meaning, the mode of being and the varieties. Vipashyana can also be condensed into preparatory or "analytic" and actual or "unfluctuating."

This six-fold presentation of vipashyana can be condensed into three main categories which are what a yogi should know:

1. the meaning of words,
2. the varieties of phenomena and
3. their mode of being.

The first of these corresponds to the first investigation; the second corresponds to the investigation of things in general and of the specific character of phenomena; and the third corresponds to the last three investigations as well as to that of the general character of phenomena.

The three gateways are the entrances to the four vipashyanas explained at first, and the method of investigation was presented as six; therefore the three gateways and the six investigations are included in the four vipashyanas.

Vipashyana can also be condensed into preparatory or *analytic* and actual or *non-fluctuating*.

The Way to Meditate

The way to meditate is to analyze selflessness by means of superior knowledge, and then to rest in a state free from mental fabrications. Non-conceptual images are the

basis for analysis; having identified the particular object, one cuts through misconceptions regarding its qualities.

If one has no understanding of the view of selflessness, whichever type of meditation one may do will be mistaken with respect to suchness; therefore, it is necessary to establish the view. On the other hand, even though one may have an intellectual understanding of the view, if one does not rest within that understanding, suchness will not have been meditated upon. Therefore, one first analyses selflessness by means of superior knowledge and then rests within the sphere of complete freedom from mental fabrications.

Furthermore, if the ability to rest in equipoise decreases due to extensive analytical meditation, one should emphasize stabilizing meditation, and thus restore the abiding aspect. If one loses interest in analysis due to too much stabilizing meditation, one should go back to analytical meditation. Thus shamatha and vipashyana are said to be most effective when practiced equally in this way.

The method explained here, namely to analyze the object of meditation by means of discriminating knowledge and finally to rest in a state free of mental fabrications, is common to all systems of tenets. Moreover, according to the Gelug tradition, during the actual phase of equipoise, the mode of apprehending the object is repeatedly brought to mind.

The Actual Meditation on Vipashyana

When meditating on shamatha, due to the concentration of mind, many images appear which may or may not be similar to what is found in the external world. These are known as "non-analytical images."

In the practice of vipashyana as well, such images arise due to the force of shamatha, and are then taken as the basis for individual analysis; thus the analysis is not actually directed towards the outside, since the mind is solely turned inwards. When analyzing these images arising out of samadhi, it is necessary to begin by focusing on each object individually with discriminating knowledge, since without identifying a particular object, it is not possible to cut through misconceptions regarding its qualities. Therefore, one begins by clearly bringing to mind the object regarding which one wishes to eliminate misconceptions, and proceeds to examine it through perfect discriminating knowledge, thus ascertaining its lack of inherent existence. Then, grasping the object of samadhi (i.e. the non-analytical image) undistractedly, one should realize its being mere appearance, empty of inherent existence.

Thus, samadhi and superior knowledge are unified, being focused on the same object. As said in the *Compendium of Knowledge*: "Samadhi and superior knowledge have the same object of observation."

The nature of the percept is understood to be empty like space; the perceiver is examined as to origin, abiding, shape, etc.; discriminating knowledge itself, like a fire

produced by rubbing wood, vanishes in the expanse of "not finding"; thus one rests free of grasping.

While resting in equipoise on form etc., one also realizes its empty nature by means of discriminating knowledge, and remains in that state without being attentive to the attributes of the object. One begins by familiarizing oneself with this practice, and as a result one comes to cognize emptiness as if suspended in the midst of space, with no reference even to the nature of mere percept. This is the yoga of non-referential percept and is the external aspect of meditation, i.e. meditation on appearance and emptiness as inseparable.

The internal aspect refers to the perceiver. When for example anger arises in consciousness, one should identify it and examine it with discriminating knowledge. First, one looks for the cause of its arising, then whether it dwells within or without, and if it has any shape or color; finding nothing whatsoever, one rests in equipoise within that understanding. This method is to be applied to whichever of the six root afflictions may arise, as well as to neutral thoughts, etc. In short, whatever type of thought arises, one should be aware of it and meditate as described above. This is the yoga of non-referential perceiver and is the internal meditation on awareness and emptiness as inseparable.

Finally, the object examined "and discriminating knowledge itself, just as a fire produced by rubbing wood together, vanish into the sphere of not finding." At that point, one rests in a state free of grasping.

The main points regarding these two yogas are given by Atisha in his *Quintessential Instructions on the Middle Way* as follows:

> "Thus, the mind of the past has ceased altogether; the mind of the future has not yet arisen and the present mind is extremely difficult to examine; this is because, just like space, it has neither shape nor color, and therefore cannot be established as truly existent. Alternatively, this lack of true existence can be proven by reasons such as "neither-one-nor-many" and "non-production," or because it is by nature luminosity, etc. Thus, one investigates with the sharp weapon of reasoning and realizes this absence of true existence of the present mind."
>
> "In this way, when neither percept nor perceiver can be established as anything whatsoever, discriminating knowledge as well is understood to lack inherent existence. For example, by rubbing together two pieces of wood, fire is produced, which in turn consumes that very wood; as a result, the fire itself subsides. Likewise, when all abstract and concrete phenomena are established as non-inherently existent, then discriminating knowledge itself is beyond duality, it cannot be established as anything whatsoever, it is luminosity beyond mental fabrications. Therefore all conditions such as laxity and agitation are cleared away. At that point, awareness is totally free of concepts, nothing is perceived, and all recollection and mental activity have been

eliminated. For as long as the enemy or thief of conceptuality has not arisen, let awareness rest in this manner."

The Measure of Accomplishment

When suppleness is obtained, vipashyana is said to be accomplished.

When practicing analytical meditation by means of discriminating knowledge, until suppleness is attained, one only cultivates a similitude of vipashyana; when suppleness has arisen, one has achieved vipashyana proper.

The essential nature of suppleness and the way it arises are as previously explained in the section dealing with shamatha.

According to the *Sutra Unraveling the Thought* and the *Quintessential Instructions on the Prajnaparamita* by Shantipa, as well as other scriptures, vipashyana is said to be accomplished when suppleness can be induced by the power of analytical meditation itself. This applies to both kinds of vipashyana, namely the one focusing on the varieties of phenomena and the one focusing on their mode of being.

Part Four: The Training in Shamatha and Vipashyana Conjoined

The Actual Method of Training

Though Madhyamikas differ with respect to the method of development, they agree on what is to be developed, namely shamatha, vipashyana and the two together; these three are to be practiced in succession and the main point is non-distraction.

With respect to achieving the non-dual wisdom resulting from the conjoined practice of shamatha and vipashyana, the various Madhyamika masters explain the method of development differently. However, they all agree regarding what is to be developed, namely the union of shamatha and vipashyana.

According to the master Bhavaviveka, one first develops shamatha by contemplating ugliness, love, etc., after which vipashyana is generated by the power of reasoning. However, according to the master Shantideva, one begins with cultivating shamatha by means of meditation on bodhicitta, and then generates the superior knowledge of vipashyana by focusing on emptiness. According to the master Kamalashila in his *Stages of Meditation II*, one begins with developing shamatha by using an object of observation such as an image of the Buddha, etc., and then proceeds to accomplish vipashyana by analysing the nature of that very object. The master Chandrakirti considers that both shamatha and vipashyana are to be accomplished in dependence upon the view based on the analysis of suchness.

All of these methods are correct, unerring paths; all explanations agree in that these three practices, i.e. shamatha, vipashyana and their conjunction should be definitely accomplished in succession since they are related as cause and effect; and in all of them, the main point is an undistracted, one-pointed mind.

The Union of Shamatha and Vipashyana

When practicing meditation with designations, the full discrimination of phenomena focuses on the images arising out of shamatha; this is union. When non-conceptual vipashyana is attained, they have become one essence; thus they are unified.

At which point can shamatha and vipashyana be said to be unified? When practicing shamatha and vipashyana with designations, both the non-discursive mind that focuses on the images arising out of shamatha, and the realization of the vipashyana which fully discriminates phenomena come together in a natural way - this itself is the union of shamatha and vipashyana.

Here, when both non-conceptual shamatha and non-conceptual vipashyana are attained, they have become one essence; therefore they are known as “unified.” *The Stages of Meditation I* says

> “When focusing on the essencelessness of all phenomena in a state free of laxity and agitation, etc., where awareness rests without any conceptual effort, the path of unifying shamatha and vipashyana is completed.”

The Fruition

> **This is the genuine samadhi, by the perfection of which non-abiding nirvana, freedom from the bondage of existence and peace, is attained.**

Such a samadhi, which is the union of shamatha and vipashyana, is authentic samadhi. Maitripa's *Commentary on the Ten Suchnesses* says:

> “The phrase ‘by correct, authentic samadhi' means that the conjoined practice of shamatha and vipashyana is correct, authentic samadhi; thus, this is what accomplishes the path.”

The perfection of this samadhi results in the attainment of non-abiding nirvana, freedom from the bondage of conditioned existence and peace. The *Sutra Unravelling the Thought* says:

> “If the practitioner familiarizes himself with shamatha and vipashyana, he will be freed from the fetters of rigidity and conceptuality.”

In the post-meditative phase, with the understanding of the illusion-like nature of all phenomena, one should exert oneself in applying skillful means such as making offerings to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, practicing compassion towards all sentient beings, dedicating all virtue etc.

Part Five: A General Summary of the Categories

Brief Listing of the Categories

The Different Categories of Shamatha

In brief, the meditations on ugliness, love, the cycles of breath, pratyahara, nadis, prana, generating phase, mantra recitation, resting the mind naturally - all are but methods for developing the concentration of shamatha.

In brief, in the common path, one meditates on the nine aspects of ugliness; one trains the mind in love and compassion, and concentrates on the breath by counting its cycles of rising, falling and resting. In the Vajrayana, there are many methods such as the instructions of pratyahara, by which the ordinary connection between the sense faculties and their object is individually cut through and distraction is eliminated; visualization of the nadis as hollow pathways; prana-yoga; concentration on the bliss arising through the melting of bindu; visualization of deities, and mantra recitation. Finally (in the practices of Mahamudra and Maha-ati) one rests the mind in a natural, spacious and uncontrived state. All these are nothing but methods for developing shamatha and must begin with concentration on the object, in accordance with the faculties of each practitioner.

The Different Categories of Vipashyana

Analysis of definiendum, definition and example, and of general and specific character; dependent arising; the five reasons; pointing out the nature of mind by means of scripture, reasoning, spiritual influence and symbols - all are methods for developing supreme discriminating knowledge in accordance with the faculties of individuals.

When practicing vipashyana, one uses methods such as the analysis of definiendum, definition and supporting example, as in the study of valid cognition; analysis of the general and specific character of phenomena, as in the Abhidharma; investigation of the twelve links of dependent arising in the order of production and in the reverse order; analysis of the cause, the effect, the combination of these and the essential nature of a given phenomenon, as well as interdependence, these being the five great reasons of the Madhyamika tradition by means of which mental fabrications are severed; and various ways of pointing out the nature of mind directly and nakedly, as for example scriptures, reasoning, spiritual influence and symbols. All these are gradual methods for developing supreme discriminating knowledge in accordance with the faculties of individual practitioners. Since one can accomplish the samadhi of shamatha and vipashyana by any of these methods, it is not necessary for a single practitioner to use all of them together.

The Accomplishment of Shamatha and Vipashyana

By Means of Analytical and Stabilizing Meditation

Shamatha and vipashyana can be equally accomplished by either analytical or stabilizing meditation.

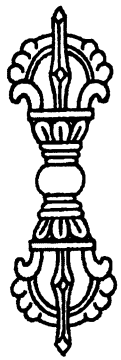
The accomplishment of shamatha and vipashyana by conjoining analytical and stabilizing meditation was described above. Moreover, if practiced profoundly, either or these types of meditation will result in the achievement of both samadhis; therefore, with regard to their essential point, analytical and stabilizing meditations are ultimately the same.

Supplementary Explanation of the Three Stages of Concentration

First by child-like concentration, one perceives signs such as smoke, etc.; by the discrimination of phenomena, the sameness of pairs of opposites is realized and supreme concentration is accomplished; by focusing on suchness, all phenomena are seen to be emptiness, which in turn is realized to be peace by nature.

According to the scriptures, there are three stages to the development of concentration. First, by means of child-like concentration, the mind is slightly withdrawn from external distraction; at this stage one starts perceiving the "ten signs of empty form" such as smoke, etc. Then, by means of the concentration which discriminates phenomena, the illusion-like interdependent manifestations and the total pacification of mental fabrications are realized as "one taste." By this the mind acquires the ability to genuinely rest in the sameness of all pairs of opposites, so that the concentration has now become unmistaken and supreme. Finally, through the concentration focusing on suchness, one knows all dualistic phenomena to be emptiness, and realizing this emptiness to be by nature, primordially, peace, the effortless nature is accomplished.

This completes the first part being the explanation of the stages of meditation of shamatha and vipashyana, the basis of all samadhis.



Wild Awakening

The Heart of Mahamudra & Dzogchen

DZOGCHEN PONLOP

SHAMBHALA • *Boston & London* • 2003

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: nondistraction, nonmeditation, and nonfabrication.

Nondistraction

Nondistraction, 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 nondistraction.

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.

THREE METHODS OF RESTING

The great masters of the lineage introduced three different methods that can lead us to the point of resting. When we contemplate and work with these three processes, we discover for ourselves how to actually arrive at that point.

Abrupt Cutting of Sudden Thoughts

The first method begins with developing watchfulness. We begin by simply watching our minds. We are not "meditating"; we are just watching our minds in the same way that we would watch the ocean. When the ocean of our mind is very calm and still, we rest in that state. Then, a karmic wind appears and blows across the ocean. It blows from different directions, creating beautiful waves. We simply watch the arising of the waves without getting caught up in their movements. We watch the arising of each thought and cut right through it. We do not follow it. We cut it and go back to watching. When another thought arises, we cut through it in the same way, at the very moment of its arising. We do not let it go further. We cut it in that moment and then we rest and watch again. We pressure ourselves to cut through the arising of each and every sudden thought. We continue to do this, on and on, with different winds and different waves until we are completely exhausted.

We are going through a process. The first step is cutting through, which brings us to the fundamental state of dharmakaya or nonexistence. We are working very hard to cut through thought at the moment of its arising, which is a very effective method of developing clarity. We develop this clarity through our practice of awareness and mindfulness. There is a strong emphasis on paying attention and concentrating one-pointedly in order to see every movement of thought, recognize it, and cut through it. When we allow a thought to develop, it is difficult to cut through it.

When we practice this method of recognizing and cutting

through, we are not simply sitting there, letting thoughts come and go. It is not as simple as that. We are entering a different stage, one that requires more directness and a greater exercise of energy and power. This level of practice takes us to the peak of intensity—intensity of cutting, intensity of letting go. Simply sitting and letting go of our thoughts is too passive. It puts us to sleep. According to such a method, letting go is like a lullaby for our thoughts. Our thoughts might go to sleep, but they will come back.

When cutting thoughts, we are not suppressing them or regarding them as bad. We are not saying, "I do not want this thought." We are not cutting in that sense, but rather in the sense of recognizing the arising of thought itself. "Recognizing" does not mean labeling, identifying, or following after these thoughts. It is seeing a thought's arising. It is not seeing that there is "something there" or that "something is going on." That would be very vague. Instead, we have to be more clear and precise with each particular experience of thought, no matter how it arises. Whether it is in the form of anger or a label, we have to be with it. Recognizing means just that: being with the thought, seeing it clearly and then cutting through it. Then we go back to being a skillful watcher. The practice of watching is like going to a beautiful cliff and looking out over the ocean. If you know how to enjoy the view, then the arising of thoughts is so beautiful. However, if you become attached to the waves and jump off the cliff to be with one of them, then you are done for. You will no longer be able to enjoy the view of the dancing waves that come after. You will have no time to enjoy that view because you will be fully enveloped in the first wave.

If we follow our conceptual patterns, then we end up in the beautiful world of samsara. When we know how to cut through and how to reach the level of dharmakaya, or the great shunyata, then later we will come to see thoughts and emotions as dharmakaya. We have not reached that point yet. Thus far, we have been considering the first instruction: pointing out the coemergent mind as dharmakaya.

Letting Be Whatever Arises

We apply the second method when we have reached the state of exhaustion. After working very hard, after exerting ourselves to cut through concept after concept, labeling thoughts and gossiping mind, we are totally wiped out and ready to relax. At this stage, we let our thoughts and perceptions remain as they are. We do not let them gain power over us and control our minds, but at the same time we do not stop them. Maintaining the simple awareness of mindfulness, we let them be in their natural state.

At this point, we allow our thoughts a certain sense of freedom. With the first method, we have been trying to catch the arising of every thought with an acute sense of awareness and watchfulness, struggling persistently to catch each thought and cut through it. There is a sense of catching our thoughts with a net, as if we were catching fish. First, we have to collect our thoughts into the net of our awareness so that we can see them with greater clarity and stability. We are trying to develop a sense of direct relationship with our thoughts. However, when it comes to the second point, we are cutting through the idea of the net and the idea of netting our thoughts; instead, we are letting thoughts be in their own wildness.

The method at this point is simply to tell our thoughts to be whatever they want to be. We give our thoughts permission to fly wherever they want to fly, like a kite. There are three elements necessary for flying this kite: the strongly blowing wind of karma; the present arising of consciousness, which is the kite itself; and the string of our awareness that is tied to the kite. When the two opportunities of wind and kite come together, we try to let the kite fly the way it wants to fly, the way it wants to maneuver in space. We let go and give our thoughts total freedom. However, this kite is tied by a tiny string so that our minds do not go completely crazy. What we are trying to do through this method is simply to leave thoughts in their own state, rather than trying to transform them into another state of being.

Thoughts are born with a certain suit or a particular attire. Sometimes we do not like the attire very much, or we see the possibility of improving it or making fun of it. So we exercise our right to change the attire of the kite. We try to dress up our thoughts in different ways, so thoughts do not really remain as they are. At this point, our thoughts become totally fabricated, totally changed. At first, we start out with the basic kite, which is made of paper and which has a natural sense of beauty as it is. However, we want to paint the kite a different color, and as we paint it with our thick brush, the kite becomes heavier and heavier. We end up adding more colors, more paper, dressing our kite up as if we were trying to imprison it, until eventually the kite can no longer fly. It cannot exercise its full energy and power in the sky. Similarly, we do not give our thoughts the chance to exercise their nature in the great space of dharmakaya, which is their right. What we are trying to do with this second method is to let be whatever arises. We are trying to let the kite be in its own state and let it fly as far as it wants or can. At this point of our practice, we let the kite fly in the great space of dharmakaya.

However, there is a simple sense of awareness, which is the string tied between us and the kite. We need this tie of basic awareness in the very moment of flying the kite, in the moment of totally letting go. We can imagine how the kite would fly if we took off all the clothing we have put on it. Letting our thoughts fly in the space of dharmakaya, we can see their lightness; we can see their transparent quality, which has a certain sense of embracing the sky or the space. There is a sense of all-encompassing space surrounding this beautiful kite, no matter how it appears. This letting go is simply letting go of our thoughts without restricting them further, without changing their identity and without following or fantasizing about our thoughts. The instruction here is to simply stop clothing this kite and simply let the kite be a kite. Let it fly in the space where there is no end to be reached.

Letting go is not simply a matter of watching our thoughts, because watching itself has a certain quality of identifying a thought.

We are not only watching our thoughts; we are also letting them be what they are. This method has a greater sense of freeing our minds from our attachment to samsara.

Being Skilled in the Key Points of the Methods of Resting

With the third method, we develop the skill of resting in genuine balance. Various analogies are used to illustrate this method of resting, one of which is a bundle of straw: Not being too tight or too loose, one should relax with full mindfulness and rest like a bundle of straw fallen open. In this example, our discursive thoughts and concepts are like a bundle of straw that is pulled together quite tightly with only a tiny bit of string. When we are tied up this way, we do not have the energy to cut through this little string and fall back into this natural state of resting. The point here is that we have a bundle of straw that is already tied tightly together, and through the process of watching our thoughts, we are constantly adding more and more straws into this bundle. We are stretching the string that binds the straw to the breaking point. At a certain point, the string breaks; it naturally cuts itself. We do not need to use scissors. Then, when the straw falls, it simply falls. It does so effortlessly. The individual straws do not have preconceived notions of how they should fall down; they do not organize themselves to fall this way or that way. The straw falls freely and naturally and comes to rest. Similarly, we have to have a natural sense of falling and coming to rest without any planning.

In this state of resting, we "space out with clarity." We do not simply blank out. There are two different ways of spacing out or being in the state of nonthought. The first is spacing out without clarity, or just blanking out, which is a state of ignorance. For example, we may get caught up in a state of thought and then blank out, after which we recognize, "Oh, for a moment I didn't have a thought." That only shows the extent of our ignorance. The second state of nonthought is spacing out with clarity. This state has a tremendous sense of luminosity and buddha energy. It also has its own self-recognition or self-awareness, without labels or terms. Therefore, we do not have the thought, "I didn't have a

thought" because there is already self-recognition.

When we space out with clarity, it is like the bundle of straw fallen open. We finally manage to discover that the string that is binding us together is only a tiny string and that, with a little effort of mindfulness, the string will break and we can fall back into our natural state of resting. The nature of the straw itself has never, from the beginning, been constrained or bound together. It has always been in the state of resting. In a similar way, natural mind has always been in the state of resting, of liberation, without any hope and fear. We are trying to return to that state. With this method, we cut through the string that binds the straw. Then we let ourselves fall back onto our cushions and we rest in that space. We fall back and rest without any sense of effort, without making any attempt to shape our experience. However, we should rest without hope of resting long and without fear of the string coming back to tie us up. This method is related to the stage of nonfabrication.

Through our practice of each of these methods, we are taking further steps on our path of meditation. We are trying to bring ourselves to the great shunyata, the dharmakaya, the ground Mahamudra, by cutting through the conceptual arising of thought. There can be a tremendous sense of clarity, which comes from the luminous aspect of our mind; and then, at that very moment, another thought arises. We need a little power, strength, and courage in order to cut through that thought. We cannot always be so weak—as fragile as the straw. It is not a big deal. It is the cutting of just one little string that leads us to the fundamental state of dharmakaya.

The third method is also taught through the analogy of spinning wool into yarn, which demonstrates a slightly different approach. Brahmins are said to be very clever and cautious and have a skillful way of spinning yarn. They do not waste anything. It is said that our meditation should be like the Brahmin's method for making thread. No wool is wasted, not even a single strand. At the same time, the wool is spun in such a way that the thread is neither too tight, which makes it difficult to weave, nor too loose, which makes it useless. Instead, the degree of tension in the spinning is managed with precision so that the

thread is spun very properly. In a similar way, when we practice the methods of shamatha, we have to balance everything. We should not be too stiff in our physical posture, and our minds should not be too focused or too tense. At the same time, our mental concentration should not be totally loose, which would be like not spinning anything at all. It would be like merely taking the wool out of its basket, which would serve no purpose. In a similar way, if we think, "I just have to relax and not do anything," then we will not enter into the actual state of meditation. Thus, developing a sense of balance is a key point in knowing how to rest properly. That is why it is called being skilled in the key points of the methods of resting.

GENERAL TECHNIQUES OF SHAMATHA MEDITATION

In the Mahamudra tradition, the descriptions of the shamatha meditation practices are very detailed, and the actual practices become quite subtle. The three main classifications of shamatha being presented here are shamatha with focal support, shamatha without focal support, and shamatha of essence.

Shamatha with Focal Support

It is important to train in the method of shamatha with focal support so that we can work with sensory objects and sensory pleasures. Working with these objects takes us to a deeper level of shamatha experience and extends our awareness further into the world. This method is the very beginning of Mahamudra shamatha.

In this first type of shamatha meditation, "support" refers to an external basis for the development of shamatha. Supports are divided into two kinds: pure and impure. In either case, supports are external objects of visual perception that are used as a basis for bringing the mind to rest.

Impure supports refer to neutral objects such as a flower, a pebble, or a small piece of wood. We place one of these objects in our line of vision so that we are looking slightly downward, along our nose. Generally, the object would be placed on a table or other surface in

front of us. We then relax our breathing and direct our attention one-pointedly to our visual consciousness of the object. When our mind comes to rest, we mix our mind with our perception of the object. This technique brings about the experiences associated with shamatha meditation very quickly and in a very forceful manner.

This can be a very relaxing meditation. For example, you can go to a beautiful park and meditate on a flower, a tree, a lake, or simply on the clouds. You can pick any specific focal object and meditate on that. This can be a very helpful practice because you do not have to remain inside, sitting and watching your breath or a particular object, such as the form of a deity. You can be anywhere in the world and take any object as an object of meditation. This is one way to bring practice into your everyday life. For example, when you are sitting on a bench waiting for a bus or waiting for your date in a restaurant, you can simply focus on any object before you and rest your mind on it.

A pure support refers to an object that is not neutral but instead has a spiritual or positive significance, such as a statue of the Buddha or an image of one of the enlightened masters or bodhisattvas. These supports are considered pure because they usually bring us more vipashyana—more awareness of enlightenment—than do ordinary, "impure" objects. The act of looking at a mundane object such as a pen, pebble, or flower, usually gives rise to some quality of emotion because we are so caught up in dealing with these objects in everyday life.

Place the statue or image in your line of vision, just as you placed the pebble before. You can either direct your attention to a bare, visual perception of successive details of a statue or to the entire statue all at once. For example, direct your attention first to the lotus pedestal or seat, then to the body of the figure, then to the crown protuberance at the top of the head. Regardless of which approach you take in directing your attention, the use of a pure support in this manner also generates a very forceful and particular type of shamatha experience.

The practice of shamatha with a focal object sounds quite basic and not at all profound. However, when you actually engage in the practice, the experiences that arise through such meditation can be

quite extraordinary. This method of practice is particularly useful because we live in a world of substantial materialism: There is a substantial material world surrounding us all the time. When we develop a certain level of understanding, insight, and meditative experience based on the shamatha techniques that use a substantial focal object, we have a greater chance of giving rise to a panoramic vipashyana experience of the outer and inner world.

Whether our meditation object is pure or impure, our mind should be totally free from thoughts. We simply blend our mind with the breath and with the object of our perception. We become one with that space and that experience, and we rest in that space without conceptualizing. We do not analyze the object in front of us. For example, we do not say, "Well, this is a black stone from the Rocky Mountains" or "This is a white stone from Kathmandu." We do not analyze an image of Buddha by thinking about how good the artist was or how colorful the painting is or whether or not we like it. We must remember that the purpose of using the focal object is simply to rest our mind.

Shamatha without Focal Support

The second type of shamatha meditation is shamatha without focal support. Rather than relying on an external, physically present support as a basis for directing our mind, here we rely on the support of an imagined image or a visualization, which may be external or internal.

External Visualization

As with the earlier method of shamatha with focal support, there are two principal variations used in this method. In the first of these, we direct our mind to a particular aspect of an image; in the second, we direct our mind to the entire image. Developing a clear and stable visualization may take some time—an hour, days, or months.

In the first variation, we imagine the form of the Buddha in the space in front of us, progressively generating the full image from the ground upward, starting with the lotus seat. The first step is to establish

the lotus clearly. Then go on to each part, focusing separately and clearly. Continue to visualize individual aspects until you can generate the whole image of the Buddha clearly. In the second variation, direct your attention to the entire image all at once; for example, the overall image of the form of the Buddha. However, this is difficult in the beginning, so start simply and focus on a single detail, such as his hand or his begging bowl. It is not necessary to visualize the whole body at once.

The most common visualization used is the form of the Buddha. However, in this technique, additional methods are used to train one's mind. These are applied once the basic visualization of the Buddha becomes stable. For example, we gradually reduce the size of the image until it becomes as small as a sesame seed. Once we have visualized this, we make sure that all the details of its appearance, such as the eyes and ears, are as clear as they were when it was larger. Then we make the image very large—as large as a mountain—while maintaining the whole image in our mind. These are methods for enhancing the clarity and stability of the visualized image.

Internal Visualization

In the preceding descriptions, you visualize a form external to yourself. For example, you may be seeing an image of the Buddha as if it were in front of you. Another variation of this method is to visualize an image inside your body, such as a sphere of light in various colors, or an emblem such as a vajra. You might also visualize your own body in an enlightened form. The image of the Buddha is often used for this practice. For Vajrayana Buddhists, it is especially important to meditate on an image of the Buddha because there is a tendency to become fascinated by colorful deities and gurus.

To practice this method, choose an image that makes you feel comfortable or that brings a sense of peace to your heart. Use an image that really generates some feelings. There are many beautiful images of Buddha in Indian art. Some of these images are livelier and more human than the Tibetan paintings. First, concentrate on looking at an actual image for some time, and then create the visualization in your

mind, following the instructions for building the visualization from the ground upward and for reducing and enlarging the size of the image while maintaining the clarity of detail.

There are a number of other methods of visualization within the overall category of shamatha meditation without a focal support. However, what we are doing in all of these practices is training our mind to focus, to relax, and to experience the quality of space.

Shamatha of Essence

Shamatha of essence is simply resting in the basic continuity of mind. That resting is explained as the subsiding or dissolving of the waves of thought into the ocean of the all-basis, or the basic mind, which is neither virtuous nor unvirtuous. "Waves of thought" refers to the dualistic concepts of subject and object, or experiencer and experienced, that agitate our minds. The subsiding of thoughts of subject and object is significant here because at this level of shamatha there is no object of meditation. Up to this point, we have been describing techniques in which there was an object toward which the mind was directed—that object being considered separate, to some extent. Here, the concept of a subjective cognition being directed to an object that is separate from it is relinquished. This act of relinquishment leaves the mind in a state similar to an ocean without waves. The ocean remains calm, and in that calmness there is an experience of profundity—one that is regarded as a bridge between shamatha and vipashyana meditation.

There are further practices of Mahamudra shamatha, which are generally communicated within the context of one's individual guru-disciple relationship.

The Mirror of Mindfulness

By Nyoshul Khen Rinpoche

From *Perfect Clarity: A Tibetan Buddhist Anthology of Mahamudra and Dzogchen*

Translated by Erik Perna Kunsang

Homage [115] to the king of self-existing mindfulness.

Look here, all vajra friends !
I am the vajra of mindfulness. When seeing me be mindful !
Look into the essence of the immovable mind!
I am the mirror of mindfulness clearly showing your mindful attention.

Mindfulness is the root of Dharma.
Mindfulness is the main part of the practice.
Mindfulness is the stronghold of the mind.
Mindfulness is the aid to spontaneously aware wisdom.

Without mindfulness one is carried away by laziness.
A lack of mindfulness is the creator of all faults.
A lack of mindfulness doesn't accomplish any purpose.
A lack of mindfulness is like a heap of excrement.

To lack mindfulness is to sleep in an ocean of urine.
To lack mindfulness is to be like a heartless corpse.
Friends [116], please be mindful!

Through the aspiration of the supreme guru, may all friends attain firm mindfulness !

These words urging one to be mindful were composed by the stupid, bucktoothed ox, the bad monke Jamyang Dorje, and offered to his vajra friends. May it be virtuous!

POINTING OUT THE GREAT WAY

THE STAGES OF MEDITATION IN THE MAHĀMUDRĀ TRADITION

Daniel P. Brown, Ph.D.

Foreword by Robert A.F. Thurman

WISDOM PUBLICATIONS • BOSTON

> you are without representations *[dmigs med]*
> produced as entities. (JP, f. 36b–37a)

Jampel Pawo explains,

> You rely on representations for the purpose of generating being without representations [during deep concentration]. (JP, f. 37a)

IV. BEING-DONE-WITH THE ABSORBED SEED

When all simple appearance is reduced to its nonaggregated form, what does the practitioner take as the intended meditation object? Any particular attributes that might be taken as a support as they emanate from the seed become absorbed quickly back into the seed. At the lower limit of this absorptive tendency there is nothing but an undifferentiated, nonaggregated seed. There are no seemingly real things, such as stones or sticks, to take as supports. This condition of the seed is likened to vast space *(nam mkha'i lta bu)*. Space cannot be considered a support for meditation, but space can be taken as the intended meditation object. The practitioner is ready to practice Tilopa's space yoga *(nam mkha'i rnal 'byor)*.

Because space is very difficult to comprehend as a subtle, nonsupporting meditation object, space yoga is only practiced by highly capable individuals. Alternate objects may be used as supports in order to prepare less capable practitioners for these more subtle staying-calm practices.[368] Concentration on the breath *(rlung cad)* is commonly recommended.[369] The breath is considered to be a support *(rten)* by some, although it doesn't have the solidity of a substance of a stone, for example. The breath is considered to be a support because its coming-and-going movement *('ong ba dang 'gro ba)* can be held on to by the mind. At a later stage of concentration on the breath, when the coming-and-going movement of the breath settles into a prolonged total stillness between the cycles of the breath, or when the breath is intentionally held, focusing on the breath is like doing space yoga.

Any discussion of objects during this stage is a bit misleading. Not having a tangible perceptual or cognitive object is a boon, not a problem. The practitioner is clearing away the disorderly mental debris. He is preparing himself to observe the very functioning of the mind at its simpler levels. The former two supporting stages were largely preparatory. Now the practitioner can capitalize on his efforts. For the first time he is able to see the

mind clearly. In the third of the preliminaries, the mind-isolation exercise, the practitioner got a glimpse of the natural state of the mind free from ordinary thought processes and mental elaboration. Here, in the third of the concentration exercises, the practitioner gets a deeper glimpse into the mind's natural state, free from its coarse-level content, such as ordinary appearances and emotional states.

These exercises are best described as *being-done-with* (*zad pa;* JP, f. 39b; *zin byed;* WD, p. 650; TN, p. 656). The word *zad pa* (variation, *zin pa*), is the perfect tense of the verb *'dzad pa,* which means "to be done." The word means "to be done with or finished with, to end, to cease." It would be misleading to translate *zad pa* and *zin byed* as "having ceased," because subtle cognitive and perceptual events continue beyond this stage.[170] They are "done with" more in the sense that they are no longer bothersome to intense concentration. They are not obstacles *(sgrib pa).*

The practice entails being-done-with both coarse cognitions *(rtog pa)* and perceptions *(snang ba)* that still emanate from the seed. The habitual tendency of the mind is to construct rudimentary sensory information into patterns with particular attributes, which take shape in the inner mind as well as in the outer world. From the event-perspective, this meditation is a way of being-done-with this habitual tendency for mental construction. From the mind-perspective, this meditation stops the mind from roaming to an object (*sems yul la 'pyan ba;* JP, f. 39b).

Even where simple appearances remain largely in their nonaggregated state, the mind, at a subtle level, is constantly active in response to sense objects. Only by refusing to permit even the most subtle engagement of sense objects can such movement be stopped. In being-done-with sense perception, the practitioner turns away from coarse-level sensory and thought contents toward empty space. Performing complex psycho-physiological breath manipulations is another way of making the breath like space. Using either method, the purpose is to close the doors of the mind (*yid kyi kha sbyor du byas;* JP, f. 41a). From the mind-perspective, closing the perceptual doors means that when events occur, they are much less likely to distract concentration. From the event-perspective, closing the doors of the mind does not mean that perceptual events no longer occur. Subtle cognitive and perceptual events persist, while coarse-level complex and simple appearances are no longer constructed.

Space yoga affects both coarse-level cognition and perception.[171] The occurrence of ordinary cognition is interrelated with the breath. By calming the

breath, coarse-level cognitions, including any residual elaborated thinking and emotions, become relatively calm. The result is an experience of a relatively nonconceptual still state *(mi rtog pa).* Residual, fleeting thoughts no longer hinder concentration, and pass quickly.

In a specific sense, *cognition* refers only to what are classified as cognitive processes: thinking and emotions. In a general sense, *cognition* is used to cover all ordinary types of coarse-level mental content, including perceptual and sensory experiences. A nonconceptual still state, in one sense, means to be-done-with all coarse-level cognitive, emotional, sensory, and perceptual events, especially thought content. Because both the activity of the sense doors and the coarse-level cognitions constructed from this activity are done-with, this meditation is sometimes called *stopping the mind (sems med).*

As ordinary cognitive and perceptual events are done-with, concentration continues naturally without much distraction. Concentration remains one-pointedly and effortlessly on the intended object—space, the breath, or whatever. Trying to be undistracted and unobstructing in the former two stages of concentration, respectively, are types of artifical mental activity *(byas ba).* So long as the practitioner is engaged in any such activity, a subtle disturbance in concentration develops, which prevents the full development of one-pointed concentration. When the mind becomes calmer, the practitioner learns that there is no need to do anything for unfolding experience to remain unobstructed. Events become calm quickly, and hence become less interesting. The practitioner has learned to let the coarse contents of the mind go their own way *(rang lugs)* while becoming relatively indifferent to this content. The term *rang lugs* is composed of *rang,* which means "self or own," and *lugs,* which means "way or manner." It literally means to let something go its "own way." The term usually refers to mental processes. For example:

> The mind is set up from the perspective of its own way, so that it is without any support and does not obstruct any cognition that may be taken-to-mind. (TN, p. 289)

Here "its own way" means that the mind's natural concentrative and observational tendencies continue uninterruptedly, relatively indifferent to any coarse-level cognitive or constructed perceptual events that might occur along the way. Consider the following metaphor. Before any concentration

practice, the beginner is like someone drowning in the river of a distracted mind. The somewhat skilled practitioner begins to float by means of a supporting log held with concentration. Once accustomed to floating, the practitioner lets go of the supporting log and swims about in the very currents that previously threatened to drown him or her. At that point the practitioner swims with considerable skill, finally swimming to a calm, quiet shore. The practitioner can now see the entire stream, both its currents and its directions, from the perspective of letting it go its own way while remaining unaffected by it.

During the respective stages of skill practice the activity of coarse-level thought and perceptions were at first observed as emanating and then as becoming calm *(zhi ba)*. The former centrifugal tendencies predominated during the early phase of the skill practice, and the latter centripetal tendencies became somewhat apparent by the end of the skill practice. Predominance of the absorptive tendencies is a clear sign that the practitioner is transitioning to the done-with practice. Whereas the skill exercise focused upon the process of emanation, the done-with exercises focus upon the process of calming, as illustrated in Table 11.

Table 11: A Comparison of the Skilled-Concentration and Done-With Meditations in Terms of Activity

	Skill	Being-Done-With
Perspective	Event-perspective *(chos)*	Mind-perspective *(chos can)*
Vector of unfolding events	Emanating *('char ba)*	Calming *(zhi ba)*
Attributes	With *(mtshan ma)*	Without *(mtshan med)*

Recognizing arising events during the skill exercise brought forth a property of the mind's natural state known as *clarity*. A new term is introduced for another property of the mind's natural state that becomes more evident during the done-with practice, namely *awareness (rig pa)*. The term *rig pa* is difficult to translate. As a verb it is classified among many verbs pertaining to knowing. Yet, unlike most of these other verbs, such as *rtog pa*, which have negative connotations, *rig pa* always has a positive connotation. Awareness pertains to the mind-perspective. It is used wherever the events of the mind

are calm enough to reveal the mind's natural way of knowing, that is, knowing through nonconceptual, nonreactive awareness. At the coarse level of the mind, *awareness* is used when purification *(dag pa)*, cleansing *(sbyang ba)*, or calmness *(zhi ba)* are being discussed. *Clarity* is used in the opposite way, namely when events arise *('char ba)* or are born *(skye ba)* in the mind. At this level, the term *awareness* is used in conjunction with the phrase *without attributes (mtshan med)*, while *clarity* is used in contexts that imply the existence of perceptual or cognitive attributes (TN, p. 363). At the coarse level of mind, *awareness* is used for how the mind acquires knowledge, but only after a calm *(zhi ba)* state of mental activity has been achieved. As one text states, "At the time of calmness, there is simply appearance and awareness" (TN, p. 411). At the subtle level of the mind, once subtle cognitions *(phra ba'i rtog pa)* also become calm, the term *awareness* is used once again to convey the quality of the mind's direct knowing, once mental stability or equanimity has been achieved. At an even more advanced level of special-insight practices, the term *awareness* is used once again to convey the mind's direct knowing of dependent origination, namely the nontemporal or *always-here (ma skye ba)* condition of the natural mind. At the very advanced level of nonmeditation practice, the term *awareness-itself* is used to convey the quality of nonartificial, direct, and pervasive knowing that reflects the fully realized mind. Awareness, as the natural condition of the mind's knowing, is only possible when not obscured by the mind's content at either the coarse, subtle, or very subtle level. At the current level of practice when formerly coarse-level cognitions and constructed appearances become relatively calm upon arising such that they lose their attributive nature, the mind's natural awareness shines forth.

As a result of being-done-with coarse-level cognitions and perceptions, concentrative ability greatly increases. Jampel Pawo defines the result from the mind-perspective. He says:

> The duration extends in which the mind stays in a nonconceptual still state, blankness, or [simple] intention [prior to the construction of content]. (JP, f. 41b)

This is called *continuous staying (gnas ba'i rgyun)*, the goal of concentration practice. Table 12 summarizes the shift in terminology.

Table 12: A Comparison of the Skilled-Concentration and Done-With Meditations in Terms of Terminology

Practice	Skill	Being-Done-With
Intended object	Thought & emotion Simple appearances	Space Breath
Quality of the mind's natural state	Clarity	Awareness
Means	Unobstructed	Own way
Benefit	Staying	Continuous staying

Concentration on the breath is the most widely recommended object to begin the done-with stage of concentration. It is the only object recommended by Pema Karpo and Jampel Pawo. Tashi Namgyel and Wangchug Dorjé recommend using the breath first and then doing space yoga.[372] The breath is an easier object to hold because it is an ever-present activity independent of the practitioner's awareness of it. Furthermore, concentration on the breath is a useful starting object because it is a direct way of controlling the coarse-level activity of the mind:

> Lord Tilopa says, "If you don't want to stay in a state of stupidity, hold the breath points and throw yourself into the nectar of knowledge.... Since the mind rides upon the carriage of the breath, binding the breath is the same point as binding the mind." (JP, f. 37b; TN, p. 282)

Because the breath is a different type of object from the previously used substances—insubstantials, simple appearances, and thought—the practitioner has to become familiar with it. Each of the previous stages of the concentration practices must be repeated using the breath as an object before the breath can be used for the done-with meditation. Many commentators divide their exercises into two parts, the diamond recitation and the breath-holding exercise.[373]

> longer aware of all the elaboration as a continuous chain [of constructed coarse-level cognitions] the way you once were. Now you are aware of one thought arising, [then] a second arising. You may lose your assurance and find very little partial staying, so don't hold it incorrectly. By making a little effort to set the mind up in an eased-up manner, so that you neither block nor go after any of these thoughts, staying arises. (TN, p. 656)

With practice the meditator becomes able to find some stability while holding the mind at the subtle level. From the mind-perspective, the mind stays more completely and uninterruptedly on the object. From the event-perspective, the unfolding mental continuum is held at the subtle level, experienced as a rapid flow of fleeting movements, and each of these rapid movements can be observed as a discrete mind-moment. Each mind-moment, in turn, has a [dual] distinction *(rnam dbye)*. That is, it can be viewed either from the mind-perspective *(chos can)* of the mind that stays continuously and completely, or from the event-perspective, namely the mind's observable moment-by-moment activity or movement *(chos)*:[389]

> Now, what is this distinction between staying/moving and temperament/harmony that perfects the realms of knowing the nature [of the mind's natural condition]? It is only that which conforms to the explanation of being-done-with practice. (JP, f. 44a)

C. Space Yoga

The more difficult way of calming coarse-level cognitions is called *space yoga*. Rangjung Dorjé cites Tilopa as the original source of space yoga, but the meditation is apparently much older because it appears in earlier mahāmudrā source material. Here is the version reported in Tilopa's *Ganges Mahāmudrā:*

> For example, if you block seeing by staring into space,
> and the mind is likewise viewed by the mind itself,
> having blocked the elaboration of thought,
> you attain the highest realization.[390]

This very brief and compact verse contains the entire instructions. There are two parts: (1) stare into space, and (2) view the mind by the mind itself. The first instruction pertains to the intended object. Space as an intended object is categorized as a nonsupport *(rten med).* One way of eradicating the habitual tendency to construct and elaborate coarse-level cognitions is to turn away from objects and stare into space. The second instruction concerns how to observe the mind. The mind becomes aware *(rig pa)* of its own functioning at the subtle level. According to Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, the objective is for "the mind...to rest without resting on any object."[391] The benefit of space yoga pertains to "blocking the construction *(tshogs)* of thought." The tendency of the mind to construct coarse-level cognitions is done-with through space yoga.

Tashi Namgyel, Rangjung Dorjé, and Wangchug Dorjé each include the space yoga meditation, and all follow Tilopa's model. Tashi Namgyel and Wangchug Dorjé suggest practicing space yoga following vase breathing. Wangchug Dorjé's space yoga is a typical example:

> Now, concentrate on what is without support as follows: Consider that the duration of earth, water, fire, wind, and space, respectively, become absorbed into each other and become Great Emptiness. Direct the mind to the intended object by staring blankly into the peaceful, blissful void of open space. Don't take-to-mind anything whatsoever—thinking neither that things exist nor not exist—and sustain it for as long as you are undistracted, unhurried, carefree, and let-go. When distracted, reestablish the partial staying as if putting a thread into the eye of a needle, like a waveless ocean without agitation, like the effortless flight of the garuda, without hope or fear, peaceful and cool. And when remaining undistracted, there won't be any [coarse-level] cognition. You have one genuine thought—a moment of simple undistraction. You recognize immediate occurrence. Besides that, you are not to do anything—the nonvirtues of attachment, aversion, and ignorance; the virtues of giving and the like; what is taught in the oral readings; any conceptualization similar to these; abandoning taking up; abandoning and producing; joy and misery! Establish it in undistraction. Look with the eyes of special insight. Take that [one genuine] thought as a support of concentration. Act free from the defect of fervent

> intensifying and fervent easing up, and establish it, too, so that you don't lose it! (WD, pp. 88–89)

Wangchug Dorjé views space yoga as a concentration practice that has an affinity with later, advanced practices regarding meditation on the natural condition of the mind itself.[392]

Rangjung Dorjé combines the coming-and-going instructions of the diamond recitation and space yoga into a single meditation:

> You should turn both eyes to the space in front of you. Don't move your body. Establish the coming-and-going breath freshly, leisurely, silently.... (RD, p. 6)

Wangchug Dorjé's space yoga can be broken down into the same structure as Tilopa's. First, staring into space is the same as taking an object without support. Just as the distinct currents and their attributes become absorbed during the vase-breathing exercise, Wangchug Dorjé says the same for space yoga. Likewise, Tashi Namgyel says that no outer forms, sounds, and so on, not even the coming-and-going of the breath, can serve as a support for space yoga (TN, p. 656).

Second, Wangchug Dorjé gives instructions for how to view the mind. He says, "Don't take-to-mind" *(yid la mi byed pa).* Rangjung Dorjé qualifies this by saying, "Don't take-to-mind anything, not attributes, not thoughts" (RD, p. 6). That is, the practitioner does not act in any way with reference to the mental events. He holds the mind to relaxation with a very special quality so that it is unable to act toward or engage whatever arises in the continuum. Various words are used to describe the quality of mind: *unhurried ('hol le), carefree (lhod de), eased up (glod),* and the three similes, "threading a needle," "waveless ocean," and "Garuda's flight," respectively. Without these qualities it becomes difficult to get a glimpse of how the mind works behind its content, just as it is difficult to thread a needle when hurried. These qualities are summed up in the term "in its own way" *(rang lugs).*

Leaving the mind in its own way leads to a major shift in awareness. One-pointed concentration is able to proceed without interruption. The mind continuously stays, not getting involved with distractions. Just as a talkative person becomes silent when realizing that no one is listening, so also mental events become calm *(zhi ba)* when the mind is left in its own way. The effect is different from the previous skill meditation in that here

thoughts tend to become calm, according to Wangchug Dorjé. Rangjung Dorjé says that space yoga suppresses emotional states (RD, p. 7). Though subtle cognitions may occur, they are less likely to become constructed, or as Tilopa says, "the assemblage of cognitions is obstructed."

Wangchug Dorjé says little about the perceptual changes from space yoga. On the other hand, Tashi Namgyel stresses these:

> If you are firm, being immovable, without [coarse-level] cognition, the various indications of absorbing the inner and outer breath arise instantaneously, and you are said to be liberated from the substances of samsāra.... The way to find the staying mind of what has and has not breath is, therefore, to be without a support that appears in the form and color of a stone or stick. Those in the lineage make the designation "without support." (TN, pp. 290–92)

Both vase breathing and space yoga bring about being-done-with both thought and perception. However, peace *(sing ne)* of the mind is not the main benefit of the exercise. Awareness of the workings of the mind is the essential benefit. According to Wangchug Dorjé, the practitioner "recognizes immediate occurrence" (*ma thag;* WD, p. 88). The practitioner becomes aware of an event exactly as it happens, at the moment that it arises. All such immediately occurring events pass almost as quickly as they come forth. Rangjung Dorjé says, "Movement, impermanent, is quickly abandoned" (RD, p. 7). What has been-done-with are the obscurations to becoming aware of the mind's spontaneity, the subtle levels with which it "acts" to make experience come forth in the continuum.

The Royal Seal of Mahamudra

Volume One: A Guidebook for the Realization of Coemergence

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cerned with good or bad karma, or the one who is spiritual or worldly, is precisely your own mind. Without the mind the body would indeed be no different from dirt, a stone, or a corpse. But since this mind abides supported by this body, it acts positively or negatively, with or without virtue, and thus plants the seeds of every single happiness and suffering. As to the future, without a mind we would not proceed to future lives. If because of having amassed negative actions now we must go to hell, it is this mind that will be reborn in hell and endure the torments of heat and cold. If by having now practiced virtue we are reborn in the higher realms, it is also this mind that takes birth as a god or human and thus experiences happiness. And when we move upward to a pure buddha field it is the mind that is transferred there. All happiness and sorrow of future lives will occur to the mind itself.

So there isn't too much to it. In a nutshell the meaning is that one's own mind is the root of all samsara and nirvana. The one that accumulates good and bad karma in past and future lives is also one's mind. That which experiences happiness and sorrow as a result of that karma is one's mind as well. Similarly, the one who now discerns between positive and negative or good and bad actions, who thinks in a spiritual or worldly way, and who acts virtuously or immorally is precisely one's own mind. Since the all-creating monarch is one's mind, it must be tamed by oneself. Therefore, now that we know that the root of samsara rests in the mind, we must cut this root. Now that we know that the essence of buddhahood rests in the mind, we should attain it. Having understood and resolved that the root of all samsara and nirvana is one's mind alone, there is no need for us to practice other meditations involving thinking, correcting, or manipulating. We should condense everything into this crucial mind practice itself.

Arousing conviction that the main point of meditation is undistracted mindfulness

Thus the root of samsara and nirvana is one's mind. The one who discerns good and bad is one's mind. The one who acts spiritually or in a worldly way is one's mind. The one who creates virtuous or unvirtuous

karma in past and future lives and in between is one's mind. And also the one who experiences all happiness and sorrow resulting from those actions is one's mind. In brief, the "all-creating monarch" is precisely one's mind. Since the roots of everything converge in one's mind, it is very important to tame and purify that mind. In order to cut the water flow the only way is to stop it at the source, for then it will dry up downstream by itself. From downstream, even though you try to block it, the water cannot be stopped. Similarly, if we want to cut the root of samsara, what we must do is sever that which creates samsara—the root of our own mind. Until the root of mind is severed, liberation from samsara is out of the question.

For example, when we cut a tree from the root the branches die by themselves, whereas if instead of cutting the root we cut the branches, they will sprout again. Likewise, if we are to cleanse negative karmic obscurations and sufferings, we must cut the basic root of our mind, which is what gives birth to them. Otherwise, by doing other physical and verbal practices that do not eliminate this root there will only be temporary results. Since obscurations and bad karma have not been cut from the root, karma and obscurations will again be accumulated. To give another example, to subdue and dominate a province, all one has to do is conquer the king or prime minister, for then the whole province and its court will be automatically conquered. If the king is not conquered, it is no use subduing a few servants or attendants. When you tame your own mind, the all-creating monarch, the rest will follow suit. Otherwise, without taming your mind, without capturing awareness, although you may do other spiritual practices of body and voice such as development, completion, and recitation of mantra, as your mind is not subdued your objectives will not be achieved; this would be like the example of the king, where just controlling a servant or two would be of no use.

In short, this is why it is important for us, ourselves, to tame the doer of all, our present mind, which is addicted to thinking, agitated, and excited with all kinds of thoughts. When you do not know how to tame and preserve your mind and it is hence carried away by distraction, delusion, and forgetfulness, it is the source of all the causes for

wandering in samsara. If instead your mind is not taken over by distraction, forgetfulness, and delusion, and realizes its own nature, which is nurtured and not forgotten, this itself encompasses the heart of all the teachings and the root of all paths. What is meant by saying that the heart of all teachings and the root of all paths is encompassed by the undistracted mindfulness of one's mind?[28] As explained before, since one's mind is the very thing that creates samsara, nirvana, good, bad, positive, negative, happiness, sorrow, and all the rest, everything converges in this mind. Therefore, the ground doer of samsara and nirvana being one's mind, the ground root of samsara and nirvana is this very mind. So we should know that the path of undistracted mindfulness of the mind is the root of all meditations and indeed the unavoidable way to reach the essential truth. Takpo Rinpoche [Gampopa][29] said:

> Nondistraction is the path of all buddhas.
> Nondistraction is the spiritual friend.
> Nondistraction is the chief instruction.
> This flow of undistracted mindfulness
> Is the main road of the buddhas of the three times.

The meaning of this quotation is as follows: undistracted mindfulness of the mind, the root of all, is the heart of the main path of all buddhas. Undistracted mindfulness is the guide, the guru and spiritual friend. Undistracted mindfulness is the chief and supreme instruction among all profound teachings. That is to say, since all perfect buddhas have relied on undistracted mindfulness of the mind, it is the chief path of all buddhas. As the undistracted mindfulness of the mind shows all the paths to enlightenment, it is the guide of the path, the guru and spiritual friend. Since all teachings converge in one's mind, undistracted mindfulness of one's mind is practiced as the chief instruction. Thus, Gampopa says, "The flow of undistracted mindfulness is the main road of the buddhas of the three times." All the perfect buddhas of the past have awakened by relying on precisely this supreme path of undistracted mindfulness. All the perfect buddhas that will come in the future also will awaken by relying on just this path of undistracted mindfulness.

And right now, all the victorious ones in the infinite buddha fields of the ten directions are becoming awakened by relying on just this path of undistracted mindfulness. Since the buddhas of the three times achieve perfect buddhahood by relying on exactly this path of undistracted mindfulness, it is impossible for anyone to awaken to enlightenment without relying on this path. So Gampopa declared the above because all the buddhas of the three times—be they those who have come in the past, those who are at present, or those who will come later—rely on only this path of undistracted mindfulness of one's mind. This path is the supreme root of the true meanings of all the outer, inner, new, and old traditions. We should rely on only this path of the undistracted mindfulness of the mind, the kernel that contains all essential points.

The true meaning teachings of non-Buddhist traditions such as those of the Hindus and Bonpos are similar in regard to looking at one's mind; and the greatest main paths of true meaning in the Buddhist traditions—such as mahamudra, great perfection and great middle way—all coincide on this point of sustaining the undistracted mindfulness of one's mind; yet any path that does not consist in sustaining mind's essence has no possibilities whatsoever.[30] To recognize the true nature of one's mind and sustain it through mindfulness is the heart of all the paths, the root of all meditations, the culmination of all practices, the core of all pith instructions, and the innermost key point of all profound instructions. Therefore, understanding and regarding it as such, we must develop certainty, trust, and conviction, all merged together.

Settling the Mind after Cutting Off the Conceptual Constructs of the Three Times

Other than sustaining the undistracted mindfulness of the mind, no correction whatsoever is to be done. The mind should not chase after past actions or thoughts that have already taken place. Future projects and so forth should not be anticipated beforehand by thinking about them now. As to present cognizance (*shes pa*), whether it appears as stillness or thought movement, you should not examine or analyze it, and specifically you should not wander elsewhere.

Since the past has already ceased and gone by, you should not think about it now. The future has not happened yet, it does not exist now, and it is not found as an object; so there is also no need to think about it. If you analyze the present, it will be a distraction right now and your meditation will end up being pointless. So do not think about the past, anticipate the future, nor be distracted and deluded by thoughts about the present. Turn the mind within to look at itself and settle directly on its own nature. Without obscuring it with even the slightest stain of fixation on attributes such as being or not being, existent or non-existent, good or bad, rest right in the continuity of the uncontrived, innate, natural state.

Furthermore, the natural condition of ground mahamudra ultimately does not depend on conceptual constructs of the three times. However, as beginners do not recognize or realize it as such, it is important for beginners to start by not being distracted by these thoughts. If you tighten the mind too much by wishing to deliberately free it of all thoughts and for it to remain still and at ease, this will not happen. If you intentionally restrict it with a meditative state, applying this or that meditation, it will be fettered. If you contrive it with concepts such as "the mind is empty," since these are discursive thoughts, the meditation will indeed become defective.

In that case, how should it be? Apart from having in each session the determination to remember to simply not wander from or forget the innate nature of mind, do not think of anything and relax loosely. If in that state of relaxation the mind settles and remains at ease in the basic nature, that is indeed the mind essence. When it does not stay in this way and various thoughts occur, then you should not produce thoughts such as, "Is the mind staying or not?" or "Are thoughts occurring or not?" Simply not wandering from the continuity of your true nature, right there identify all thoughts through undistracted mindfulness. Once you recognize a thought, let it go in its true nature. When there is some flow of this undistracted mindfulness that loosens up in that way, keep it present and avoid being distracted from it or forgetting it. When the mind has wandered and thoughts are not recognized, again tighten the determination to be present, and rest. Whether the mind rests still or

not, and no matter what thoughts arise, do not slip out of that continuity of mindfulness; preserve the essence of whatever arises. If you lose the continuity of awareness, have forgotten, and are wandering in delusion, then you must tighten mindfulness and rest there. In the *Resting in Natural Mind* it is said:

> First, in order to remove the stains of meditation,
> Rest loosely and let be.
> Then, in order to integrate meditation and postmeditation,
> Look sharply and lucidly.
> Finally, let go completely.
> Don't examine past actions, anticipate the future,
> Or grasp at the present moment, but rest in space.
> Cut off the coming and going of thoughts of the three times—
> Thus rest free of thoughts in samadhi.

Lord Takpo Rinpoche said:

> Do not chase after the past or anticipate the future. Rest persistently in the perfect original cognizance of nowness. Not to pursue the past means that our thoughts should not follow after what has passed. Not to anticipate the future means our thoughts should not encounter beforehand what is yet to come. To make sure to rest in natural cognizance of nowness means to not have any focus at all in the present moment. As it is said, "When the mind is not modified, it becomes clear. When water is not agitated, it becomes limpid." Therefore, rest casually and persistently in the continuity of nonmodification. Resting thus, there will be a clarity without thoughts, immaculate and open, which may last for but the duration of a finger snap or for as long as it takes to milk a cow, etc. Meditate without regarding a long duration of that state as a virtue or a short duration as a fault. Subsequently, when a thought occurs, let go and rest there. As it is said, "This mind tightened by busy thoughts, once let loose will no doubt be released."[31] Letting go and meditating in this way, when a thought-free clarity arises for longer and longer periods, this clarity will naturally turn into your true nature. This is what is called "river-flow samadhi."

Also Lord Takpo Rinpoche expressed very clearly the wisdom of Dombhi Heruka in the following words:

> Just as water is limpid when not agitated, rest without modifying the natural state. Like the sun uncovered by clouds, do not block the six senses[32] but leave them of their own accord. At all times and in every activity, remain free of distraction.

You must practice all these meditation instructions without mistaking the key points.

Sustaining the Identity[33] of the Flow of Stillness and Thought Movement

When your mind does not wander in thoughts of the three times, but rests on the presence of the recognition of the unfabricated self-knowing awareness and stays without projecting elsewhere, that is stillness. When still, note that it stays still on the identity of stillness, and sustain this attentively. Simply not forgetting the natural flow of its identity, maintain that stillness through the determination to be mindful. Since the identity of stillness abides without being tangible or having form, color, or shape, let the mind naturally remain loose, as there are no luminous appearances such as lights nor anything else to be seen at all. Do not care about the duration of such stillness. When it lasts briefly, sustain the identity of that duration while it lasts without forgetting it. It is difficult for beginners who are new to meditation to have stillness for a long time. So even though it does not last for more than a moment, you should preserve the identity of that moment without forgetting it. Actually, by giving importance to the duration, you create the hope that stillness will endure, as well as the fear that it may not stay still for long. Avoid hopes for stillness, fears of nonstillness, and so forth. Whether it

from this, it is difficult for beginners to identify stillness, movement, whatever arises, or any thoughts they might have during formal meditation in the way others can. So even if this identification doesn't happen, at all times and in every situation, simply stick to not forgetting the flow of undistracted mindfulness of your mind in a natural way. At first, be concerned about becoming distracted. Later, keep alive the presence of mindfulness again and again. Finally, on recognizing that you have forgotten and on restoring the flow of undistracted mindfulness, it is necessary not to succumb to laziness, indolence, diversions, and so forth. Since this is a very important point be sure to proceed in this way.

This has been an explanation of the ways of resting the mind and sustaining the practice. What now follows is a brief explanation of how to structure your present meditation session.

How to structure your meditation session

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Before starting the session and at all times, as a method for your mind to follow the Dharma and ensure the conditions to arouse diligence for practice, reflect on points such as the following: the difficulty of obtaining the opportunities provided by a human existence, impermanence and the certainty of death, lack of knowledge about when you will die, and the usefulness of the sacred Dharma after death, for, unlike mere momentary goals of this life, it is extremely important for all your lives.

As to the main part of the session, carry out the extraordinary preliminaries. In terms of refuge and bodhichitta, offer prostrations. Cleanse the obscurations of your body, voice, and mind. Accumulate the collections by offering mandalas. Through guru yoga, supplicate your guru and receive his or her blessing. Carry out all these stages of practice as precisely as you can.

Then, outwardly, observe the key points of the physical posture, the seven points of Vairochana. Inwardly, observe the key points of voice by keeping silent. Secretly, observe the key points of mind. If your mind, the ground, is distracted and forgets, this causes you to wander in samsara. If you purify yourself, recognize your original face, and remain in your natural state, then you awaken to buddhahood. The root of

all of samsara and nirvana is your mind. This mind never leaves you. In all your past and future lives, that which forms positive or negative karma, and experiences all the happiness or sorrow resulting from it, is also your own mind. Confirm that the root of samsara and nirvana is precisely your own mind, the foundation and creator of all. Your own mind being the root of samsara and nirvana, it follows that it is indeed very important to tame it. Be convinced and trust that the root of all paths, the heart of all meditations, the crucial point of all Dharma paths, the very root of all, is precisely this mindful knowing nurtured by yourself that keeps your mind present and undeluded.

In the state of undistracted mindfulness there may be stillness or thought movement, depending upon whether the mind stays still or wanders about. In either case, having this trust and conviction, do not make alterations; preserve the natural flow of not forgetting the identity of staying, going, or whatever the mind does or thinks. Stillness and thought movement are like water and its waves; it cannot be said that while the water is good its waves are bad or that they are different from each other. Waves rise from the water itself, and also disappear into the water. Likewise, the nature of your mind is such that stillness is its essence and the myriad thought movements are its natural radiance. "Good" stillness does not come from elsewhere nor does "bad" thought movement arise from anywhere else. The mind of stillness and the mind of movement do not exist separately. No matter how diverse thoughts may be, they all arise from the natural brilliance of the mind's basic nature. Like waves dissolving in water, thoughts disappear by themselves within the nature of mind; they do not exist apart from it. Hoping there will be stillness, you pursue it; thinking that if only there weren't thoughts, you try to stop them. Do not indulge in any such corrections, pursuing something and stopping something else. When still, note that there is stillness and do not forget its identity. Also when thinking all kinds of thoughts—one thought, two thoughts, a good thought, a bad thought—recognize the identity of that movement and sustain it without forgetting. When you forget and are distracted, restore your determination and maintain its continuity. If you become conscious of an outer object, such as a form seen by the eyes, remain

on that perception without distraction. When the ears hear a sound, maintain undistracted mindfulness on that aural perception. In a similar fashion, whether it is forms, sounds, smells, tastes, or textures, in each case rest on it without forgetting. If thoughts of good or bad, like or dislike toward these arise, do not slip into this delusion, but look at whatever occurs with undistracted mindfulness.

Thus through meditative composure, one-pointedly keeping the key points of body, voice, and mind, remain undistracted. Then, at the end of the session, dedicate the merit. In particular, when you are not resting composed in formal meditation, while moving, sitting, eating, drinking, working, at leisure, occupied, lying, standing, conversing, reciting prayers, and so forth, in all your daily activities always proceed as follows. First, apprehensive that your mind may be distracted, be careful and concerned, and through mindful knowing and not forgetting, establish the foundation. Second, when you forget, revive your mindfulness through determination. Finally, even if you forget, pick up from there, and again and again restore mindfulness. Never separate the practice of mindful knowing and carefulness from the main body of the meditation. Capture that point of nonseparation as much as you can. If you always nurture mindful knowing and carefulness they will steadily improve. Without falling prey to the negative karma of laziness, indolence, distraction, or lassitude, you must extend the presence of the essence of meditative composure, the ultimate achievement of your lifetimes, continually striving to be as diligent as possible.

Many cling to experiences devoid of realization.
Most meditators remain at this level.

There are many references of this sort, like the case of Takpo Rinpoche, who had no thought movement for about thirteen days. When he related this to Jetsun Milarepa, the latter replied, "That too is meditation, but since it is suppressive concentration, enlightenment is not attained. No butter results from churning sand."

Straying into blank shamatha

There are people who have little learning and have attended on a guru for a short time, who may have something analogous to meditation at the beginning. However, they do not know how to maintain it, and due to the lack of continuity or weakness of this state the conviction of vipashyana slips away and the mindful knowing of samadhi slackens. Some related experiences, not of the meditative sort, arise and the person regards them as meditation and becomes conceited. He then strays into some sort of blank meditation which, when maintained, eventually leads to an increase of dullness and torpor. First, the objects of sight, fine and gross, become blurred and somewhat hazy. Then they become increasingly blurred until finally the sight consciousness fades away and the vision of forms ceases. Similarly, audible sounds and the other objects of the senses eventually become blurred and hazy, and finally cease. At the end, after the six consciousnesses that engage with the six sense objects have ceased, the person becomes imperceptive and unconscious, as if fainting. For example, when ice forms on a lake, the transparency and clarity of the water, as well as any particular thing inside the water become blurred. This is similar to proudly regarding consciousness that has turned into nonthought as meditation—it is merely the straying into blank shamatha.

It may also happen that there is slightly more lucidity than that and one has mindfulness for just fleeting moments, and visual, auditory, and the other types of phenomena are not blocked. However, once these are indistinct and have become somewhat hazy, knowing becomes unclear,

and a kind of dullness, daze, or numbness sets in. These are referred to as belonging to the category of the affliction of stupidity and its set of secondary afflictions. Furthermore, it may also be that one does not notice or perceive in any way whatsoever such things as whether phenomena of the six groups are distinct or not; without any mental activity at all, it is as if one were unconscious. This way of abiding is like the ones described before and it belongs to the blank type; therefore, it is not fit to be called meditation, as since these are intense forms of stupidity, they are explained as being a collection of causes for animal existence. Therefore, as said in the *Jewel Garland:*

> The fools usually become animals.

Takpo Rinpoche says:

> Without realization, blank mind is the demon of meditation.
> While confidence has not risen from your depth,
> Don't proclaim, "This is a good experience."

Also in various differentiation teachings of the Nyingma tradition, it is said:

> Resting the mind in the concentration of blank emptiness is mental darkness;
> Through this it is impossible to actualize the realization.
> It is not a meditative experience in accordance with the scriptures.
> One calls the experience of oblivion that arose "realization"
> And performs unconventional wrong acts.
> There are many foolish meditations
> That are attached to counterfeit concentrations such as this.
> To bring about nonconceptuality by rejecting thoughts
> Is like wanting to make butter by churning water.

In addition, two states of mind slightly different from these may occur. There may be mental lucidity or vivid clarity, but if the sharp

clarity of knowing and the desired mindfulness are missing, it neither swerves toward a one-pointed virtuous mind nor turns into nonvirtue; therefore this is labeled "oblivious mind." Similarly, in the absence of clear mindful knowing, one may simply abide without blocking or pursuing different kinds of phenomena. However, this is oblivious mind because it is classified as belonging to the karmic formation of apathy. As to the karma of oblivion, although it is possible for it to later change into another karma because of conditions, it is said that it does not have a single definite fruition. Some say that it has the same meaning as the nontransferring karma,[70] but that is not quite right because there are immense differences between these two. That being so, if things go well, these two states of mind may possibly advance toward being the cause of serenity of nonperception, which contains afflictions. Nevertheless, since these do not even evolve flawlessly toward the four concentrations or the samadhis of formlessness, in our case they are never suitable as objects of accomplishment. As stated in *The Way of the Bodhisattva:*

> Lacking realization of emptiness,
> A mind that is blocked will later rise again.
> That is the serenity of nonperception.

It is said that this is the cause of rebirth in the form of those known as "unperceptive gods" in whom perception and its related functions have stopped.

Straying into the four concentrations

When one has become extremely proficient in the samadhi of shamatha, body and mind have become pliable and the equanimous mind has conceptions and discernment; in it, without apprehensions, an expansive joy arises. Once familiar with this state, free of passionate craving, negative actions, and so forth, if you meditate with conceptual discernment and attachment, and feel joy and pleasure, this constitutes the so-called samadhi of the first concentration, which causes rebirth as a god of that level. Then, if you meditate having shed the desire for

ping the water at the spring where it originates—that itself would be sufficient. Whatever arises, whatever appears, you only need to remain at ease. Lord Daö Shönu said:

> If a moment is not contaminated by the dualistic stain
> Everything is the display of dharmakaya.

You must think along these lines. Therefore, no matter what occurs—whether considered good or bad, positive or negative—resolve it in the nondual state of your mind's essence, free from the duality of avoiding or pursuing. Whatever arises all you need to do is not veil its original face and let it be, sustaining its continuity through knowing.

The benefits and result of shamatha and its experiences

To give up all inner and outer entertainments that harm shamatha is generosity. To delight in having a body as light and placid as a cotton leaf, and a mind that spontaneously enters the object of meditation, i.e., a completely trained body and mind, is discipline. To rest in samadhi free of such veils as those of agitation and regret is patience. The inability of adversities to weaken samadhi is perseverance. The absence of thought movement in the lucidity of samadhi is concentration. The ability to know other people's thinking due to the lucidity of shamatha arising unbiased is prajña. As said in the *Excellent Eon Sutra:*

> What are the six paramitas in reference to shamatha?
> To give up anything that can harm it is generosity.
> To delight in the thorough training of body and mind is discipline.
> To be absorbed in meditation without obscurations is patience.
> The absence of other factors to weaken the samadhi is perseverance.
> That the connection with wisdom does not deteriorate is concentration.

> The knowledge of all thoughts is prajña.
> These are the six paramitas based on shamatha.

Further, Cher Gompa said:

> Generosity is not to cling or be attached to the blissful, clear, or thought-free meditation of shamatha. Discipline is to be free of the five hindrances.[75] Patience is not to be harmed by other circumstances. Perseverance is to enter meditation with the conviction of one-pointedness. Concentration is the stillness of body, voice, and mind resting serenely, calmly and vividly awake. Prajña is to skillfully eliminate whatever goes against shamatha and accomplish all that is conducive to it.

Further qualities that have been taught are that, in this life, one gives up attachment to the sense pleasures, as a result of which several higher perceptions and samadhis arise and, in the next life, one acquires the existence of a desireless god. As said in the *Concise Prajñaparamita Sutra:*

> Through concentration, the vulgar sense pleasures are abandoned. Proper reasoning, supernatural knowledge, and samadhi are firmly accomplished.

In the *Letter to a Friend:*

> The four concentrations that eradicate
> Hedonism, pleasures, and pain,
> Bring about the same level of attainment of the great gods
> Brahmakayika, Parittabha, Subhakritsna and Brihatphala.

In the *Torch of the Path to Enlightenment:*

> If a yogi accomplishes shamatha,
> He will also accomplish higher perceptions.

Thus, following the realization of this authentic vipashyana of realization, there is no need for any other action or effort.

Distinction between shamatha and vipashyana

Generally, vipashyana has many divisions. The vipashyana that has the specific feature of coarse peace is the worldly kind, and the one that has the specific feature of the four noble truths is the vipashyana of the hinayana. Although it is an excellent accomplishment, it is not an indispensible factor. The vipashyana consisting of meditation on the meaning of egolessness is the vipashyana to be accomplished in our case, because based on it we should seek to establish the natural state of all phenomena included in subject and object.

As to the way of arousing this type of vipashyana, the expanded form consists of the four vipashyanas taught in the *Sutra That Unravels the Intent* and the *Compendium of the Abhidharma*. The intermediate version consists of the three vipashyanas taught in the *Sutra That Unravels the Intent*. The condensed meaning of all these is found in the vipashyana meditations on the twofold egolessness and others. This has many divisions, but we cannot discuss them all.

Here we will discuss the classifications of vipashyana together with those of shamatha and vipashyana united. In general, at the time of one-pointedness, what is called vipashyana is mostly considered to be somewhat low, but this is because distinctions have not been made between its divisions. Although there are a lot of divisions in vipashyana, in fact they can be condensed into just three. These are known as the vipashyana focusing on vipashyana, the vipashyana during the experiences, and the vipashyana of realization. These can be further condensed and classified as two: path vipashyana and fruition vipashyana. Path vipashyana is the examination carried out by discerning prajña in the lucidity during shamatha. Fruition vipashyana is the correct realization of the final conviction of the nonduality of observer and observed. Here, the division of shamatha and vipashyana united is that the mind resting purely of its own accord is shamatha; that state itself, including the aspect of awareness, is vipashyana. As said in the *Cloud of Precious Jewels Sutra:*

> Shamatha is one-pointedness of mind. Vipashyana is to correctly discern the absolute reality as it is.

In the *Sutra Requested by Jonpa:*

> Shamatha is one-pointedness.
> Vipashyana is awareness.

Further, in the *Lotus Graded Path of the Great Perfection:*

> By letting the mind rest of its own accord, all subtle and gross thoughts repose and subside in their original condition. Then a calm abiding of the mind naturally occurs that is what is called "shamatha." In its unimpeded radiance, the natural lucidity, a vivid nakedness takes place; this is called "vipashyana."

Also in the *Bodhichitta Pitaka Sutra:*

> The shamatha of the bodhisattva is perfect concentration; there is no dwelling in the notion of peace. Through vipashyana, by looking there is seeing; but although there is looking, nothing is seen. That is how they see and by doing so they see reality as it is.

This quotation explains the common shamatha, including the essence of the view of vipashyana. Also the *Prajñaparamita Sutra* states:

> If you query as to the shamatha and vipashyana of a bodhisattva mahasattva, this is it: the wisdom that knows all phenomena is the shamatha and vipashyana of the bodhisattva mahasattva.

Hence this refers to the fruition, i.e., shamatha and vipashyana united. There are many similar references to this in sutras, tantras, and *shastras*.[78]

part from calm abiding nor its radiance from devotion, one's voice should never part from supplication, and one's body should never part from composure.

How do we carry out this investigation? For instance, it would be pointless to do any kind of thinking, as that would be to focus outward, like the analytical meditation of the scholars. Instead, we should follow the style of what is known as the resting meditation of a simple yogi. Here, by resting evenly in mind essence and not parting from it, the mind's natural radiance examines itself. This is what is called "conceptual shamatha arising as discerning prajña." The Great Brahmin said:

> *Kyema!* Aim at that within yourself and look.
> By looking with undistracted mind, looking disappears,
> While with distracted mind "that" cannot be seen.

In the *Stages of Meditation* it is said:

> If, when the mind has been stabilized on the object of shamatha, one thoroughly investigates through prajña, the light of perfect wisdom will dawn.

12: How to Practice Vipashyana

5. The main body of vipashyana practice
   a. General investigation
      i. Investigating the essence, the basic nature
         A) Examining the identity of your mind essence
         B) Examining its color and shape
         C) Examining its support and location
      ii. Examining the radiance of the basic nature: thoughts and thinking
         A) Examining from where they arise at the beginning
         B) Examining where they dwell in the meantime
         C) Examining where they finally stop
      iii. Investigating nature and radiance together
         A) Examining in terms of single or multiple
            1) General analysis in terms of single or multiple
            2) Special explanation of stillness and movement
         B) Analyzing in terms of substantial and insubstantial
         C) Analyzing in terms of the three times
      iv. Analyzing apparent external objects
         A) Examining the natural state of perceived objects
         B) Analyzing whether these appearances exist dualistically as outer and inner
         C) Analyzing the identification of apparent objects
         D) Analyzing the essence of perceived objects
         E) Analyzing their mode of arising
         F) Analyzing the objects of fixation

G) Analyzing whether they are empty or nonempty
H) Analyzing the substance of that which ceased
b. Special investigation
i. Analyzing the root, ego fixation
A) Inner: Analyzing the ego fixation of the person
B) Outer: Analyzing the fixation on the identity of phenomena
ii. Analyzing the birthplace and way of abiding of the coarse concepts of the five poisons
A) Analyzing ignorance-dullness
B) Analyzing grasping and desire
C) Analyzing cruel hatred
D) Analyzing hostility and jealousy
E) Analyzing self-importance and pride
iii. Analyzing circumstances, positive and negative, pleasurable and painful
A) Analyzing external positive circumstances
B) Analyzing external negative circumstances
C) Analyzing inner mental happiness or joy
D) Analyzing inner mental suffering or unpleasantness

The main body of vipashyana practice

This consists of (1) the general investigation and (2) the special investigation.

General investigation

This includes explanation of (1) investigating the essence, the basic nature; (2) examining the radiance of the basic nature—thoughts and thinking; (3) investigating nature and radiance together; and (4) investigating apparent external objects.

Investigating the essence, the basic nature

This has three parts: (1) examining the identity of your mind essence, (2) examining its color and shape, and (3) examining its support and location.

Examining the identity of your mind essence

Adopt the right posture as indicated before. As to the gaze, without closing the eyes, look straight ahead. As the Great Brahmin said:

> Not closing the eyes is the yoga of nonmeditation.

And elsewhere:

> The yogi that does not close his eyes
> Excels all other yogis.

Also:

> The non-Buddhists look upward to Brahma.
> The shravakas look downward to peace.
> The vajra eyes look straight ahead.

Then supplicate the guru, ask for siddhis and receive the blessings. The guru dissolves into you and your minds become inseparable. Rest in that space and look at its essence. Then, after identifying the essence of mind, examine whether it exists or does not exist, what it looks like, and so on. If there seems to be something identifiable, investigate the qualities of that graspable aspect as well as those of the subject fixating upon it. If you perceive it as a sort of brightness, identify the manner in which that brightness is clear. Is that brightness like rainbow light or like the light of the sun, the moon, a butter lamp, etc.? Examine this in depth. If it does not seem to have the radiance of light, examine whether

it is self-luminous. Now, if you take it to not contain anything at all, investigate whether that void is a kind of nothingness. If you perceive it as nothing, examine closely where phenomena and thoughts as well as this mindful knowing arise from. Once you come to the conclusion that it is an aware emptiness, rest right there.

Examining its color and shape

Next, examine whether or not the mind has color or shape. If you see that it seems to have color and shape, check closely whether it is white, red, or any other color. What is its shape? Is it round, triangular, spherical, or does it have other forms, such as human or animal; or does it look like earth, stone, a mountain, or rock? In case it appears to have any of these shapes, closely examine what is there to be seen, cognized, or revealed. If you come to the conclusion that it is a lucid emptiness, devoid of color, shape, and so forth, rest right there.

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Examining its support and location

Examine whether the support and location of the mind is outside, inside, or in between. If it appears to be located inside, dwelling in the body, does it dwell in individual parts such as top, bottom, or between; limbs, stomach, the five main and six hollow organs? Or does it dwell in the body as a whole? If it dwells in the body as a whole, check whether it does so in the manner of inside-outside[79] or mingling with it. If it seems that it mingles, when it projects to outer objects such as forms, how does it go there? When you come to the conclusion that it is the self-knowing inherently luminous awareness (*rang rig rang gsal*) that does not dwell in or take support on anything whatsoever, rest right there. At this point whether you recognize it or not depends on the blessings, so persevere in devotional supplications rather than in a lot of analyzing and examining.

Unlike before when, even though you had mental stillness and an experience of clarity, you had not reached conviction about the ultimate, proceeding as just described, identify the true mind. Having no

color, shape, support, location, etc., it is empty. However, although it is empty, it is an emptiness possessing cognizance. Looking at the sky devoid of light or anything else, vision ceases. Similarly, the mind's essence is self-knowing and inherently luminous. You must be sure about this and experience it. Tilopa stated:

> For instance, the nature of sky transcends color and shape.
> Untainted by whites or blacks, it is unchanging.
> Likewise, transcending color and shape, the essence of one's mind
> Is untainted by the white and black factors of virtue and vice.

And:

> For example, although you conventionally say that you see the sky,
> You cannot say that the sky is like this or that.
> Similarly, you may say your mind is luminous,
> But there is no conventional basis for labeling it as "it exists like this."
> The nature of mind is originally like the sky:
> There is not a single phenomenon that is not included within it.

In the *Sun's Expression* it is said:

> The myriad things are the magical display of the mind.
> The mind cannot be shown by saying, "It is this."
> Therefore, samsara and nirvana are rootless.
> Know them to be dharmakaya!

Gotsangpa said:

> Look directly at your own mind.
> Nothing is seen by looking; it is a non-thing.

When undistracted mindfulness is present, the naturally lucid essence is unchanging. When mindful presence is absent, it becomes an ordinary state of mind. Therefore, while identifying your mind as free from grasper and grasped, you should keep present your intrinsic awareness, sustaining its continuity without losing its sharpness.

Examining the radiance of the basic nature: thoughts and thinking

This has three parts: examining (1) from where they arise at the beginning, (2) where they dwell in the meantime, and (3) where they finally stop.

Examining from where they arise at the beginning

Supplicate the lama and adopt the posture, resting in the essence of mental stillness as before. When a thought arises—or if due to a strong shamatha no thought arises, then without wandering, deliberately produce one—observe it, examining from which source this thought first arose. If you think it arose from mind essence, check if you can separate them, like a child born from its mother. If it does not look like you can separate them, does it arise from mind's natural expression, like light radiated by the sun or the moon? Or is it that mind itself turns into the thought? Thoroughly examine points such as these.

The thought has not arisen from a specific cause, was not produced by particular conditions, nor manufactured by a creator, a craftsman, or anything else. Therefore, not originated from causes and conditions, rootless and without basis, it was never born. When you are convinced of this, rest right there.

Examining where they dwell in the meantime

Whatever thought arises, examine whether there is a location—outside, inside, or in between; the five sense organs; etc.—that supports it either

continuously or temporarily. If it does not seem to have a support or location, does it appear through a strong upsurge that is held to be real? If there seems to be no reification, is there anything identifiable? Or is it an undefined state where you cannot specify that "it is this"? Thoroughly examine it in these and other ways.

In no case is the thought found to have even a hair's tip of support, dwelling, tangibility, shape, or anything else, and thus there is no location where it dwells that you can say, "This is the way it is." When you are convinced of this, rest right there.

Examining where they finally stop

Examine how the occurring thought, the radiance of the basic nature of things as they are, finally disappears. If you think it becomes nothing, has it become nothing after the thought stopped or has it vanished of its own accord and thus becoming nothing? If it ceased, who stopped it? What factor caused it to cease? If it vanished, what factor made it disappear? Did it disappear by itself?

Apart from its natural unfolding, whatever arises goes to no specific place and leaves no trace. Nobody stops it and its occurrence is not blocked. Therefore it neither ceases nor is destroyed; when you come to this conclusion, rest right there.

Investigate mind essence, experiencing your perception of it to the core. If, without caring for its arising, abiding, and ceasing, while leaving it intact, the self-arising thought is freed by itself into its own basic nature, you are seeing the genuine essence of mind. Lord Yangonpa said:

> On examining the mind, some say that because at first what arises does not appear, it is not born; since it does not dwell, it is nonabiding; and lastly as it does not stop, it is unceasing. We say that an instant of what arises is not born because its essence from the very beginning has never been born; it is unceasing because from the point of view of awareness it is unimpeded; and it is nonabiding because it does not dwell separate from aware emptiness.

So sustain the natural flow with the mindfulness that lets be. Be convinced and loosely rest your awareness upon the continuity of the basic nature, the nonconceptual state in which there is nothing dualistic to cultivate.

Investigating nature and radiance—or stillness and movement—together

This has three parts: (1) examining in terms of single or multiple, (2) analyzing in terms of substantial or insubstantial, and (3) analyzing in terms of the three times.

Examining in terms of single or multiple

This has two parts: (1) the general analysis in terms of single or multiple, and (2) the special explanation of stillness and movement.

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General analysis in terms of single or multiple

Supplicate the lama and adopt the right posture. Based on mind essence, analyze with discerning prajña as follows. Examine whether the mind is single or multiple. If you understand the mind as being a single entity, what is the meaning of it arising as the myriad phenomena? If you perceive it as being multiple, find out from where, if not from mind essence, these minds that appear as separate arise. If investigating in this way you come to understand that, being neither single nor multiple, it is something that transcends both these extremes, then this will suffice.

Special explanation of stillness and movement

In general, again and again closely examine whether stillness and movement are the same or different. When the mind moves, does it move in the absence of stillness or does it move while its nature remains still?

Is there stillness when there is movement? Is there a stillness occurring apart from the absence of that movement, or not? Is there a movement apart from the one that occurs or comes when there is no stillness? Thoroughly examine them in these and other ways.

It might be that after investigating in this way you still do not understand and continue to perceive stillness and movement as separate. You think there is something that stays still while there is movement and something that moves while there is stillness, and so forth. Well then, when these two are present, how do they stay? Are they one on top of the other, alongside one another, overlapping, or set in some other way? When they leave, how is it? Does one leave while the other remains? Or do they leave together and stay together? Thoroughly investigating this, fully resolve it to its depths.

Further, if during stillness there is no movement and during movement there is no stillness, you may think that they are the same. Then if these two are the same, examine in which way they are so. If you think they are the same in the absence of thought, how do these two, in that very sameness, merge and remain, etc.? Again, if you think they are the same when thoughts arise, are they the same due to thought movement unifying with stillness or by stillness unifying with movement?

By thoroughly investigating in these and other ways, you may see that the manifold manifestations arising from the play of the single essential ground are the natural expression of the mind, and they are inseparable. Like water and its waves or the sun and its light, they are not separate entities. If you understand them to be so, you will not find stillness and movement to be separate and you will not find their identities either. Convinced that there is no need to pursue or repress, adopt or reject stillness and movement, when the mind is still, rest in stillness and when it moves, rest in movement. Once you understand that this is sufficient, you must arouse confidence in the self-liberation of whatever spontaneously arises.

At that point, is the observer—awareness—other than the observed—stillness and movement—or is it actually that stillness and movement itself? By investigating with the gaze of your own awareness, you come to understand that that which is investigating itself is also no other

than stillness and movement. Once this happens you will experience lucid emptiness as the naturally luminous self-knowing awareness. Ultimately, whether we say nature and radiance, undesirable and antidote, observer and observed, mindfulness and thoughts, stillness and movement, etc., you should know that the terms of each pair are no different from one another; by receiving the blessing of the guru, properly ascertain that they are inseparable. Ultimately, to arrive at the expanse free of observer and observed is the realization of the true meaning and the culmination of all analyses. This is called "the view transcending concepts," which is free of conceptualization, or "the vajra mind view." Jetsun Milarepa said:

> Through the conviction that it is the view, look at your own mind.
> If you seek a view other than mind,
> It would be like trying to abandon your own mind, O physician monk.

Also Jetsun Mitra Yogi said:

> *Emaho!* It has never been born.
> It creates all of samsara and nirvana.
> It is nowhere else but in the center of one's heart.
> Realize it through the kindness of the guru!

Gyalwey Wangpo [Kunga Paljor] said:

> Even "good" conceptual views are destroyed.
> Beyond concepts, even the term "view" does not exist.
> The certainty that observer and observed are inseparable
> Is found through the kindness of the guru.

Hence, it is sufficient to sustain the meditation by barely not forgetting the inseparability of nature and radiance in the continuous state of thoroughly knowing the nature.

Analyzing in terms of substantial and insubstantial

The variety of thought movements is just a manifestation of precisely this mind essence. Now, is the mere designation "mind" something that exists, a concrete thing? Or is it nonexistent, nothing? If it is substantial, is it found as such in the object or in the subject? If found in the object, what is its shape and color? The same investigation should be applied to the subject as well. Furthermore, if it is nothing—insubstantial—what has created its various manifestations?

If by investigating in this way there were an existing essence it would be right to establish it as being a concrete thing, but investigating with intelligence, nothing whatsoever is found to have real existence. Therefore you should realize that the mind is something beyond the extremes of eternalism and nihilism. What are eternalism and nihilism? Nagarjuna said:

> The view of existence is the view of eternalism.
> The view of nonexistence is the view of nihilism.

As to the way in which it transcends the extremes of eternalism and nihilism, since mind has no shape, color, dwelling, support, or identifiable essence, it does not fall into the extreme of eternalism. Having the cognizance of the self-knowing inherently luminous awareness, it is not total nothingness, and therefore it does not fall into the extreme of nihilism. While it is not established as belonging to the category of an existing thing, it also does not fall into the category of being nothing—a nonexistent thing—because it lies within the sphere of experience of one's awareness-wisdom. Hence, free from being either something or nothing, it does not fall into the path of eternalism or nihilism, and this is known as *madhyamaka,* or the middle way. Continuing the above quotation:

> Therefore, the wise dwell neither
> In existence nor nonexistence.

Also:

> Whatever arises interdependently
> Is unceasing and unoriginated,
> Is neither nothing nor eternal;
> It neither comes nor goes.

And:

> What are called "existence" and "nonexistence" are extremes.
> "Empty" and "not empty" are also extremes.
> Thus, having completely abandoned the two extremes,
> The wise one does not even dwell in the middle.

Therefore, free of all mentally created conceptual modes of apprehension, such as the views of existence, nonexistence, and equality, you should rest evenly in the genuine innate state without mental fabrication.

Analyzing in terms of the three times

The essence or mode of being of one's mind transcends the extremes of eternalism, nihilism, etc. It is the empty, naked, and vividly aware mind, arising unobstructedly in a variety of ways. Examine its essence. Where has past mind gone? From where does future mind arise? How does the present mind abide?

Past mind ceases and vanishes. Future mind has neither taken birth nor yet arisen. Nothing whatsoever can be identified in the present mind. By investigating in this way, the mode of all phenomena is also seen to be similar: every single phenomenon is unreal. They are but mere designations of one's conceptual mind; hence their birth, cessation, and abiding have no existence whatsoever. You must experience mind and phenomena as never changing, like space. Lord Jowo said:

> Thus past mind ceases and vanishes. Future mind has neither taken birth nor yet arisen. Present mind is extremely difficult to examine; like space which is without color or shape, it does not exist.

Further, investigate whether there is or isn't a source from where this mind essence—the fundamental ground—arises at the beginning. Is there a location where it dwells in the meantime? Is there an exit through which it leaves at the end? If there seems to be a source, location, and exit, examine first where the mind comes from, then where it stays, and finally where it goes. Then, if you don't perceive a source at the beginning, a location in the meantime, or a destination at the end, carefully examine the way in which these are absent and reach a final conclusion. With this conviction, investigate the meaning of "unoriginated" to its depths and experience its certainty at the level of the ground, verifying such points as these: Since mind essence does not happen fortuitously, it is present at all times. Since it is unoriginated, nonabiding, and unceasing, it is incessant. It is neither good when realized nor bad when not realized. Because it endures, it neither increases nor decreases. Since it is a matter of whether you recognize it or not, it is neither obtained nor lost respectively. Because it never changes at any time, it neither waxes nor wanes.

Through all these methods of investigation, you come to know the crucial point: that mind essence has always been free from all conceptual limitations. To "see the mind" is merely a verbal convention apart from which not even as much as a hair's tip of tangibility in what is seen or of substantiality in the seer is perceived or seen. Ultimately its nature is such that it transcends the field of speech and thought, and it never changes. In *The Two Segments* it is said:

> This self-knowing awareness-wisdom transcends the path of words
> And is not in the domain of the conceptual mind.

In the *Prajñaparamita:*

> Prajñaparamita, beyond words, thoughts, and description,
> Unoriginated and unceasing, its very nature is like space.

It lies only in the domain of self-knowing awareness-wisdom.
I prostrate to the mother of the conquerors of the three times.

In the *Concise Prajñaparamita Sutra:*

People say the words, "I see space."
"How do I see space?" That is the point to analyze.
The Tathagatha has taught that phenomena are to be seen in this way.
This seeing cannot be illustrated by any other analogy.

In the *Chakrasamvara Samvarodaya:*

Though sentient beings depend on mind and mental events,
Their nature is similar to space, abiding as perfect sky,
Transparent like a crystal and a jewel,
Having a form without beginning or end.
Free from mental constructs, it does not reside in the domain of the senses.
It is unchanging and invisible,
Entirely empty and devoid of afflictions.

Thus most Indian and Tibetan scholars as well as accomplished practitioners have given the name "perfect nature" or "thoroughly knowing the nature" to the recognition of mind essence and the natural lucidity free of fixation. Master Maitripa stated:

The thorough knowing of the ground's nature
Is this innate essence that cannot be shown.
It is the way of all the conquerors,
Constantly abiding in one's own mind.

And Lord Toktse said:

This cognizance of the innate nature
Has been called "thoroughly knowing the nature"
By all male and female great siddhas.
This is the very practice that I also do.

Lord Lhatsewa said:

If you thoroughly know the nature, you never part from meditation.

Once this is seen in this way, there are no longer any fabricated patches to affix. Thoroughly knowing the nature—self-knowing awareness—carefree, and comfortable, let be in that space and sustain the essence with undistracted nonmeditation. This is important.

Analyzing apparent external objects

Lord Takpo said that whatever experiences might occur, all thoughts of subject and object arising in the mind should be classified as perceptions.[80] However, for the time being, in order to facilitate understanding, we will also designate the objects of grasping—the phenomena of the six sensory groups such as forms—as "perceptions," and examine them.

When, within the domain of karma and propensities, the eyes and the remaining four sense organs come into contact with their five objects, such as forms, perception occurs in the following way. At this point, obvious things that are well known usually appear in ordinary beings' sensory consciousness as having true individual characteristics of shape, color, and so on. Without reverting from such a common way of perceiving, no analysis is made as to the absence of true nature in outer objects, such as forms, by reducing them analytically into atoms and sides. Since we believe that once the nature of the fixating mind is resolved, the fetter of the grasped object is released by itself, we primarily analyze the perceiving consciousness.

There are eight ways of carrying out this analysis: (1) examining the natural state of perceived objects, (2) analyzing whether these appearances exist dualistically as outer and inner, (3) analyzing the identification of apparent objects, (4) analyzing the essence of perceived objects, (5) analyzing their mode of arising, (6) analyzing the objects of fixation, (7) analyzing whether they are empty or nonempty, and (8) analyzing the substance of that which ceased.

Examining the natural state of perceived objects

Before starting any of these analyses, supplicate the lama with fervent devotion and yearning, guiding your prayer toward establishing certainty about phenomena. Without wandering, while in empty lucidity let your mind be vividly aware of the appearance of any visual form. When this is happening, examine whether that apparent image has arisen from the natural radiance of mind's basic nature, or whether it exists elsewhere. Likewise, investigate its substance, shape, color, dwelling, and support. If you think that it is a thing existing apart from the mind, investigate what is the difference between the thing and the perceiving cognizance. If it seems to have substance, shape, and so forth, how is it that from the arising of just its unimpeded appearance it is established as real? As in the case of visual forms, be open to perceiving appearances of different things of the world and its inhabitants, including sounds, smells, and the other sensory objects, and examine the observer.

While examining in this way it may happen that the perception itself becomes unclear because the phenomenon stops. Or it may be that it has subsided in the state of empty lucidity along with mental occurrences and fixating thoughts, and the mind has come to rest in composure. Because of this you might not be able to clearly differentiate the perception from the perceiver. If that happens, then again be open to perceiving any phenomenon, and right on that perception you should analyze the perceiver.

In short, no matter how a phenomenon may manifest, while appearing without interruption mind and phenomenon are inseparable, arising

as emptiness transcending shape, color, and so forth. Therefore, there should be no attachment to the appearance and if you experience it as somewhat lackluster, a slight experience corresponding to this stage has arisen within you. So from then on, when subtle or coarse phenomena arise, you should keep to perceiving them as empty phenomena.

Analyzing whether these appearances exist dualistically as outer and inner

Again be open to perceiving a visual form.[81] Examine the mind and the apparent form. Are these two side by side, outside and inside, one on top of the other, etc.? If they are so, are they one autonomous entity or are they two separate entities? In case the apparent form and mind are one entity, are they so due to the mind becoming the apparent form or to the apparent form becoming the mind? Likewise, by examining the things, sounds, and so forth of the universe and its inhabitants, if you come to understand that phenomena and mind are coemergent from the beginning, like the sun and its light, that itself would be enough.

Analyzing the identification of apparent objects

Again be open to perceiving a visual form and examine it. Can it be identified as empty? Can it be identified as a phenomenon? Can it be identified as mental clarity? By similarly investigating the sounds and so forth of the world and its inhabitants, when you are sure that there is nothing whatsoever that can be identified, rest right there.

Analyzing the essence of perceived objects

Again be open to perceiving a visual form. Examine whether its essence truly exists. Since in the face of delusion all kinds of things arise, analyze whether it is false. Likewise, examine all other objects of perception, whereby you will not find any true nature at all in any of them. However, since they do arise from an interdependence of causes and

conditions, they are not utterly nothing. Experiencing them as the moon on water, for example, rest right there.

Analyzing their mode of arising

Again be open to perceiving a visual form. Has it arisen from external conditions? Has it arisen in the eye, the gateway of vision? Does it arise from the mind consciousness? Thoroughly examine questions such as these. Similarly, analyze the objects of the other senses.

Although it arises as an object of both gateway and conditions, and so forth, unless it is seen by the mind it will not arise in the field of consciousness. Therefore, understanding that the object arises from the interdependence of conditions and gateway, if you realized and experienced that consciousness arises from the appearance and the appearance arises from consciousness, this would be sufficient.

Analyzing the objects of fixation

Again be open to perceiving a visual form. Examine that which fixates upon it as a concrete object with inherent characteristics so that it appears as something that exists. Examine that which, from the dualistic mind, fixates on the natural state as empty. Likewise examine that which fixates on the object as existing or not or as being true or false. By also properly examining other things and beings in the world you should come to understand that free from the stain of conceptual fixation on inherent characteristics, the things and beings of this world are the radiance of the unoriginated originally free nature, arising without impediment. If so, that would be sufficient.

Analyzing whether they are empty or nonempty

Again be open to perceiving a visual form. Is it something concrete or not? If not, is it insubstantial, empty? If it is a concrete phenomenon, examine whether it is permanent and stable or not, instead of being a deluded perception by the visual consciousness of an object corresponding to the six sensory groups. If it is empty, is it primordially so? Also analyze the various other things, sounds, and so forth of the entire world. If by doing so you come to realize that the myriad things that appear in the absence of investigation are, when properly investigated, false phenomena similar to an illusion, indivisible from mind, that would be sufficient.

Analyzing the substance of that which ceased

Again be open to perceiving a visual form. At the end, when it is not seen anymore, and thus it has ceased as if becoming invisible, how has it ceased? Is it because the apparent thing lost its support of delusion, or rather that it has somehow faded away? Has the feeling corresponding to the five perceiving gateways stopped, or is it that the visual consciousness has become too distracted, after which the previous mind has stopped on its own and then another subsequent mind arises? Or has its visibility become dormant? Investigate all these and, applying the same reasoning, extend your analysis to all sounds, etc., of the entire world. When you finally experience that appearances are not blocked and therefore are without destruction or cessation, then that will be sufficient.

By thus examining and investigating, the dualistic fixation on phenomena and mind essence as separate is destroyed. Then no matter how the various phenomena might appear, you will experience them as having an unidentifiable essence, as empty appearance or appearing emptiness. You should then know that being inseparable from mind essence they are like the analogy of an illusion or, better said, like the dreaming mind and its dream images. For example, while dreaming, any outer image arising in the dream is not beyond the dreaming consciousness itself; the dream images and the dreaming consciousness are inseparable. Likewise, although all kinds of outer phenomena appear, they are simply appearances, mere unobstructed appearances of mind essence, and nothing beyond that. You should know that your mind and phenomena appearing as the myriad things are inseparable.

In a sutra we find:

> The three worlds are only mind.
> If they are known as mind, then there are no phenomena.

Lord Gotsangpa states:

> All these phenomena are one's own mind; although they appear, they have no true nature.

Siddha Orgyenpa says:

> Mind and phenomena, these two, are indeed the same, like fire and heat.

Let us see the reason that this actuality appears falsely. From beginningless time our individual minds have been disturbed by the power of deluded propensities and karma. On account of this, all kinds of phenomena arise like dreams. Moreover, the different individual perceptions cannot be defined as being one by stating, "They are this." For example, what is regarded by humans as earth and stones is seen by gods and spirits as mansions. When looking at the same liquid, gods see it as nectar (*amrita*); hungry ghosts (*pretas*), as pus and blood; and humans, as tea or beer; whatever the case, none of these perceptions can be considered ultimately true. Similarly, if anger is blazing within like fire, all outer phenomena appear as enemies. Once we have trained on inner love, compassion, and bodhichitta, outer beings are perceived as our parents. When we have stabilized the development stage within, all phenomena arise as male and female deities. If the inner realization of mahamudra has been trained to the point of transcending meditation and postmeditation, all external phenomena arise as the play of great bliss dharmakaya. Dusum Khyenpa said:

> An angry meditator
> Sees all phenomena as enemies.

> A meditator who has practiced loving-kindness
> Sees everybody not as friends or foes but as parents.
> A meditator who has stabilized the development stage
> Sees the entire world and inhabitants as divine.
> The meditator who has practiced luminosity
> Realizes everything as dharmakaya, without dividing outer and inner.
> What is outer is inner;
> The doings of the inner arise as the outer.

Therefore, be convinced that the variety of phenomena is neither totally external nor remains totally within mind essence, but rather phenomena and mind are nondual. Knowing that praise and blame, pleasure and pain, love and hate, and so forth are dreamlike deceptive seductions, give up doing as you like. And in relation to buddhahood, don't deliberately practice just to achieve an equanimity free of desire. Whatever appears, whatever may occur, you must leave it to itself, sustaining its essence without modification.

However, as long as there are impure collective karma and habitual patterns, object, sense organ, and consciousness fall under their domain. We merely know that these three arise interdependently, but apart from that, we haven't turned away from the mode of arising of collective phenomena. To have completely cut off all misconceptions regarding the indivisibility of phenomena and mind, and to merge mind and phenomena free of hope and fear is said to happen at the time of the greater level of one taste. Here, as the opportunity arose, we simply mentioned it.

Special investigation

Three general analyses are carried out here: (1) analyzing the root, ego fixation; (2) analyzing the birthplace and way of being of the coarse concepts of the five poisons; and (3) analyzing the circumstances, positive and negative, pleasurable and painful.

Analyzing the root, ego fixation

There are two types of ego-fixation: (1) inner and (2) outer.

Inner: Analyzing the ego-fixation of the person

Properly examine the five aggregates, i.e., form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness. Is there a substantial entity in these five aggregates? Or are they insubstantial? How is the true existence of the self fixated upon these aggregates? If you believe that it is real, this is the personal ego-fixation, so persevere in further examining it. If all the aggregates as a whole are realized to be in essence emptiness, this is what is called "the egolessness of the person" and it would be sufficient.

Outer: Analyzing the fixation on the identity of phenomena

Examine the five sense gates, the outer objects grasped at, and the inner grasping mind comprising the eight consciousnesses where the perception takes place. Are any of these truly existing or not? Check whether there is a cause for the bondage brought about by fixating on subject and object as separate, which creates the notion of mine. Investigate in other ways as well. If there is clinging, it is the fixation on the identity of phenomena, so continue investigating. If you realize it to be pure emptiness, this is what is called "the lack of identity of phenomena," and it will be sufficient.

Analyzing the birthplace and way of abiding of the coarse concepts of the five poisons

Five analyses are to be carried out: (1) analyzing ignorance-dullness, (2) analyzing grasping and desire, (3) analyzing cruel hatred, (4) analyzing hostility and jealousy, and (5) analyzing self-importance and pride.

Analyzing ignorance-dullness

Not knowing what is to be adopted and rejected in terms of the outer causes and effects of karma; being deluded about the characteristics, the mode of arising, and the natural state of inner awareness; and a present lack of mental clarity such as sleep, dullness, or torpor—whether these forms of unclear mind are present or you arouse them deliberately, examine the fresh identity of that which arises. First, what is the birthplace of that ignorance-dullness? Where does it arise from? From what cause did it originate? Which conditions have brought it about? If by investigating you think that it is born from the mind, are they two separate entities like a child born from its mother? Or does it arise from the mind's expression, like water and wave? Investigate well in this and other ways.

Next, in which way does it abide? Does it dwell in the upper or lower body, outside or inside, or anywhere else? What shape, color, or substance does it have?

If after following such lines of inquiry you conclude that it is a manifestation of delusion, has this been provoked by a disease or generated by a demon, instead of being an expression of the mind? Can it affect positively or negatively the empty mind? Is its identity different from mind essence or is it the same? Investigate thoroughly.

Finally, how is it eliminated? If it has stopped, which conditions made it stop? If it has been eliminated, which conditions removed it? If after examining in this way you think that it has become nothing, has it somehow ended by itself and vanished or has it dissolved right into the mind? Properly inquire in these and other ways.

Analyzing grasping and desire

You may have solid attachment to your wealth, possessions, merchandise, or food, or you may be attracted to and cling to a specific object and so feel desire, craving, and longing. If you have any of these concepts, examine its essence as before. If not, then deliberately arouse one. First, from where is it born? Then, what is its mode of being? Finally,

where does it stop? Properly examine by following lines of inquiry such as these.

Analyzing cruel hatred

A fierce, cruel hatred toward those who disagree with you, such as enemies, may be burning in your heart. Whether with a motive or not, you may be experiencing anger or cruel feelings toward someone who incites it, but if not, deliberately arouse it. Examine its essence as before. First, where was it born? Next, how does it abide? Finally, where does it stop? Keep on investigating in these and other ways.

Analyzing hostility and jealousy

Toward someone else, whoever it may be, you may feel apprehensive that he may be higher, wealthier, more powerful, and so forth. Feeling a sense of loss to different degrees, you may be unhappy and spiteful. If you do not, then deliberately arouse any of these feelings. Thoroughly examine its essence as before. Where was it born to begin with? How does it abide in the meantime? Where does it finally cease?

Analyzing self-importance and pride

Due to your beauty, wealth, or power; your learning, reflection, and meditation; or anything else, you may feel that you are superior to others. Your attitude reflects the thought, "Nobody is like me. Apart from me, nobody knows." If you do not have these feelings, in any degree, then deliberately arouse any of them. Analyze its essence. What kind of birthplace does it have at the beginning? Then, how does it abide? Finally, how does it cease? As before, properly examine questions such as these.

Thus, by examining the concepts of the five poisons, you come to see that it is dualistic fixation that makes them appear to be separate from mind essence. Whatever form of the five poisons arises, experience it

as empty lucidity, lacking an identifiable essence. You should know that mind essence and the five poisons are inseparable, like water and waves. Waves do not go beyond the water; the water itself arises as waves, and these are not something other than water's nature. Similarly, the concepts of the five poisons simply arise, without going beyond the mind essence, empty lucidity. And as far as mind essence is concerned, it also arises unimpededly as any of the concepts of the five poisons; you should be certain that these lack an identity and are no other than the empty lucidity of mind essence.

Analyzing circumstances, positive and negative, pleasurable and painful

Four analyses are carried out: (1) analyzing external positive circumstances, (2) analyzing external negative circumstances, (3) analyzing inner mental happiness or joy, and (4) analyzing inner mental suffering or unpleasantness.

Analyzing external positive circumstances

At present you may be experiencing some degree of happiness; you have no suffering and whatever you wish for such as food, wealth, enjoyments, and fame is accomplished. If not, then deliberately arouse this experience in your mind. Regarding the fresh identity of that experience, first, what kind of source does it have? In what manner does it arise? Then, what is its essence—substantial or insubstantial? Finally, while the experience is fading away and becomes imperceptible, where does it fade to? How does it vanish? Thoroughly investigate in these and other ways.

Analyzing external negative circumstances

You may be encountering undesirable situations, such as hostility from enemies, obstacles from gods and spirits, physical illness, or mental suffering. In case you are not, then deliberately arouse in your mind any

of these experiences. Examine that perception as before. Firstly, how does it arise? Then, what is its essence? Finally, how does it fade away?

Analyzing inner mental happiness or joy

Your body is healthy and your mind is joyful and at peace, experiences and realizations are increasing, and so forth. If not, then deliberately arouse such a feeling. Examine its essence as before: how it arises at the beginning, abides in the meantime, and vanishes at the end.

Analyzing inner mental suffering or unpleasantness

Body and mind feel uneasy and you are unhappy, experiences are not increasing, and you feel no joy. You may be having any such feelings. If not, then deliberately arouse them. Analyze their essence as before: how they arise at the beginning, abide in the meantime, and how they change and fade away at the end.

By examining in these ways, you will find no distinctions between good and bad situations. You should experience the truth of nonorigination as they are all inseparable from essential mind, emptiness. In brief, you must examine them until you have reached a definitive conclusion, experiencing the rootlessness of the basic nature or ground of essential mind.

In some styles of guidance advice, based on a suitable system of seeking mind, a method of inquiry into only the lucid knowing of the thought-free mind is applied; and apart from that, one does not carry out any examination on thoughts or phenomena. We regard this as slightly unrefined because practicing in that way, most minds will find it easy to meditate during stillness, but difficult when there is thought movement or perceptions. Similarly, some say that by looking at thoughts and phenomena as described, shamatha turns into lucid emptiness; however, although this indeed may occur to some beginners, others simply draw thoughts and appearances toward the state of meditative composure and other than that they do not resolve thoughts and phenomena and take them as the path. Therefore you should be aware of this distinction.

By having investigated through the above analyses, you come to experience the natural condition of mind beyond thought and words. Finally, even the analyzer, the discernment itself, subsides and vanishes on its own, after which it is said that thought-free wisdom arises. The Great Brahmin said:

> By looking at the nature of primordially pure space
> Again and again, the seeing ceases.

And:

> When mind turns itself into a symbol
> And thoughts do not move but stay still,
> Just like salt dissolving in water,
> Mind dissolves into its nature.

Furthermore other effects take place. You are free from attachment to the things of this life, and passion and aggression are eradicated. The core hidden deception bursts and the false structure of the conventional level collapses. Samsara is uprooted and the foundation of nirvana is laid. The root of the five poisons dries up and you see the spectacle of illusion.

13: The Fruition of Vipashyana

6. Evaluating whether vipashyana has arisen or not
7. Equivalence with other systems of vipashyana meditation
8. How to meditate with shamatha and vipashyana united
9. The fruition of vipashyana

Evaluating whether vipashyana has arisen or not

Every time one practices vipashyana as described above, one investigates with discerning prajña. At that time, it happens to some people in whom shamatha stillness is very intense that, due to this stillness, they do not ascertain the point being examined, no matter how hard they try. Just as they start to analyze, the samadhi of shamatha arises and they are convinced that all the points of the investigation are resolved right then; thus their vision of the essence becomes deluded. Others have a very strong experience of nothingness, and due to this the lack of essential nature of all phenomena appears as that experience of nothingness; taking that as the essence they too are deluded. For a while they should apply methods for removing that shamatha experience and their clinging to it. Then, once the fog of experience is cleared from their cognizance, they should again practice vipashyana, whereby they will succeed.

It also happens that some unintelligent people with great obscurations do not see the essence no matter how much they investigate. For

some time they should exert themselves in purification and generation of merit practices. Once they have developed the sharp clarity of shamatha, at some point they should practice vipashyana. Some other people are very intelligent, so when they have a good understanding of an idea, they proudly regard that as having had the experience. Though they may be very eloquent, most scholars have no experience. As the saying goes, "You believe the person who gives explanations about herbs and roots but does not identify the medicine." Some others may not know how to put it into words, but when the opportunity arises for the experience, they gain conviction on the basis of the essence. Therefore, it is extremely important to distinguish between all these. No matter how good a meditation may be, if vipashyana has not dawned, it is simply one of the worldly non-Buddhist or common Buddhist meditations. It does not even qualify as a meditation of the hinayana, so how could it possibly qualify as a meditation of mahayana, madhyamaka or especially mahamudra? For this reason it is important to earnestly practice vipashyana.

Now, to what degree must vipashyana have arisen to be considered true vipashyana? The unmistaken vipashyana that has directly realized the truth of dharmata comes only at the time of the greater level of the yoga of simplicity. In our case, however, we are only concerned with the vipashyana that arises in the beginner's mind. For instance, the first moon of the month does not have the same function as the full moon, yet it is still conventionally considered to be the moon. Therefore here we are concerned with the vipashyana that includes one's mind and the thoughts and phenomena arising from its radiance, as discussed earlier. All phenomena of subject and object are unoriginated, nonabiding, and unceasing. To know this crucial point and to have the experience and conviction born from deep within that they are devoid of true essence or nature is what, at this point, should be defined as vipashyana. It may happen that, for some time, vipashyana does not arise to such a degree. However, as followers of the practice lineage, we acknowledge the following beginner's vipashyana. The essence of one's mind is an unidentifiable void; it is the primordial cognizance that has not been fabricated. In the mind that is aware of itself and lucid by itself, these

two, void and cognizance, are inseparable. To gain the experience that the mind has ascertained that it is so is a beginner's vipashyana. By sustaining just that much at the beginning, we are confident that unmistaken vipashyana will gradually arise.

Why do we believe that this will happen? The evident concept-free wisdom of mind essence does not fall into any extreme whatsoever, whether of existence or nonexistence, being or nonbeing, eternalism or nihilism. It is experienced and known as inseparable from lucidity, emptiness, and awareness. Nonetheless, it cannot be illustrated and there is no way to express it verbally. It is self-existent and self-arising, and the vivid wakefulness in exactly this state is given the name "vipashyana," or "higher insight." From the state of ordinary being onward, it is never separate from oneself even for an instant, but as long as it is not embraced by the pith instructions and blessings, it is not recognized. At the time of resting in shamatha meditation, that which rests or watches whether there is stillness or not, and so forth, is precisely this vipashyana, except for the fact that it somehow does not see itself. In fact, the discursive thoughts at the time of ordinary being, which proliferate as a concrete chain, are none other than vipashyana itself manifesting as discursive thoughts. The experiences of shamatha are also none other than the vipashyana cognizance arising as bliss, clarity, nonthought, and all the rest. Nevertheless, to maintain stillness alone without knowing the original face of bare nonconceptual mind does not become a cause for enlightenment. So from seeing the original face onward, there is nothing whatsoever that does not become vipashyana or mahamudra, whether it is stillness, movement, or anything else. As Lorepa said:

> No matter what arises in the field of the six senses,
> If the mind does not grasp at it,
> It spontaneously appears and is self-liberated.
> Have you realized this distinction, all you meditators?

In the sutra system, it is taught that first the pliancy of shamatha is accomplished. Based on that, the power from practicing vipashyana brings about a pliancy that is considered to be the actual vipashyana,

and any vipashyana after that will be similar. In our case it is not that definite; it depends strictly on the nature of the experience and realization.

Equivalence with other systems of vipashyana meditation

In the *Sutra That Unravels the Intent* and other sutras, the four vipashyanas of distinguishing phenomena and the rest are explained. Here are the equivalences with our system.

To focus on what arises from the expression or radiance of the mind, the thoughts and perceptions that include all phenomena of subject and object, is the vipashyana that distinguishes phenomena. This is because after focusing on the diversity of phenomena—all knowable objects—they are completely distinguished from each other. To focus on the absence of true nature in each of the aspects of subject and object is the vipashyana that utterly distinguishes, because the distinction is carried out by focusing on the "as it is" aspect of knowable objects. To discern these two with fixation on inherent attributes is the vipashyana that completely discerns, because the coarse meanings of "as it is" and "as many as there are" are discerned with fixation on inherent attributes. The subtle investigation deriving from these two is the vipashyana that completely investigates, because even the subtlest aspects of "as it is" and "as many as there are" are perfectly investigated. In the *Shravaka Levels* it is said:

> In this regard, how is the distinction carried out? Full differentiation should be accomplished through the object of completely trained scrutiny, the object of mastery, the object of completely trained afflictions, and as many objects as there are available.

Also, as found in the *Sutra That Unravels the Intent:*

> If we compare the explanations of the three vipashyanas derived from attributes, in our case the diverse objects of

observation of vipashyana are in the conceptual style; so this is equivalent to the vipashyana derived from attributes. This is because the object of observation of vipashyana is only a conceptualized image, a mental engagement. The way to bring about the realization that these have no true nature is the vipashyana derived from a thorough search. This is because it is a mental engagement that knows the object of examination that was not realized before. The way to become familiar with the attained freedom related with all phenomena having no true nature is the vipashyana derived from discernment. This is because, once the natural condition of all phenomena is realized through discerning prajña, this vipashyana brings about familiarization with the natural condition so that one comes into contact with the perfect bliss of liberation.

The same sutra also states:

> What is meant by "derived from attributes?" It is the vipashyana that mentally engages solely on a conceptual image in the field of experience of samadhi. What is the vipashyana derived from a thorough search? It is that particular vipashyana that mentally engages in order to have the excellent realization of those phenomena that have not been extremely well realized through prajña in the previous vipashyana. What is the vipashyana derived from discernment? It is that particular vipashyana that mentally engages in order to achieve freedom derived from the phenomena that have been extremely well realized through prajña, and to properly come into contact with bliss.

Apart from the classification of vipashyana thus described simply being mentioned in sutras and commentaries, the manners of establishing certainty in each have not been explained in the texts on the stages of meditation. The key points of all these forms of vipashyana are condensed in the manner of establishing certainty based upon the twofold selflessness, which is very renowned in the sutra system both in

India and Tibet. Comparing these with ours the manner of establishing certainty about the essence of mind is equivalent to the approach found in the sutras that establishes the selflessness of the individual self. In the sutra section the approach is through reasoning, and the individual is held to be the continuity of the aggregates. This apprehends itself as permanent and singular, after which it clings to and fixates upon itself as "I" or self. This is the self of the individual. To know that it has no true nature is called "the selflessness of the individual." Likewise, in our case that which holds itself as permanent and singular and fixates as "I" or self is one's own mind itself. This is confirmed not only by establishing that it has no true nature, but also by one's own mind becoming the object of meditation.

Similarly to establish certainty about thoughts and phenomena is equivalent to the sutra method of establishing the lack of identity, or selflessness, of phenomena. In the sutra system, the individual self designates the aggregates, elements, etc., as phenomena. Clinging to and fixating upon them as things endowed with inherent defining attributes is the identity, or self, of phenomena. To know them as having no true nature is the selflessness of phenomena. Likewise, here we not only establish that the mental events and external forms, sounds, etc., designated by the mind and appearing as things endowed with inherent attributes have no true nature, but we also take them as the object of our meditation.

However, the order in which the subject and object are ascertained is different. In the sutra systems it is taught that without first resolving the object grasped upon, the subject—the fixated mind—cannot be resolved. Dharmakirti stated:

> Without refuting the object ["mine"],
> That ["I"] cannot be eliminated.

Aryadeva said:

> If the object is seen as lacking inherent identity,
> The seed of existence is obliterated.

In our case, we believe that proceeding in that way leads to a lot of difficulty in resolving the fixating mind. Therefore we first resolve the fixating mind, whereby the object of grasping becomes resolved by being self-liberated. By cutting a tree from the root, its branches, leaves, and petals all dry up. Tilopa applied this analogy in his teaching and the same has been taught in all the instructions of essential truth.

How to meditate with shamatha and vipashyana united

Shamatha is responsible for ensuring that the mind does not waver from the object. After the realization of suchness, perverted views can no longer shake the mind and it remains like a mountain, which is the work of vipashyana. Therefore both shamatha and vipashyana are needed. As said in the *Moon Torch Sutra:*

> By the strength of shamatha, distraction ceases.
> Through vipashyana, it becomes like a mountain.

For beginners the meditation with these two in union has been explained as follows. If due to excessive analytical meditation and vipashyana distraction develops, one should practice shamatha. And when through excessive shamatha and meditative resting there is dullness, vipashyana should be practiced. When practicing shamatha and vipashyana together, one should practice truly uncontrived equanimity. In the first *Stages of Meditation* we find:

> If dullness of mind is not removed then there is no vipashyana because of extreme dullness and the mind becoming as if blind. Therefore, if the mind is dull, this must be removed. If by practicing vipashyana prajña becomes excessive, then the mind moves too much, like a butter lamp placed in the wind. Therefore the vision of suchness will not be very clear. Hence, at that time shamatha should be practiced.

And:

> At some point both are practiced together. Then, one should remain without applying an antidote for as long as no harm is done to body or mind.

Summarizing these topics, mind essence is included in nonmeditation and nondistraction. This should be known by beginners. Nonmeditation is on the side of shamatha and relaxation, so dullness arises when it is excessive. Nondistraction is on the side of vipashyana and tightness, so agitation arises when it is excessive. Therefore we believe that one must maintain the meditative composure balanced between tight and loose. Lord Gampopa said:

> Don't manipulate, rest carefree.
> Don't seek further, rest casually.
> Don't mentally engage, rest without reference point.

Therefore don't wish for a meditation; don't wish for an experience; don't think, "This is the meditation." Don't mentally fabricate it in any way whatsoever. Thoroughly knowing the nature, sustain the unveiled original face of the basic nature as it naturally flows and arouse conviction in that itself. As Saraha said:

> Once the mind, the root of all of samara and nirvana,
> Has been realized, rest carefree by not meditating.
> Once it rests in you, to look for it elsewhere is to be deluded.
> Being neither this nor that, it is the continuous state of the innate.

Nevertheless, in the state of nothing-at-all-to-meditate-upon, a somewhat one-pointed mind is definitely required, in which there is a degree of nondistraction based upon whatever experience one has. The Great Brahmin said:

Kyema! Point at that itself and look!
While through undistracted mind the looking disappears,
It is not realized with a wandering mind.
You lose the jewel of that itself in the dense jungle of concrete things.

And Shawaripa said:

Kyema! With undistracted mind, look at yourself!

Virupa said:

Don't think at all whether it exists or not. Rest without distraction in the continuous state.

Tilopa said:

If there is no distraction, that is the king of meditations.

Maitripa said:

Resting without distraction in the continuous state . . .

In this context, to rest one's mind of its own accord without meditating at all is shamatha. Not to wander from the ultimate is vipashyana. Nonmeditation and nondistraction acquiring the same taste comprises all the points of shamatha and vipashyana united. According to the sutra system this is called "thought-free wisdom," "thought-free undeluded awareness," and "natural emptiness." In vajrayana it is called "coemergent wisdom," "natural luminosity," and "utter emptiness." The last *Stages of Meditation* states:

If on occasion, because you are free from dullness and agitation, you enter composure and by its own natural engagement

the mind becomes extremely clear about suchness, then relaxing the effort, you should practice equanimity. You should know that you have, at that time, accomplished the path of the unity of shamatha and vipashyana.

In other words, not to conceptualize any other thing apart from the object of attention, and to settle the mind one-pointedly on that itself is shamatha. To fully distinguish the object's nature and discern it, or else to be convinced about the realization that the object's very essence does not exist is vipashyana. Merging these two without separation is shamatha and vipashyana united.

The fruition of vipashyana

Generally, having received instructions on how to look for the mind, what is the fruition that one obtains as a result of having searched through all these methods? Although short explanations about the corresponding fruition in each case have already been given, let us discuss this subject further. Regarding the support of one's mind, this mind is not supported by anything, whether outside, inside, or in between. The essence of the mind has no identifiable color or shape, it is inseparable from its radiance, and is free from the extremes of origination, abiding, and cessation. Therefore, no matter how much or where one searches, nothing at all is found—this is the great emptiness free from all mind-made limitations, effort, and activity. Though it is not perceived as being an existing substantial thing, similarly it is neither nonexistent, both, nor neither—it is free from the four extremes. It is the sublime nature of mind and all phenomena. It is absolute space. It is not to be examined through discursive thought. In the perfect primordial essence, great emptiness, it occurs as spontaneously present[82] awareness.

In fact, past obscurations due to reifying fixations have confused the truth, what is empty has not been seen as empty, and what is without self has not been seen to be without self; due to this the truth became the chain of delusion. Here, by having practiced the heart of all teachings, the path of profound pith instructions, and through the power of the

great blessings of a sacred guru, you come to unmistakably understand the natural condition of emptiness, the unoriginated basic nature of your mind, primordially free from obscurations. Seeing what is—not as if beholding it before your eyes, but as it is—you find certainty. In this respect, other instructions teach:

> What is seen is emptiness. What sees is emptiness. How it is seen is emptiness. The means or circumstances that bring about the seeing are also emptiness. This is connected with the fourfold pointing-out, namely "emptiness by emptiness as emptiness through emptiness."

In this and other quotations, everything is linked to emptiness. Likewise the Buddha taught a great deal about sixteen, thirty, and other numbers of types of emptiness, such as outer emptiness, inner emptiness, outer and inner emptiness, emptiness of emptiness, and emptiness of all phenomena. There are numerous detailed explanations on the attainment of the true meaning of all these types of emptiness, but we do not need to discuss them here.

Actually, it is not enough to hold all these types of emptiness as merely empty space, we need to realize emptiness as a spontaneous presence. In other words, to give an example, the essence of the mind is utterly empty like space; it is *dharmata*. Without ever wavering from it even slightly, its unimpeded radiance arises as the myriad things. But no matter how these myriad things may arise, all that arises is spontaneously present in the great void. In short, what are known as nondual phenomena-emptiness, inseparable awareness-emptiness, inseparable clarity-emptiness, inseparable bliss-emptiness and so forth have to be understood intellectually, realized, and experienced.

In the sutras, tantras, and pith instructions it is clearly taught that all phenomena in samsara and nirvana are by essence utterly empty. It is only in emptiness that the manifested, unimpeded radiance arises as the myriad things and is spontaneously present. So if one is biased and says that this is spontaneously present in nirvana but not in samsara, one has not realized the genuine spontaneous presence and is thus gripped

by the fixation on inherent characteristics. Here, if you find certainty in the profound truth, the various fetters are completely released and due to this samsara and nirvana do not arise as good and bad; indeed you see the profound truth of the inseparability of good and bad. By implication, spontaneously present emptiness has a spontaneously present result. Furthermore, you understand that from the beginning, awareness, phenomena, clarity, and bliss are all indivisible from emptiness, this indivisibility being the natural condition of the great spontaneous presence. Therefore, in the very natural condition of your mind, the state of things as they are, there is not even the slightest taint, obscuration, or anything considered impure that needs to be eliminated or expelled, nor is there even a hair of achievable qualities to be incorporated or attained. This is because of the vital point that from the beginning it is great enlightenment by nature. Thus, through the principle of nothing to remove and nothing to add, it is naturally self-liberated. Without depending on other antidotes for even an instant, the fetter itself is the unsurpassable king of liberation. By corroborating this you actualize the essential point that all reifying fixations of hope and fear, adoption and rejection are self-liberated in their original state. In a scripture it is said:

> Whatever is the cause of bondage,
> That itself is the liberating path.
> Here there is no fetter at all:
> Whatever the fetter, that is liberation.

Acharya Nagarjuna said:

> If realized, tell me what is there that is able to bind?
> Whatever the fetter, from the beginning it is liberation itself.
> Since neither bondage nor fetter is found to exist anywhere,
> Let the elephant living in the forest roam as it pleases.

The great scholar Khenpo Bodhisattva [Shantarakshita] said:

Without wavering from the space of sameness, it exhibits all kinds of magic.
All small rivers unite in the ocean and taste salty.
In this multiplicity in one taste, there are no distinctions.
When everything is pervaded by the taste of the innate, all is good.

Siddha Luipa said:

Although one has actualized the unchanging innate cognizance,
Out of desire one strenuously seeks the buddha elsewhere.
This is like searching for the elephant's footprints when the elephant has already been found.
Since I know there is no buddhahood, I am free from the desirous mind.

Siddha Ghundhipa[83] said:

The whole phenomenal world is primordially liberated; it is the dharmadhatu.
In mahamudra there is nothing to abandon or realize.
The bird in the sky does not grasp at anything.
Children become exhausted from their efforts.
Rest free in the effortless state.

Dombhi Heruka said:

The equality of samsara and nirvana is beyond constructs.
Accomplishment through effort is exhausting.
In the transparent nonduality of object and mind,
How deluded it is to grasp at them as separate!
In the nonduality of self and other, the dharmakaya,
How pitiful it is to cling to good and bad.

The great Acharya Chandrakirti said:

Blind eyes; it sees nothing.
Ignorant; it thinks of nothing.
A cripple's gait; it goes nowhere.
A pauper's treasure; nothing is attained.

The great Acharya Nyima Bepa said:

When you look at the object, it is unoriginated.
When you look at the mind, it is free of constructs.
This truth of nonduality transcends concepts.
There is nothing whatsoever that I cognize.

Lord Gyare said:

The mind resting as it is is dharmakaya.
Conceptual thought is liberated into its original condition.
Experience the truth beyond thought!

There are a great number of quotations such as these.

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Nyingthik
or The Innermost Essence
JIGME LINGPA

This is the lion's roar which subdues the rampant confusions and misunderstandings of those meditators who have abandoned materialistic attachments to meditate on the innermost essence.

The maha ati, which is beyond conceptions and transcends both grasping and letting go, is the essence of transcendental insight. This is the unchanging state of nonmeditation in which there is awareness but no clinging. Understanding this, I pay ceaseless homage to the maha ati with great simplicity.

> Here is the essence of the maha ati tantra,
> The innermost heart of Padmakara's teachings,
> The life force of the dakinis.
> This is the ultimate teaching of all the nine vehicles.[1]
> It can be transmitted only by a guru of the thought lineage
> And not by words alone.
> Nevertheless I have written this
> For the benefit of great meditators
> Who are dedicated to the highest teaching.
> This teaching was taken from the treasury of dharmadhatu[2]
> And is not created out of attachment
> To theories and philosophical abstractions.

First the pupil must find an accomplished guru with whom he has a good karmic link. The teacher must be a holder of the thought lineage

1. The nine vehicles are shravakayana, pratyekabuddhayana, mahayana, kriyayana, upayana, yogayana, mahayogayana, anuyana, and atiyana.

2. The dharmadhatu is all-encompassing space.

transmission. The pupil must have single-minded devotion and faith, which makes possible the transmission of the teacher's understanding.

The maha ati is of the greatest simplicity. It is what *is*. It cannot be shown by analogy; nothing can obstruct it. It is without limitation and transcends all extremes. It is clear-cut nowness, which can never change its shape or color. When you become one with this state the desire to meditate itself dissolves; you are freed from the chain of meditation and philosophy, and conviction is born within you. The thinker has deserted. There is no longer any benefit to be gained from "good" thoughts and no harm is to be suffered from "bad" thoughts. Neutral thoughts can no longer deceive. You become one with transcendental insight and boundless space. Then you will find signs of progress on the path. There is no longer any question of rampant confusions and misunderstandings.

Although this teaching is the king of the yanas, meditators are divided into those who are highly receptive to it, those who are less receptive, and those who are quite unreceptive. The most highly receptive pupils are hard to find, and it sometimes happens that teacher and pupil are unable to find a true meeting point. In such a case nothing is gained and misconceptions may arise concerning the nature of maha ati.

Those who are less receptive begin by studying the theory and gradually develop the feeling and true understanding. Nowadays many people regard the theory as being the meditation. Their meditation may be clear and devoid of thoughts and it may be relaxing and enjoyable, but this is merely the temporary experiencing of bliss. They think this is meditation and that no one knows any better than them. They think, "I have attained this understanding" and they are proud of themselves. Then, if there is no competent teacher, their experience is only theoretical. As it is said in the scriptures of maha ati: "Theory is like a patch on a coat—one day it will come apart." People often try to discriminate between "good" thoughts and "bad" thoughts, like trying to separate milk from water. It is easy enough to accept the negative experiences in life but much harder to see the positive experiences as part of the path. Even those who claim to have reached the highest stage of realization are completely involved with worldly concerns and fame. They are attracted by devaputra.[3] This means they have not realized the self-liberation of the six senses. Such people regard fame as extraordinary and miraculous.

3. Devaputra personifies the evil force which causes attraction to sense objects.

This is like claiming that a raven is white. But those who are completely dedicated to the practice of dharma without being concerned about worldly fame and glory should not become too self-satisfied on account of their higher developments of meditation. They must practice the guru yoga throughout the four periods of the day in order to receive the blessings of the guru and to merge their minds with his and open the eye of insight. Once this experience is attained it should not be disregarded. The yogi should thenceforth dedicate himself to this practice with unremitting perseverance. Subsequently his experience of the void will become more peaceful, or he will experience greater clarity and insight. Or again, he may begin to realize the shortcomings of discursive thoughts and thereby develop discriminating wisdom. Some individuals will be able to use both thoughts and the absence of thoughts as meditation, but it should be borne in mind that that which notes what is happening is the tight grip of ego.

Look out for the subtle hindrance of trying to analyze experiences. This is a great danger. It is too early to label all thoughts as dharmakaya. The remedy is the wisdom of nowness, changeless and unfailing. Once freed from the bondage of philosophical speculation, the meditator develops penetrating awareness in his practice. If he analyzes his meditation and postmeditation experiences he will be led astray and make many mistakes. If he fails to understand his shortcomings he will never gain the free-flowing insight of nowness, beyond all concepts. He will have only a conceptual and nihilistic view of the void, which is characteristic of the lesser yanas.

It is also a mistake to regard the void as a mirage as though it were merely a combination of vivid perceptions and nothingness. This is the experience of the lower tantras, which might be induced by practice of the svabhava mantra. It is likewise a mistake, when discursive thoughts are pacified, to overlook the clarity and regard the mind as merely blank. The experience of true insight is the simultaneous awareness of both stillness and active thoughts. According to the maha ati teaching, meditation consists of seeing whatever arises in the mind and simply remaining in the state of nowness. Continuing in this state after meditation is known as "the postmeditation experience."

It is a mistake to try to *concentrate* on emptiness and, after meditation, intellectually to regard everything as a mirage. Primordial insight is the state which is not influenced by the undergrowth of thoughts. It is a

mistake to be on guard against the wandering mind or to try and imprison the mind in the ascetic practice of suppressing thoughts.

Some people may misunderstand the term *nowness* and take it to refer to whatever thoughts happen to be in their mind at the moment. *Nowness* should be understood as being the primeval insight already described.

The state of nonmeditation is born in the heart when one no longer discriminates between meditation and nonmeditation and one is no longer tempted to change or prolong the state of meditation. There is all-pervading joy, free from all doubts. This is different from the enjoyment of sensual pleasure or from mere happiness.

When we speak of "clarity" we are referring to that state which is free from sloth and dullness. This clarity, inseparable from pure energy, shines forth unobstructed. It is a mistake to equate clarity with awareness of thoughts and the colors and shapes of external phenomena.

When thoughts are absent the meditator is completely immersed in the space on nonthought. The "absence of thoughts" does not mean unconsciousness or sleep or withdrawal from the senses, but simply being unmoved by conflict. The three signs of meditation—clarity, joy, and absence of thoughts—may occur naturally when a person meditates, but if an effort is made to create them the meditator still remains in the circle of samsara.

There are four mistaken views of the void. It is a mistake to imagine that the void is merely empty without seeing the wild space of nowness. It is a mistake to seek the buddha nature (dharmakaya) in external sources without realizing that nowness knows no path or goal. It is a mistake to try to introduce some remedy for thought without realizing that thoughts are by nature void and that one can free oneself like a snake unwinding. It is also a mistake to hold a nihilistic view that there is nothing but the void, no cause and effect of karma and no meditator nor meditation, failing to experience the void which is beyond conceptions. Those who have had glimpses of realization must know these dangers and study them thoroughly. It is easy to theorize and talk eloquently about the void, but the meditator may still be unable to deal with certain situations. In a maha ati text it is said:

> Temporary realization is like a mist which will surely disappear.

Meditators who have not studied these dangers will never derive any benefit from being in strict retreat or forcibly restraining the mind, nor

from visualizing, reciting mantras, or practicing hatha yoga. As is said in the *Phakpa Düpa Sutra*,

> A bodhisattva who does not know the real meaning of solitude,
> Even if he meditates for many years in a remote valley full of poisonous snakes
> Five hundred miles from the nearest habitation,
> Would develop overweening pride.

If the meditator is able to use whatever occurs in his life as the path, his body becomes a retreat hut. He does not need to add up the number of years he has been meditating and does not panic when "shocking" thoughts arise. His awareness remains unbroken like that of an old man watching a child at play. As is said in a maha ati text:

> Complete realization is like unchanging space.

The yogi of maha ati may look like an ordinary person but his awareness is completely absorbed in nowness. He has no need of books because he sees apparent phenomena and the whole of existence as the mandala of the guru. For him there is no speculation about the stages on the path. His actions are spontaneous and therefore benefit all sentient beings. When he leaves the physical body his consciousness becomes one with the dharmakaya, just as the air in a vase merges with the surrounding space when the vase is broken.

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The Way of Maha Ati

BY CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA AND RIGDZIN SHIKPO

THE ALAYA

THE GROUND of samsara and nirvana, the beginning and end of both confusion and realization, the nature of universal shunyata and of all apparent phenomena, more fundamental even than the trikaya because it is free from bias toward enlightenment, is the alaya, sometimes called the pure or original mind.

Although prajna sees in it no basis for such concepts as different aspects, yet three fundamental aspects of complete openness, natural perfection, and absolute spontaneity are distinguished by upaya as useful devices.

COMPLETE OPENNESS

All aspects of every phenomenon are completely clear and lucid. The whole universe is open and unobstructed, everything mutually interpenetrating.

Since all things are naked, clear, and free from obscurations, there is nothing to attain or to realize. The nature of things naturally appears and is naturally present in time-transcending awareness.

The everyday practice is simply to develop a complete acceptance and openness to all situations and emotions and to all people, experiencing

everything totally without mental reservations and blockages, so that one never withdraws or centralizes onto oneself.

This produces a tremendous energy which is usually locked up in the processes of mental evasion and generally running away from life experiences.

Clarity of awareness may in its initial stages be unpleasant or fear inspiring. If so, then one should open oneself completely to the pain or the fear and welcome it. In this way the barriers created by one's own habitual emotional reactions and prejudices are broken down.

When performing the meditation practice one should get the feeling of opening oneself out completely to the whole universe with absolute simplicity and nakedness of mind, ridding oneself of all "protecting" barriers.

Don't mentally split in two when meditating, one part of the mind watching the other like a cat watching a mouse.

One should realize that one does not meditate in order to go deeply into oneself and withdraw from the world.

Even when meditating on chakras in Buddhist yoga there is no introspective concentration—complete openness of mind is still the keynote.

Natural Perfection

Everything is naturally perfect just as it is, completely pure and undefiled.

All phenomena naturally appear in their uniquely correct modes and situations, forming ever-changing patterns full of meaning and significance, like participants in a great dance.

Everything is symbol, yet there is no difference between the symbol and the truth symbolized.

With no effort or practice whatsoever liberation, enlightenment, and buddhahood are already fully developed and perfected.

The everyday practice is just ordinary life itself. Since the underdeveloped state does not exist, there is no need to behave in any special way or to try to attain or practice anything.

There should be no feeling of striving to reach some exalted goal or higher state, since this simply produces something conditioned and artificial that will act as an obstruction to the free flow of the mind.

One should never think of oneself as "sinful" or worthless, but as naturally pure and perfect, lacking nothing.

When performing meditation practice one should think of it as just a natural function of everyday life, like eating or breathing, not as a special, formal event to be undertaken with great seriousness and solemnity. One must realize that to meditate is to pass beyond effort, beyond practice, beyond aims and goals, and beyond the dualism of bondage and liberation.

Meditation is always perfect, so there is no need to correct anything. Since everything that arises is simply the play of the mind, there are no bad meditation sessions and no need to judge thoughts as good or evil. Therefore one should not sit down to meditate with various hopes and fears about the outcome—one just does it, with no self-conscious feeling of "I am meditating," without effort, without strain, without attempting to control or force the mind, without trying to become peaceful.

If one finds one is going astray in any of these ways, stop meditating and simply rest and relax for a while before resuming.

If one has experiences that one interprets as "results," either during or after meditation, do not make anything special of them, but just observe them as phenomena. Above all, do not attempt to repeat them, since this opposes the natural spontaneity of the mind.

Absolute Spontaneity

All phenomena are completely new and fresh, absolutely unique at the instant of their appearance and entirely free from all concepts of past, present, and future, as if experienced in another dimension of time.

The continual stream of new discovery and fresh revelation and inspiration which arises at every moment is the manifestation of the eternal youth of the living dharma and its wonder, splendor, and spontaneity are the play or dance aspect of the universe as guru.

Learn to see everyday life as a mandala in which one is at the center, and be free of the bias and prejudice of past conditioning, present desires, and future hopes and expectations.

The figures of the mandala are the day-to-day objects of one's life experience, moving in the great dance or play of the universe, the symbolism by which the guru reveals profound and ultimate meaning and significance. Therefore be natural and spontaneous, accept and learn from everything.

See the ironic, amusing side of irritating situations.

In meditation see through the illusion of past, present, and future. The past is but a present memory or condition, the future a present projection, and the present itself vanishes before it can be grasped.

Free oneself from past memories of, and conceptions about, meditation. Each moment of meditation is completely unique and full of the potentiality of new discovery, so one is incapable of judging meditation by past sessions or by theory.

Just plunge straight into meditation at this very moment with one's whole mind and be free from hesitation, boredom, or excitement.

The Practice of Meditation

It is traditional, and best if possible, to sit cross-legged when meditating, with the back erect but not rigid. However, it is most important to feel comfortable, so it is better to sit in a chair if sitting cross-legged proves painful.

One's attitude of mind should be inspired by the three fundamental aspects, whether the meditation is with or without form, although in the latter case the three aspects constitute the whole meditation itself, with particular emphasis on complete openness.

Meditations with form are preceded by, followed by, and contain periods without form and similarly it may often prove desirable, if not essential, to precede a period of formless meditation by a period with form.

To provide for this eventuality many preliminary meditations have been developed over the centuries of Buddhist practice, the most important classes being meditations on breathing, mantra repetitions, and visualizations.

The second and third of these classes need personal instruction from

one's guru before they can be attempted, but a few words on the first would not be out of place here, since the method used varies little from person to person.

First, let the mind follow the in-and-out rhythm of the breath until it becomes calm and tranquil; then rest the mind more and more on the breath until one's whole being seems to be identified with it.

Finally, become aware of the breath leaving the body and going out into space and gradually transfer the attention away from the breath and toward the sensation of spaciousness and expansion.

By letting this final sensation merge into complete openness, one moves into the sphere of formless meditation proper.

In all probability the above descriptions of the three fundamental aspects and the meditation practices involved will seem very vague and inadequate.

This is inevitable since they attempt to describe what is not only beyond words but beyond thought, and invite practice of what is essentially a state of being.

The words are simply a form of upaya (i.e., skill in means), a hint, which if acted upon may enable the innate natural wisdom and the naturally perfect action to arise spontaneously.

Sometimes in meditation there is a gap in normal consciousness, a sudden complete openness.

This only arises when one has ceased to think in terms of meditator, meditation, and the object of meditation. It is a glimpse of reality, a sudden flash which occurs at first infrequently and then gradually more and more often. It may not be a particularly shattering or explosive experience at all, just a moment of great simplicity.

Do not make the mistake of deliberately trying to force these experiences to recur, for this is to betray the naturalness and spontaneity of reality.

EARLY TEACHERS' TRAINING
Lectures by and Discussions with
Vidyadhara Venerable Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche

These discussions with a small group of students took place at Karmê Chöling in 1971

I. The Evolution of Meditative Techniques

A. Shamatha Meditation

Shamatha meditation is calmness through stilling the mind, through precision. Not judging thoughts but just acknowledging them. The only way to do this is through precise attention to the details of breathing. The breath is very faithful and acute. Shamatha is taught only to a very literal person. The technique is to acknowledge thought, "I am thinking, I am thinking," and to follow the breathing.

If a person is unable to keep to the precision of that, then you introduce the watcher: "I am being mindful of breathing out, I am being mindful of breathing in. My breath is short, my breath is long." Thoughts are verbalized. The difference between shamatha and vipashyana is subtle. In shamatha you verbalize the thoughts.

B. Vipashyana Meditation

In vipashyana meditation you don't divide thoughts into sections but follow a more general process. You don't verbalize your thoughts and you don't teach the calmness of mind. Instead you pay attention to the acute precision of the breathing, i.e. the outgoing breath, without verbal labels.

We teach outbreath. The inbreath is considered only the turning for the next outbreath. Eyes open. Vipashyana is the process of identifying with the breath dissolving in space. It has the acute precision of breathing from the nostrils.

C. Shamatha-Vipashyana

We do shamatha-vipashyana meditation. Here you introduce an element of sensation, or the *feeling* of the whole thing rather than *paying attention* to the whole thing. You just pay attention to the outline of the breath rather than being faithful in any way to the precision. At this stage it is feeling without acute precision, and the student is taught to be more intelligent than necessary.

D. Mahavipashyana

We also teach mahavipashyana, which is attention to shunyata. What is special here is the *identification* with the breath. You don't have to follow the outline any more once you *are* the breath. Therefore, identification with breathing is very important and rarely taught. The other techniques are all forms of attention to the breath, and the

person is conscious of the journey. It is a bit of looking still, and one is taught to be intelligent.

You identified as the breath dissolved into nothing, but this still has a clumsy quality, it still has dogma. Don't concentrate on your body. It is still awkward because you have to introduce some negativity there.

II. Four Foundations of Mindfulness

This can also extend to vipashyana. All four foundations are taught at once. They come together in the practice.

A. Body

You say mentally, as a mantra: "I feel my arm," and you feel the simplicity of your arm. There is no fantasy and no hallucination. The body is healthy to relate to. It becomes neutral ground unless you have body hang-ups.

B. Surviving, the Effort to Live

This is any effort to live, either repelling or magnetizing. It is the acknowledgment of objective judgment or emotional reactions or feelings: "I feel love, I feel hate." You acknowledge in simplicity, and as fully as possible, with an objective quality.

C. Self-consciousness, Deliberate Actions of any Kind

The effort is the energy or driving force that inspires actions or emotions. It is behind the whole thing. It is more subtle than love or hate. Acknowledgment of energy inspires the second foundation, surviving, and is more subtle than the second one.

D. Recollection, Mental Intelligence or Content, Associations

Recollection, or the subconscious mind, concerns time. It goes further than effort, the third foundation. It is concerned with the intelligence which sets off energies. There can't be intelligence without memories. You can't have intelligence without contrast. It is based on concepts. Dealing with the subconscious creates the environment for the energy which sets off the thought.

The process begins with the fourth, the subconscious. The subconscious creates the environment for energy, the third. The energy triggers the emotional response (the second). The emotional reaction has its own substance, but memory and energy have to inspire such substance. The emotional response is already conscious.

III. Mahavipashyana

Mahavipashyana differs in that it doesn't go into details, but works on the instinctive level. Going into great details is too intellectual. Mahavipashyana is trying to be as literal as possible with breathing and space. When this is practiced, literal space is

found to be the same as psychological space. When physical space becomes psychological space, the person loses track of being "here" automatically, or in the body. "Me" or "mine" goes as well as any reference to the body. When you identify with space, there is no place inward, just breathing out into space. It happens *out there*.

If a person becomes identified with the breath, the breath becomes a dead end. Where physical space becomes psychological space you permeate space by breathing. It becomes psychological as breathing doesn't come from the nostrils, but breathing is just breathing. It is no one's and goes nowhere. The breathing becomes an entity.

If you settle in the body with the breathing, it will always result in the person having tension and spasms. The same amount of outbreathing and inbreathing makes an emphasis on the person who is the creator of these two breathings. The student doesn't have to be freed from here because psychological space is physical space.

Thoughts are less aggressive if outward. Like flies in a dirty place, if thought is centralized on the body, thoughts, like flies, congregate more.

Tibetan Buddhism is based on expansion rather than on the inward body. Shamatha practice is more or less concentration on specific things: bodily movement, sensations, and details of the breath in relationship to the body. Vipashyana, the next stage, is not verbalizing the awareness, but feeling it. Mahavipashyana is not only concentrating but becoming one with the technique and externalizing. We teach Americans half-way; they are not quite up to shunyata principles. Half-way suggests the possibility of shunyata, but there is still the discipline of mahavipashyana.

Mahavipashyana is identifying completely with the breath, rather than concentrating or trying to call yourself to it, sticking to it, or trying to make breathing a separate object. So you have a nondualistic relationship to the breathing, where you feel that the breathing is part of yourself and you are the breathing. It is completely nondualistic attitude to the breathing and not centralized on your body at all—just the outward-going breath. Exhalation is more important than inhalation. Inhalation is just the turning point of exhalation. Between the two, your breathing dissolves into the atmosphere. As you breathe out there is constant radiation and dissolving. The result is that one begins to lose the notion of *this* by working on the*that*. *That* in itself becomes empty, spacious, automatically. And that is the way of working with thoughts and other things.

Thoughts need a crowded situation to breed. So when you are not working inside you, or on your body, or concentrating on anything—the thoughts have nothing to linger on. They just pass away like clouds passing in the sky. They just hover around and become transparent and fade away. This has nothing to do with creating or exercising at all. It is just a functional, organic process.

Also, one's attitude to thoughts begins to change. You begin to realize they are not mad or a nuisance at all. They are just part of the whole thing, like a wave in the ocean. They just develop as a natural process—transparent.

Mahavipashyana is being aware with skillful means. No notion of spiritual path is involved, but spontaneous action with insight. It contains energy which is a link up to maha ati. The meditation in action—sword of Manjushri—is mahavipashyana. Lesser vipashyana has effort. Shunyata meditation in action is the bodhisattva ideal.

Prajna equals mahavipashyana, but it is still knowledge, not quite wisdom, but relating to situations as they are. Wisdom is complete absorption—no consciousness of being wise—you are what you are.

Mahavipashyana, which is this particular technique of using breathing in that way, in spaciousness, is a step towards shikantaza in the Japanese tradition. But if you introduce shikantaza at once to a person, the whole thing becomes too abstract. There's nothing to work with, work on, and it becomes purely concept. By introducing a technique along with the basic framework of shikantaza, then you are really already delivered to shikantaza. At a certain stage the breathing technique, the necessity of breathing, becomes irrelevant and the breathing just falls apart. You are there with open space. Shikantaza is formless but with a particular posture.

But any kind of discipline or daily practice is extremely hard still. One has to hold that much concept because one is working along with duality. As you work along with duality, at a certain point it runs out by itself or wears out like a pair of shoes. So you abandon the discipline or technique. But if you abandon them at the beginning, the abandonment in itself becomes duality.

How to make the leap—acknowledgment of spaciousness and then disowning or relinquishing it. This is leap. At a certain stage the disowning becomes a flash, and acknowledgment and disowning become one. When checking other people, check their acknowledgment and disownership.

IV. Shunyata

At a certain stage, space predominates over breathing. At that time you have the shunyata principle. Shunyata is spaciousness, absolute nothingness.

You have to allow the student the excitement of the discovery of shunyata. This is similar to the abhisheka—to make it precious. This initial discovery of shunyata is like an infant finding how to walk—compared to really discovering the mahamudra principle.

When you are teaching shunyata, have student meditate with the breath, then talk to him. Point out the background during the talking and also during the meditation.

If people get tension or definiteness, or if person is potential shunyata, they can go to a mountain, lie on the ground, look at the blue sky, and open the mouth as if saying AH.

Talk Four: Vipashyana

The Path of Meditation Seminar

Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche

Naropa Institute, Boulder, Colorado

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Hopefully, that we have established some basic understanding about practice of meditation on the basis of shamatha level of simplicity and directness. Seem to be necessary to also present the question of vipashyana, which comes after shamatha practice of meditation. According to the tradition, that vipashyana is regarded as further experience of egolessness and developing prajna, which means "transcendent knowledge." That compared with shamatha, that vipashyana is more concerned with, in dealing with one's inquisitive mind and taking full advantage of it, and exploring that and developing and so fundamentally or finally that sense of exploration of one's mind become openness, egoless.

That there is a problem that we have a general concept or idea that one should control oneself constantly until the point that one begin to obey one's basic given training, and accomplishing training is trying to tighten up unnecessary habits and trying to create a different form of imprisonment. And that has become problem and misunderstood a great deal. So the question here that what we presenting in terms of vipashyana, is sense of freedom, sense of enlightenment, if you like to call it. That sense of freedom is exploring the sense of basic awareness which is basic, fundamental state of our mind of inquisitiveness.

That when we talking about inquisitive mind, we are talking about sense consciousness, which includes the sixth sense, that is, the "sem" that we talked about the other day, the mind. That you'd hear sound, you would smell smell, that you would taste, that you have a feeling, bodily sensations, and you have the sense of being alive. That there is a mental faculty also functions, that those six sense consciousness are need to be used. As so far what we have been discussing in this area, is that those sense perceptions are disregarded, sense consciousness are disregarded. And we haven't even got that level yet. That we are simply just working on the basic simplicity of keeping our attention with the breath and keeping our experience as simple as possible.

Having developed already some sense of simplicity, and some sense of accuracy in our practice, that thoughts come and go, but however, that they are expression of simplicity. They come and they go, and so what? However, I am sitting here on a meditation cushion and practicing meditation, which is boils down to absolutely doing nothing, and watching your thoughts come and go and then disappear, they come back. And you have your basic breathing is taking place, that sense of precisions as to what's happening there is completely wakeful, because whenever you are drifted your mind into thought patterns of the past, present or future, conceptual memories, or whatever, you come back. You come back very simply. Just come back to the breath and very simply to the breath, not analyzing, not visualizing breathing but just simply doing it, precisely, very ordinarily doing it, very

consciously, conscientiously in fact doing that. And day to day and repetition after repetition, years and years and weeks and weeks and days and says, hours and hours, that we keep on doing that.

A lot of problems come up which seemingly to be complicated, confused, but however, if you could get back to that particular practice level of simplicity, that complication is dissolved by itself. Because things are so complicated, therefore they take care of themselves. And what you have afterwards is nothing. Very simple situation. That complication took care of themselves being complicated, and there is nothing left behind, anything at all. So things become somewhat encouraging.

But on the other hand, there is possibilities of memories, emotions, aggression, passion, fantasies of all kinds begin to churn up. But even though those are also part of the complications, they take care of themselves. We have nothing to do with them, or we have everything to do with them, whatever. Doesn't matter who is who, what is what, but just simply, simply keep sitting and doing it. That's the vipashyana, that's the shamatha experience of simplicity that is taking place there. It's very honest thing to do. We are not taking advantage of our emotions. We are not dreaming up any new experience or exotic, rich, fantastic dreams, spiritually or otherwise. We are not inventing anything new at all. We are simply just *being* at what we are, what we have. We have our body, we have our breath, we have our mind, and just deal with those three principles. Just very, very simply.

And because of that simplicity, then you begin to find new dimension of experience, what is known as the vipashyana experience, or "lhagthong" in Tibetan, which literally means "development of insight," or, literally speaking, it means "clear seeing, seeing things very clearly, very precisely, extremely clearly and precisely." Lhagthong. "Lhag" means "superior" or "clear" or "exquisite," "thong" means "looking, seeing." So "seeing things exquisitely, very precisely." And a shift between shiné and lhagthong or vipashyana, shamatha, is: in the level of shamatha, that there is very specialized attentions be put on your practice and just breath and breath. Very direct and very simple. Very narrow from that point of view. And in the case of awareness of vipashyana is concerned, it's a slightly extended version of openness. That you begin to find that there is lots of room apart from the object of concentration or breath or your bodily sensations or your whatever you have, that there is lots of more room, great deal of more room that there is, is experiencing the environment, as well as experiencing the object of our attention, namely our technique of breathing.

According to Buddha, that he described the state of lhagthong or vipashyana is state of clear seeing, egoless, because that we don't have to concentrate on our particular thing too heavy-handedly, but we begin to realize the environment around our practice, around our breath. So when you start with your breath, you begin to experience that environment around you is also part of the breathing, part of the whole basic being. You begin to feel the space around you, sense of being-ness is extended at the level that there is also state of awareness that we all have our antenna sharpened constantly. That you begin to feel that if you sit and meditate very honestly, earnestly, you begin to find somebody is watching behind your back, and looking at your neck, and examining you. And you begin to feel that there is heavy, heaviness

coming down to you. You begin to feel that your bodily sensations are as if you are wearing heavy coat or turban, and all kinds of tensions happen in the back of your neck and your buttocks, your legs, and your arms feels awkward. And your body becomes more than there is, at some point. But those are the vanguard of that of the vipashyana experience. That there is something is taking place around you apart from the object of concentration, which is breath. There is something more than that is taking place, more than that is happening. Extended version of that is taking place.

And vipashyana is the seed or beginning point of developing meditation-in-action attitude. That you are able to extend your state of awareness to everyday life situation constantly. That being watchful, being aware of whatever you are doing in your life. But we can't just simply practice on the meditation-in-action level immediately, because we begin to find ourselves not practicing meditation, but we begin to find ourselves entertaining ourselves. That there is tension that is taking place. If you wash up dishes, that you begin to feel entertained by it. You have little spots of dirt to relate with, that you have a plate, that you have the soap, you have the faucet, the water tap. There is lot of things happening there, and the whole thing becomes somewhat delightful experience, and entertaining. That is become the problem, so we shouldn't try to practice meditation-in-action in early stages, which people would say, "well, whatever I do is meditation. I feel good about it. I do everything deliberately. I do my gardening, I do my piano, and I do my washing of dishes, I cook for my husband, my wife, whatever. And I take ride in countryside, I read books, and I feel that I am doing everything very consciously, and I feel very good, and I think I'm meditating."

Well, that's very tricky, and there is a lot of deceptions taking place in such kind of naïveté experience, that things hadn't happened in 100% level. Things be happening in 50 – 50% level, which is not so good. If we are going to trod on the path and going to practice meditation properly and thoroughly and fully as the Buddha had experience, or given the message to us, we got to do it much better than that, much simpler than that, much more orthodox than that. That room for meditation-in-action is possible *of course*, but we have to prepare the ground for that before we do anything. We have to first find out what is the span of our awareness, span of our concentration, span of our watchfulness.

That there is a term "mindfulness" applies to shamatha experience, which is being fully there with our techniques and everything, being completely watchful. Then we have the term "awareness" which applies to vipashyana experience, the second stage. If you being too watchful, too mindful, it is possible you will lose your awareness. That is to say that if you are watching your highway more than necessary, you begin to miss the sign-posts around the highway, because you haven't been aware of them, aware of that you are driving, but you have been mindful of your driving, watchful of your driving, mindfully driving that you are so much concerned with your driving, and watching the guy in front of you or behind you too much that you lost your exit, because you haven't been *aware* of it. So that's the situation relationship, that it is necessary, to *begin* with, to develop that kind of caution and directness of watching the guy in front of us and behind us as we drive on the highway and keep your speed limit or whatever, and watch for cops. [laughter]

But then you need something else than that, that that is just adolescent level of being careful; but you can be much greater being careful is developing *awareness*, aware. In Tibetan term, there is two words. First one is called "trenpa," which literally means "recollection, memory, sharpness," like our mindfulness, trenpa. And then there's another word called "sheshin." "Shenpa" is "knowing." "Shin" means "as it is." So "knowing things as they are." There is some kind of sense of perspectives involved, and so it is necessary to have both trenpa and sheshin working together, and particularly paying more attention to the sheshin experience as you develop later on in your practice of meditation.

But I wouldn't suggest students to shift their practice of meditation at this point, but I would recommend still that you should stick to the shamatha practice of the concentration practice at the beginning that we have been discussing, and working with the outbreath and so forth. That seem to be necessary. But if you keep doing that, certain period of time, and maybe at some point that you begin to find that you, that's not the only thing that's happening to you alone, but you begin to developing some sense of expansion, some sense of greater awareness, greater mindfulness taking place, which is awareness. And that is possible, that should happen, that would happen provided if you keep faithful to this particular technique was presented to us, and what we are doing. So sheshin, or the "knowing as it is," "knowing things as they are," which is sharpening our antenna, perceptual, visual, smell, sound, feeling, and everything, sense of expansion is taking place.

Taking second look at same analogies of driving motor car on highway, that if we rent a car, at the beginning we are concerned about the accelerations of the car, and how to work with the little gadgets goes with on the dashboard, and sense of power, and sense of speed at the same time. If you are experienced driver, then you begin to feel you can tune yourself immediately into the size of the car, how big is the car, how small is the car. Your whole awareness becomes car, as if car is your body, if you are good driver. And you don't miscalculate your size of your being there on the highway. Or even for parking, for that matter. And you begin to get instant knowledge of awareness, rather than mindfulness at that level. That you know how to handle your car, how to park your car, how big is your car, how big you are for that matter, at this point. And that is the question of the awareness of vipashyana that we are talking about, is that we should adapt ourselves to that particular situation of sense of perception, sense of radiation, how far our feelings extend, and so that working situation becomes also appropriate and applicable to our every day-to-day running situation.

So the question of vipashyana at this point is sheshin, or the awareness experience. And when you have that sense of awareness experience taking place in you, you begin to find new discovery, which is that it is not new, that exp, that operating, necessarily. That you really don't exist particularly. It is *that* is operating, the relationship, the vibration is operating, rather than *you* are conducting that particular show. And one begin to feel a sense of hollowness inside you. At the same time, sense of being and very careful and sense of, sense of being appropriate and real, at the same time, of course. But nevertheless, there is sense of hollowness, that you feel that you are not operating that, but it is taking happen, it's happening.

That in fact the car is driving you rather than you are driving the car, in some sense. That car goes by itself, and you just put little energy, but it is not up to you particularly. Whereas if you are bad driver, that you begin to feel lots of *you*, because you are taking all kinds of chances and you do all kinds of dangerous things, and there is more a sense of *you* involved. Whereas if you are confident driver, you have a proper relationship with your motor car, that you have a sense of being there, that you just move a little bit and the car just goes. Which is not *your* movement, but it's movement of the car dictates to you. So awareness dictates to you, from that point of view, that awareness becomes part of your basic being, part of your behavior, that you don't have to meditate as such, but meditation is conducting you, rather than you are conducting practice of meditation as such. That there is a sense of delightfulness taking place and a sense of openness taking place. And that level maybe then we could look in terms of meditation-in-action, in terms of lhagthong or vipashyana experience.

In the experience of vipashyana, there is sense of dignity, there is sense of completion, definite completion and definite sense of dignity, sense of knowingness, somewhat familiarity. That as if you've done this in some time ago, many times in your past you've done this, and now you're doing it again. That sense of familiarity begin to come. And awareness is that not only pointing your attention to a spotlight alone, but space around that spotlight, maybe it's the darkness that around that spotlight. Or if you are concentrating on piece of stone, piece of pebble, that you not only see the pebble, but you only see the, also you see the environment around the pebble. And sense of expansion, sense of openness begin to take place.

And one of the interesting point about vipashyana experience is that the sense of exertion, sense of discipline is not so much of *your* discipline, but it is self-existing experience. And that seem to be the basic point that we should understand. That certain point that you have to of course hassle yourself and push yourself into situation that you are going to meditate. Those are just common problems we all have, even if we are advanced meditator for that matter. Once we get into the practice, we might find it different but before we begin to push ourselves into the practice, we have all kinds of hesitations as if we are naughty child. That you try to calculate that anything that you could make excuses that why you are not meditating seem to be valid point to us. That I have to make phone call to my friend, or I have this and that to do, do my laundry, or wash up the dishes, or take the meat out of the freezer. Any little point that comes to us, that usually we usually play against ourselves, particularly if person is living individually rather than at community level, that meditation becomes mandatory. That we usually play games to ourselves all those areas which we have to cut through anyway, whether we are practicing the shamatha level practice or vipashyana level practice, whatever we do, doesn't really matter.

But once we begin to get into the practice and begin to break the ice, so to speak, then we begin to feel that there is a definite sense of difference. That we could glide in, into it, we could swim into it. Sense of familiarity, maybe sense of slight irritation that you are doing the same thing all over again, and sense of slight being bored, and being lonely that you are doing this thing to yourself rather than you are doing with anybody. Even if you are doing with

group of people, it's same thing. That you are doing this practice by yourself, although the others doing same thing, but they are doing their thing, I am doing my thing. So there is sense of loneliness, sense of individuality takes place. But nevertheless, there is general notion of sense of gliding into, having, into the practice of meditation of vipashyana type. Whereas at the level of shamatha type, it is actually struggle; training ourselves, we can't glide in ourselves, we have to catch ourselves constantly. And there is lot of struggle, there are lot of personal effort is involved, keep yourself alive, that particular meditation. But in the case of vipashyana level that there is a sense of gliding into it because of your training.

So that seem to be the basic point, that students should start with vipashyana experience. Before you start vipashana experience, by the way, that one should get into the shamatha experience thoroughly and completely and fully and being very faithful to your technique, which is absolutely important. And sense of fearlessness and sense of cutting through your boredom, whatever. And having done that already, then it is possible to glide into your technique, your experience. At some point, students find things are very easy, very comfortable, that your physical, physiological situation is adapting itself to the sitting practice, that you are used to sit down on the cushion cross-legged and straighten your back and everything is a natural thing, that it comes very naturally to you. And psychologically much simpler, much easier, because you can glide yourself into that situation.

But, however, there is need to keep the basic sense of openness, awareness, the basic sense of what we could almost say cleanliness, the cleanliness, that things done properly and literally, that meditation becomes a real thing. There is no areas left that we are deceiving ourselves no longer. In fact, that sense of wholesomeness and healthiness into the practice which ignites further light into the experience of vipashyana experience. The experience becomes very personal, very real, very healthy, and very direct. And the purpose of this training is being eventually that you are going to become warrior. That warrior should keep his basic being intact, including his alertness; otherwise, that warrior doesn't become warrior.

So therefore, practice of meditation at this level could be regarded as the experience of training your mind, and training your sense of feeling, sense of touch, sense of smell in appropriate level. That no mysterious areas left at all; that every area has been explored and trained and worked on, so that we have different kind of sense of pride, in the positive sense, that no mysterious dark corners left. That there is sense of enormous pride, enormous wholesomeness, completeness, that the universe or spiritual search does not become still mysterious any more. It's, it's very real to us. And one begin to develop also sense of intellect at the same time, that you can cut yourself, or cut others for that matter, and it becomes a very real experience.

I think that's the purpose of vipashyana experience, vipashyana technique, is to bring us, ourselves down and down and down to the ground, much more than those of the concentrated experience of shamatha, which is okay, but still needs more down-to-earth level. That finally we begin to realize that sight, smell, sound and all the other experiences are very direct, very literal, and very simple. And of course maybe it's beautiful, but no longer

mysterious as such. And perhaps you would like to ask questions, maybe. That's better than me talking.

Q. Is there any difference in, between the technique of shamatha and vipashyana? Is the technique the same?

CTR. Well, as far as the technique is concerned, it's pretty much the same, but in the vipashyana level, you watch the boundaries more than point of concentration. The boundary of feeling around you. That you are not purely working on your breath, but you are working on the boundary around the breath, that sense of expansion is taking place, the radiation is taking place. That's simply question of attitude. You see, the point is that there is literal teaching, and as literal, direct, simple teaching begin to develop, then you begin to expand yourself greater and greater, more and more wider level. And one begin to get a sense of you begin to use your intellect subconsciously and imagination at the same time subconsciously as well. So at the time that attainment of enlightenment, that you got everything together. [laughs]

Q. I have two questions. In the practice of moving from shamatha to vapassana, does, does one just move in that or is there, does it, does one need to push in some way? In other words, is there danger of becoming comfortable in the practice?

CTR. Well, I think as we have discussed already, that it is necessary to have someone to check your practice and we make, develop a personal friendship or reference point with somebody is necessary. But at the same time, you could develop your own intelligence for that, is that when you begin to feel that you have to expand yourself, rather than your practice is strictly at the level of being too faithful. And you begin to feel slightly different, that you can expand yourself. And at that level, if you examine yourself, your particular style of experience is concerned, you begin to find yourself actually doing vipashyana experience already, vipashyana technique already. That you transcended the shamatha experience in any case, so one has to take that kind of, it's like growing up, you know. When you grow up, you have this ceremony called "birthday party," which isn't quite really so. You haven't suddenly become a different person by the time when you blow your candles off or when you get your presents. But you have been growing up all the time. So and I think it's forced you to make just to make random and maybe specialized time and moment. That now everything's okay, you have become different because you had bar mitzvah or whatever, you know.

Q. Also, where do these two techniques fit in terms of Hinayana and Mahayana paths?

CTR. The vipashyana experience is still in Hinayana level. And the sense of the inspiration and sense of awareness is preparing yourself to become Bodhisattva in the Mahayana level. That you need more requirements of awareness and egolessness. That's just a first hint. But basically technique is included according to the doctrine, is that you are doing Hinayana practice still, but preparing yourself to become a Boshisattva.

The Path Is the Goal

A BASIC HANDBOOK OF BUDDHIST MEDITATION

Chögyam Trungpa

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2

Continuing Your Confusion

Having laid the basic groundwork regarding the practice of meditation, we can now go further and discuss the point that the practice of meditation involves a basic sense of continuity. The practice of meditation does not involve discontinuing one's relationship with oneself and looking for a better person or searching for possibilities of reforming oneself and becoming a better person. The practice of meditation is a way of continuing one's confusion, chaos, aggression, and passion—but working with it, seeing it from the enlightened point of view. That is the basic purpose of meditation practice as far as this approach is concerned.

There is a Sanskrit term for basic meditation practice, *shamatha,* which means "development of peace." In this case, peace refers to the harmony connected with accuracy rather than to peace from the point of view of pleasure rather than pain. We have experienced pain, discomfort, because we have failed to relate with the harmony of things as they are. We haven't seen

things as they are precisely, directly, properly, and because of that we have experienced pain, chaotic pain. But in this case when we talk about peace we mean that for the first time we are able to see ourselves completely, perfectly, beautifully *as what we are,* absolutely as what we are.

This is more than raising the level of our potentiality. If we talk in those terms, it means we are thinking of an embryonic situation that will develop: this child may be highly disturbed, but he has enormous potentiality of becoming a reasonable, less disturbed personality. We have a problem with language here, an enormous problem. Our language is highly involved with the realm of possessions and achievements. Therefore, we have a problem in expressing with this language the notion of unconditional potentiality, which is the notion that is applicable here.

Shamatha meditation practice is the vanguard practice for developing our mindfulness. I would like to call your attention to this term, *mindfulness.* Generally, when we talk about mindfulness, it has to do with a warning sign, like the label on your cigarette package where the surgeon general tells you this is dangerous to your health—beware of this, be mindful of this. But here mindfulness is not connected with a warning. In fact, it is regarded as more of a welcoming gesture: you could be fully minded, mindful. Mindfulness means that you could be a wholesome person, a completely

wholesome person, rather than that you should not be doing this or that. Mindfulness here does not mean that you should look this way or that way so you can be cured of your infamous problems, whatever they are, your problems of being mindless. Maybe you think like this: you are a highly distracted person, you have problems with your attention span. You can't sit still for five minutes or even one minute, and you should control yourself. Everybody who practices meditation begins as a naughty boy or naughty girl who has to learn to control himself or herself. They should learn to pay attention to their desk, their notebook, their teacher's blackboard.

That is the attitude that is usually connected with the idea of mindfulness. But the approach here has nothing to do with going back to school, and mindfulness has nothing to do with your attention span as you experienced it in school at all. This is an entirely new angle, a new approach, a development of peace, harmony, openness.

The practice of meditation, in the form of shamatha at the beginner's level, is simply being. It is bare attention that has nothing to do with a warning. It is just simply being and keeping a watchful eye, completely and properly. There are traditional disciplines, techniques, for that, mindfulness techniques. But it is very difficult actually to explain the nature of mindfulness. When you begin trying to develop mindfulness in the

ordinary sense, a novice sense, your first flash of thought is that you are unable to do such a thing. You feel that you may not be able to accomplish what you want to do. You feel threatened. At the same time, you feel very romantic: "I am getting into this new discipline, which is a unique and very powerful thing for me to do. I feel joyous, contemplative, monkish (or 'nunkish'). I feel a sense of renunciation, which is very romantic."

Then the actual practice begins. The instructors tell you how to handle your mind and your body and your awareness and so on. In practicing shamatha under those circumstances, you feel like a heavily loaded pack donkey trying to struggle across a highly polished stream of ice. You can't grip it with your hooves, and you have a heavy load on your back. At the same time, people are hitting you from behind, and you feel so inadequate and so embarrassed. Every beginning meditator feels like an adolescent donkey, heavily loaded and not knowing how to deal with the slippery ice. Even when you are introduced to various mindfulness techniques that are supposed to help you, you still feel the same thing—that you are dealing with a foreign element, which you are unable to deal with properly. But you feel that you should at least show your faith and bravery, show that you are willing to go through the ordeal of the training, the challenge of the discipline.

The problem here is not so much that you are uncertain how to practice meditation, but that you haven't identified the teachings as personal experience. The teachings are still regarded as a foreign element coming into your system. You feel you have to do your best with that sense of foreignness, which makes you a clumsy young donkey. The young donkey is being hassled by his master a great deal, and he is already used to carrying a heavy load and to being hit every time there is a hesitation. In that picture the master becomes an external entity rather than the donkey's own conviction. A lot of the problems that come up in the practice of meditation have to do with a fear of foreignness, a sense that you are unable to relate with the teachings as part of your basic being. That becomes an enormous problem.

The practice of shamatha meditation is one of the most basic practices for becoming a good Buddhist, a well-trained person. Without that, you cannot take even a step toward a personal understanding of the true buddhadharma. And the buddhadharma, at this point, is no myth. We know that this practice and technique was devised by the Buddha himself. We know that he went through the same experiential process. Therefore, we can follow his example.

The basic technique here is identification with one's breath or, when doing walking meditation, identification with one's walking. There is a traditional story

that Buddha told an accomplished musician that he should relate to controlling his mind by keeping it not too tight and not too loose. He should keep his mind at the right level of attention. So, as we practice these techniques, we should put 25 percent of our attention on the breathing or the walking. The rest of our mental activities should be let loose, left open. This has nothing to do with the vajrayana or crazy wisdom or anything like that at all. It is just practical advice. When you tell somebody to keep a high level of concentration, to concentrate 100 percent and not make any mistakes, that person becomes stupid and is liable to make more mistakes because he's so concentrated on what he's doing. There's no gap. There's no room to open himself, no room to relate with the back-and-forth play between the reference point of the object and the reference point of the subject. So the Buddha quite wisely advised that you put only tentative attention on your technique, not to make a big deal out of concentrating on the technique (this method is mentioned in the *Samadhiraja-sutra*). Concentrating too heavily on the technique brings all kinds of mental activities, frustrations, and sexual and aggressive fantasies of all kinds. So you keep just on the verge of your technique, with just 25 percent of your attention. Another 25 percent is relaxing, a further 25 percent relates to making friends with oneself, and the last 25 percent connects with expectation—your mind is open to the possibility

of something happening during this practice session. The whole thing is synchronized completely.

These four aspects of mindfulness have been referred to in the *Samadhiraja-sutra* as the four wheels of a chariot. If you have only three wheels, there's going to be a strain on the chariot as well as the horse. If you have two, the chariot will be heavy to the point of not being functional—the horse will have to hold up the whole thing and pull as well. If, on the other hand, you had five or six wheels on your chariot, that would create a bumpy ride and the passengers would not feel all that comfortable. So the ideal number of wheels we should have on our chariot is four, the four techniques of meditation: concentration, openness, awareness, expectation. That leaves a lot of room for play. That is the approach of the buddhadharma, and we know that a lot of people in the lineage have practiced that way and have actually achieved a perfect state of enlightenment in one lifetime.

The reason why the technique is very simple is that, that way, we cannot elaborate on our spiritual-materialism trip.[1] Everyone breathes, unless they are dead. Everyone walks, unless they are in a wheelchair. And those techniques are the simplest and the most powerful, the most immediate, practical, and relevant to our life. In the case of breathing, there is a particular tradition that has developed from a commentary on the *Samadhiraja-sutra* written by Gampopa. There we find

the notion, related to breathing, of mixing mind and space, which is also used in tantric meditative practices. But even at the hinayana level, there is a mixing of mind and space. This has become one of the very important techniques of meditation. Sometimes this particular approach is also referred to as *shi-lhak sung juk,* which is a Tibetan expression meaning "combining shamatha and vipashyana meditation practices."

Combining shamatha and vipashyana plays an important part in the meditator's development. Mindfulness becomes awareness. Mindfulness is taking an interest in precision of all kinds, in the simplicity of the breath, of walking, of the sensations of the body, of the experiences of the mind—of the thought process and memories of all kinds. Awareness is acknowledging the totality of the whole thing. In the Buddhist tradition, awareness has been described as the first experience of egolessness. The term for awareness in Tibetan is *lhakthong,*[2] and there is an expression *lhakthong dagme tokpe sherap,* which means "the knowledge that realizes egolessness through awareness." This is the first introduction to the understanding of egolessness. Awareness in this case is totality rather than one-sidedness. A person who has achieved awareness or who is working on the discipline of awareness has no direction, no bias in one direction or another. He is just simply aware, totally and completely. This awareness also includes precision,

which is the main quality of awareness in the early stage of the practice of meditation.

Awareness brings egolessness because there is no object of awareness. You are aware of the whole thing completely, of you and other and of the activities of you and other at the same time. So everything is open. There is no particular object of the awareness.

If you're smart enough, you might ask the question, "Who is being aware of this whole thing?" That's a very interesting question, the sixty-four-dollar question. And the answer is, nobody is being aware of anything but *itself.* The razor blade cuts itself. The sun shines by itself. Fire burns by itself. Water flows by itself. Nobody watches—and that is the very primitive logic of egolessness.

I'm sure the mahayanists would sneer and think that this is terrible logic, very crude. They probably would not hold high opinions of it. But from the point of view of hinayana, that's extraordinarily fantastic logic. Razor blade cuts itself; fire burns itself; water quenches thirst by itself.[3] This is the egolessness of vipashyana practice.

Traditionally, we have the term *smriti-upasthana* in Sanskrit, or *satipatthana* in Pali, which means resting in one's intelligence. This is the same as awareness. Awareness here does not mean that the person practicing vipashyana meditation gives up his or her shamatha techniques of, say, *anapanasati*—mindfulness of the coming and going of the breath—or of walking in

walking meditation practice. The meditator simply relates with that discipline in a more expansive way. He or she begins to relate with the whole thing. This is done in connection with what is known as the four foundations of mindfulness: mindfulness of body, of mind, of livelihood, and of effort.[4]

If you relate with every move you make in your sitting practice of meditation, if you take note of every detail, every aspect of the movement of your mind, of the relationships in everything that you do, there's no room for anything else at all. Every area is taken over by meditation, by vipashyana practice. So there is no one to practice and nothing to practice. No you actually exists. Even if you think, "I am practicing this particular technique," you really have no one there to relate to, no one to talk to. Even at the moment when you say, "I am practicing," that too is an expression of awareness at the same time, so you have nothing left, nothing whatsoever, even no "I am practicing." You can still say the empty words, but they are like a lion's corpse, as it has been traditionally described. When the lion is dead, the lion's corpse remains lying in the jungle, and the other animals continue to be frightened of the lion. The only ones who can destroy the lion's corpse are the worms who crawl up from underneath and do not see it from the outside. They eat through it, so finally the lion's corpse disintegrates on the ground. So the worms are like the awareness, the

knowledge that realizes egolessness through awareness—vipashyana.

STUDENT: You characterized shamatha as mindfulness and vipashyana as awareness. Then you went on to speak of the combination of shamatha and vipashyana. How would you characterize that?

TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: It's a combination of the two, of being precise and at the same time being open. Precision is shamatha and openness is vipashyana, and it is possible to have both of those happening together.

S: But don't they already happen together in vipashyana? Isn't the development of vipashyana based on the precision of shamatha, which vipashyana then goes on to include in its openness or awareness?

TR: That is precisely why we talk about shamatha-vipashyana. One of the interesting points is that even at the level of *maha ati* or the *mahamudra* experience—on the tantric level of awarenesss—shamatha and vipashyana still function. They still are valid, because you have developed this basic way of taming your mind, and it is still developing.

S: But if vipashyana includes or is based on shamatha, why do we have to bother to speak of shamatha-vipashyana?

TR: Further clarity and further precision develop. Shamatha comes back again at the level of the sixth *bhumi* of the bodhisattva path, when the bodhisattva has

achieved the *paramita* of *prajna.* He still comes back to shamatha, and vipashyana comes back again as well. There is a second round.

S: Maybe it's that vipashyana is a stance of openness, and as such, maybe it's a little too loose.

TR: That's right. It loses its perspective, so there is a constant renewal of things happening. Then the same thing happens again on the tantric level of *kriya* yoga, which is the first of the six yanas of tantra, involved with purity. You begin your precision once more. Then it happens again at the level of the yanas of the higher tantra, *mahayoga* yana, the first of the *ati* yanas. There again, you bring back your precision of relating with certain mandalas and the experience of phenomena. So there's a constant recalling, again and again throughout the nine yanas. The precision of shamatha practice is always recalled, again and again.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, could you clarify satipatthana a little bit?

TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: Satipatthana, or smriti-upasthana, as it is known in Sanskrit, is the basic mindfulness practice that goes on in both shamatha and vipashyana. It is made up of the four foundations of mindfulness, *drenpa nyewar shakpa shi* in Tibetan, which means resting your cognitive mind, mindfulness. That is always a very important point. Without that, it is impossible to begin on the Buddhist path at all. It is

the foundation of your building. Without going through that process, you have misunderstandings of vajrayana, misunderstandings of mahayana, and of course misunderstandings of hinayana. So satipatthana is the only way that is taught. It is a very important basic beginning. A person cannot begin any spiritual discipline without that, because his mind will not be tamed. Basic sanity will not be developed. No reconciliation, or acceptance, will have developed at the beginner's level.

S: It's not easy.

TR: It's very hard, very difficult. That's why we call the beginning level hinayana, the narrow path, which is very severe, extremely severe. It's not a matter of being happy and having fun, particularly. It's verrrry difficult.

S: It has to be conquered.

TR: Has to be reconciled, or rather, you have to become reconciled to it. That's why there are going to be very rare Buddhists who are actually going to involve themselves with such a process. They will be what is known as golden Buddhists, who have been burned and hammered and have finally turned into pure gold, beyond the twenty-four-carat level, very fine gold. This is very difficult, but it is better to have golden Buddhists than copper Buddhists.

STUDENT: Rinpoche, in meditation practice, when you're beginning to develop vipashyana and you be-

come aware of the space around the breath, is there is no longer a watcher involved?

TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: There is still a watcher involved, but the watcher is no longer regarded as problematic. The watcher is regarded as a vehicle.

S: So should one encourage the watcher during meditation?

TR: One doesn't do anything with the watcher. One just lives with the watcher.

S: How is the watcher a vehicle?

TR: Well, we don't have anything else but the watcher for a vehicle. At that point, the only intelligent voice that you have is the watcher. For lack of a better choice, that's it. Sometimes the watcher is referred to as self-consciousness. In the Christian tradition, it might be referred to as a guilt conflict—whatever.

STUDENT: If you put 25 percent concentration on the breath and 25 percent on relaxation, and so on—the way you described—does that create a problem with identifying with the breath as you have taught us to do?

TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: Absolutely not. It provides more possibility of identifying. Take a very simple example. People find it very conducive when they're watching movies to eat popcorn. Twenty-five percent, maybe 50 percent of their attention is on the screen and another 25 percent is on popcorn, and another 25

percent is on their companion or their Coca-Cola, or whatever. Which makes the whole experience of going to the cinema very pleasurable. That's precisely the whole point. You develop enormous concentration. You follow the dialogue in the movie and you follow every detail of the story, and you have a good time at the movies.

STUDENT: It seems to me that once you gave some instruction before we were going to meditate like, "Don't be the watcher."

TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: You can't be the watcher anyway, but if you try to be the watcher, that just creates further problems. It's like leprosy: once you have one sore, that expands and develops another, and another sore is constantly developing. So the less watcher, the more clean-cut. But rather than trying to abandon the watcher, you just don't take part in the watcher's trip.

S: Is the watcher your reference point?

TR: Reference point *is* the watcher. The reference point referring to itself is the watcher. There is no other watcher other than the reference point. That's the whole point—that all kinds of reference points become the watcher.

STUDENT: When I'm meditating I see words, and some of them seem to be other people's thoughts and some of them seem to be communications from some-

where else, and some of them seem to be directions. And it's very hard to really distinguish what's what.

TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: Why bother?

S: Just to clarify.

TR: Why bother?

S: I suppose I can just try to ride through the confusion, but—

TR: There's no point trying to sort out whose confusion is whose. That would be like trying to sort out whose dollar is whose, and every nickel and every cent. The whole thing becomes very complicated. Maybe some analytical disciplines might encourage you to sort out the problem of the universe bit by bit, but we Buddhists are very sloppy, I'm afraid. We don't bother to count our pennies. We just deal with dollars, or twenty-dollar checks, or seven-hundred-dollar checks. It's just simply money. It doesn't matter who each cent came from. That doesn't seem to present any problems.

S: I'm a writer. I try to record it.

TR: Well, you have to write very simply. The possibilities are, you might become a more successful writer if you simplify the plot. Make it very clean-cut, which is very intriguing at the same time, maybe very mysterious. That makes a best-seller.

S: I don't know. I wouldn't really know how to simplify.

TR: Don't try to. That's the starting point.

STUDENT: Making friends with yourself.

TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: Well said.

STUDENT: Can you make a distinction between hope and expectation, which is one of the things that you listed for 25 percent attention? You once said it was necessary to give up hope, and I really don't see too much distinction there.

TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: Hope is future-oriented. Expectation is much closer to reality, but still not quite getting to the reality. It's on the verge of reality. Hope is like saying, "I hope I could be the mother of a child." Expectation means you are already pregnant, that it is already happening in real life, that you are going to bear a child. Which is much more immediate.

STUDENT: What is perfect enlightenment, which you mentioned in your talk?

TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: The Sanskrit term is *samyak-sambuddha,* which traditionally means enlightenment without any reference point. So there is no certainty whether you have actually attained enlightenment or not. You *are.* If you look at it from our angle, it might be very dull, disappointing. But once you are there, you find it is completely spacious. The whole thing doesn't sound that glamorous, eh?

STUDENT: How do you avoid creating a better speedy confused situation by doling out your awareness into

concentration and expectation, et cetera? It seems to me that in meditation practice, just as in the rest of your life, you try to keep on top of what you're doing and create space at the same time. And it only creates more confusion.

TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: I think the only thing to do is try not to sort out what is better and what is not better. Sorting out produces further problems. Gesundheit.

STUDENT: Is there a point in meditation practice where you practice letting go of the watcher or reference point, or is it something that just falls away by itself?

TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: There's no telling. No promise.

S: Is letting go of the reference point something you consciously practice?

TR: No promise. *Duhkha,* suffering, is regarded as the first noble truth. Discovering duhkha is also regarded as one of the noble truths. And the path is regarded as a noble truth and the goal is regarded as a noble truth. All the four noble truths are equally valid in themselves. One can't say which one is the best truth. All four are noble truths. Good luck!

S: I don't understand at all.

TR: Well, think about it. You can't sort out which is the best one.

S: The question I think I was asking was related to the practice itself: whether letting go is something active

or something that just happens through the practice of watching the breath.

TR: Both are saying the same thing. Letting go is watching the breath, watching the breath is letting go. Saying the same thing.

STUDENT: Could meditation and these techniques you've been talking about be regarded as a form of psychotherapy?

TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: Psychotherapy is analyzing oneself and providing medication—being therapeutic. But meditation is not regarded as medicine or even as therapeutic. It is just an unconditional way of being in life.

S: Well, is it parallel at all to existential therapy in philosophy and practice?

TR: Somewhat, but the Buddhist approach is more boring. There's no glamour involved.

STUDENT: I've been wondering what dangers one can encounter in meditation, if there are dangers that exist.

TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: If one becomes involved in contemplative practices which entail contemplating all kinds of visual objects without first having developed basic shamatha and vipashyana, it could be quite dangerous. The scriptures say that if you become involved in visualizing without basic training of the mind, you could become Rudra, an egomaniac. Apart from that, if a person is following a very simple technique of medi-

tation practice and has a background in the basic training, there's no problem at all. That is why shamatha, for example, is called "development of peace." It is harmless, very kind. That's why vipashyana is called development of insight or awareness—because it sharpens your basic being. It is designed for those people who are following the first stages of the path.

According to the Buddhist tradition, there are five paths that make up the path: the path of accumulation, the path of unification, the path of seeing, the path of meditation, and the path of no more learning. So in this case, being a beginner, you are starting on the path of accumulation. Traditionally, a person on the path of accumulation should begin with shamatha practice, which is a harmless practice, but at the same time very fruitful. That's how the Buddha designed the path. And it seems it has been working for two thousand five hundred years. Nobody has gone utterly crazy except those people who didn't follow his path.

STUDENT: How do you reconcile what you said in your first talk about being willing to waste time and what you talked about tonight about 25 percent expectation? I mean, a rock doesn't expect anything. It's just sitting there. That's what you said in your first talk. Then tonight, we're expecting something.

TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: That's also wasting time. Expecting something is wasting your time as well, because you are not going to get anything.

S: So wasting time is not part of your feeling, then. You don't feel like you're wasting time.

TR: It doesn't really matter what you do, you're still wasting time. You don't have to make a martyr of yourself, saying, "I feel great because I'm wasting my time. I'm being a perfectly good Buddhist and a good meditator, because I'm wasting my time."

S: So wasting time with that attitude . . . that really isn't an attitude that you want to cultivate.

TR: Wasting time's not an attitude. It's just a fact.

3

The Portable Stage Set

We should probably discuss the various types of backgrounds with the help of which we operate in our lives. These backgrounds are vague, uncertain, dubious for us. I am talking about the kind of background we create in our minds in every situation—when we enter somebody's room, when we sit by ourselves, when we meet someone. This kind of background is partially made up of the sense of basic space that we carry around with us all the time, and it is also colored by our particular mood of the moment. It is a kind of portable stage set that we carry around with us that enables us to operate as individuals. We constantly produce a display, a theatrical scene. For each situation we create the appropriate backdrop and the appropriate lighting. We also have the appropriate actors, mainly ourselves, who appear on the stage. We carry on this kind of play, this theatrical game, all the time, and we are constantly using our antennae, so to speak, to feel out the total effect our stage set is having.

In vipashyana meditation, we deal with this kind of

background, our portable theater. Whether we are a big deal or a small deal, there is always some kind of a deal happening. Vipashyana works with that big deal or small deal, that great deal, large deal, littlest, expansive, cunning, or clever deal—whatever setup you have chosen to establish. In practicing vipashyana, instead of keeping very busy setting up your theater, your theatrical stage, your attitude is changed so that there is a sense of questioning how we produce this background, why we do it, whether we have to do it or might not have to do it. This is still on the level of inquiry in some sense, but at the same time it is experiential.

In vipashyana, you as the practitioner experience the game that you are playing in setting up your theater. From that you pick up a new way of dealing with the whole thing without its being a game. This is the sitting practice of meditation. When you sit, you don't sit for the sake of creating a display or a particular effect. It's a very private thing in some sense. In sitting practice, you relate to the radiation you are creating. Before you begin sitting, this radiation was being created purely in order to impress or overpower the audience. In this case, the situation is reversed. You experience your own radiation face to face rather than playing with it in order to impress or overpower your audience. You have no audience when you sit and meditate, or you are your own audience.

Even in this situation, however, it is possible for sub-

tle little tricks to take place. You congratulate yourself for sitting and being such a good boy or good girl, and try to make that into a display. It's very subtle. The games can be peeled away one after the other like the layers of an onion. The games continue to happen, obviously, but somehow you can deal with this.

You have had the basic training of shamatha practice and from there you begin to expand. I would like to stress again that the shamatha experience is extremely important. Without that foundation, the practitioner is not at all in a position to experience vipashyana. But with that foundation, the practitioner can begin to expand the meaning of mindfulness so that it becomes awareness. Mindfulness is being fully there, and awareness is a total sensing. In awareness, all happenings are seen at once. This could also be called panoramic vision.

Panoramic vision, in this case, is having a sense of the entire radiation that we create. We possess a certain mannerism or a certain style that is reflected outward. When you sit, this becomes purely a thought process. You develop a sense of appreciation of things around you, not one by one, but totally. It's like light radiating from a flame or a light bulb that expands outward. However, we find that this radiation has no radiat*or*. If you look into who is doing all these tricks, producing this display, this radiation, there is nobody. Even the *idea* of somebody doesn't exist. There is a pure sense of

openness, a sense that you can relate with the living world as an open world.

At this point, we are only just introducing the vipashyana experience. Later we will go into it in greater detail. What it is necessary to understand now is that the vipashyana experience does not proceed to the level of a game, but remains purely at the level of experience, the living experience of awareness (as opposed to mindfulness).

Awareness, in this case, is not awareness of self but awareness of the other. The difference between the two is that if you are aware of yourself, it is awareness of yourself being aware of yourself aware of yourself aware of yourself aware of yourself. There is some kind of incest taking place. Whereas, if you are just being aware, that is openness, a welcoming gesture. You include your doings within your realm of awareness, so you don't punish or you don't watch. You don't question, particularly, but you just be. That seems to be the basic approach or the basic policy in insight meditation, vipashyana.

Do you understand what I've been saying?

STUDENT: I don't understand about the radiation without a radiator.

TRUNGPA RINPOCHE: If you have a radiator, the radiator has to work itself up to the level where there is enough radiation to be expanded or reflected outward.

4

Boredom—Full or Empty?

One of the points of basic vipashyana practice is developing what is known as the knowledge of egolessness. That is to say that the awareness that develops through the vipashyana experience brings nonexistence of yourself. And because you develop an understanding of the nonexistence of yourself, therefore you are freer to relate with the phenomenal world—the climate, atmosphere, or environment we have been talking about.

Unless there is no basic center, one cannot develop the vipashyana experience. On the practical level, this means that vipashyana is experiencing a sense of the environment, a sense of space, as the meditator practices. This is called awareness as opposed to mindfulness. Mindfulness is very detailed and very direct, but awareness is something panoramic, open. Even in following the breathing techniques of mindfulness of breathing, you are aware not only of the breathing but also of the environment you have created around the breath.

As far as dealing with heavy-handed thoughts, emo-

tions, is concerned, there is no way of destroying or getting over them unless you see the reference point that is with them. To begin with, seeing this takes the form of awareness of the atmosphere or environment. If you are already aware of the atmosphere beforehand, then there is a possibility that you might have a less intense relationship with your heavy-handed thoughts. That is one of the basic points.

Once you are aware of the atmosphere, you begin to realize that thoughts are no big deal. Thoughts can just be allowed to diffuse into the atmosphere. This kind of atmosphere that we are talking about is, in any case, an ongoing experience that happens to us in our lives. But sometimes we find we are so wrapped up in our little game, our little manipulation, that we miss the totality. That is why it is necessary for students to begin with shamatha—so that they can see the details of such an eruption, such a manipulation, the details of the game that goes on. Then beyond that, having established some kind of relationship with that already, they begin to see the basic totality.

Thus vipashyana is understanding the whole thing. You might ask, "What is this 'whole thing'?" Well, it's not particularly anything, really. This "whole thing" is the accommodator of all the activities that are taking place. It is the basic accommodation, which usually comes in the form of boredom, as far as the practitioner is concerned. The practitioner is looking for something

to fill the gap, particularly in the sitting practice of vipashyana meditation, where the quality of nonhappening becomes very boring. Then you might get agitated by the boredom, which is the way of filling it up with some activities.

So in this case, the background is boredom. There are different types of boredom that we usually experience. Insecurity, lack of excitement, being idle, nothing happening. In this case, in vipashyana, the boredom we are talking about is a sense of being idle, and this is unconditional boredom. The experience of vipashyana awareness has a quality of all-pervasive thick cream. It has body, at the same time it is fluid, and it is somewhat challenging. Therefore, as one's development of awareness is taking place, one doesn't become spaced out particularly, not at all.

When we talk about being spaced out, we are talking about being empty-hearted. When we are empty-hearted, then the dazzling light of emotions begins to irritate us. We can't grasp anything and we are ready to completely freak out. Whereas the vipashyana awareness is something much more tangible, in some sense, than this empty-heartedness. It is something very personal that exists. It usually accompanies any kind of activity, not only in sitting practice alone.

For example, sitting and listening to this talk, you have developed or created a certain type of attitude. You are directing your attention toward the speaker;

but also you know at the same time that you and the speaker are not the only people in this tent, so there is the sense that you are sitting in the middle of the inside of this space—underneath the ocean, so to speak. And awareness brings about your relating with that particular experience, which is tangible, real, experiential.

When awareness relates to that type of experience, it is called insight. Sometimes this is spoken of in terms of light, luminosity. But this doesn't mean something fluorescent. It refers to the sense of clarity that exists in this experience. Once you feel that basic all-pervasiveness, then there is nothing else but *that* (the other), and *this* (oneself) is long forgotten.

Maybe at the beginning *this* tried to struggle, to fight with *that,* the all-pervasiveness. But though *this* might struggle, at some point the all-pervasiveness is all over the place, and a sense of suffocation begins to develop. And that subtle suffocation turns into boredom. That is the point when you are actually getting into the all-pervasiveness of the vipashyana experience.

This is just the beginning stage of vipashyana that we have been describing. And I would like to emphasize once more that we are not talking about hypothetical possibilities. You can actually experience this in your life, in your being. And in fact, potentialities of vipashyana are already prominent in our experience; they take place all the time. But we have not actually acknowledged them or perhaps even seen them.

The Mandala Principle and the Meditative Process

From Chapter Four in *The Dawn Of Tantra*

By Herbert V. Guenther and Chögyam Trungpa

Michael Kohn, ed., Shambhala, Boston & London, 2001

Tantra [page 21] cannot be understood apart from experience arising out of the practice of meditation. Tantra, as we have said, can be regarded as the golden roof of the house. Before we can put on a roof, we have first to have built a house, and before that even, to have laid a foundation. I have already mentioned the four foundation practices. But such practices by themselves are not enough; we have to do the basic work of relating to ourselves. The work we must do to have a complete understanding of the symbolism of tantra and of the mandala principle begins at a very rudimentary level.

A mandala consists of a center and the fringe area of a circle. On the basic level, it consists of the practitioner and his relationship to the phenomenal world. The study of the mandala principle is that of the student in his life situation.

In a sense spiritual practice in Buddhism in the beginning stages could be said to be very intellectual. It is intellectual in the sense of being precise. It could also be seen as intellectual because of the nature of the dialogue which has to take place between the student and the teacher, the student and the [page 22] teaching. A certain questioning process has to take place. It is not a matter of memorizing texts or merely applying a variety of techniques. Rather it is necessary that situations be created in which the student can relate to himself as a potential Buddha, as a dharma-body—he relates his whole psyche or whole make-up to the Dharma. He must begin with a precise study of himself and his situation.

Traditionally there are twelve types of teaching styles proper to a Buddha. The sutras can be divided into twelve categories according to which of the twelve styles the Buddha has employed in it. One of the twelve styles is that of creating a situation in which the teaching can transpire. Take the example of the *Prajnaparamitahridaya* or *Heart Sutra*. In the original Sanskrit version of this sutra, Buddha does not say a word; but it was Buddha who created the dialogue between Avalokiteshvara and Shariputra. Buddha created the situation in which Shariputra could act as the receiver or audience and Avalokiteshvara as the propounder of the analysis.

So creating the situation in which the student can relate to the teaching is the initial creation of the mandala principle. There is the hungry questioning, the thirsty mind which examines all possibilities. The questions are inspired by the basic suffering of the student's situation, the basic chaos of it. It is uncertainty, dissatisfaction, which brings out the questions.

Seen in the tantric perspective, the first stages of the creation of the mandala principle are the basic Buddhist practices on the Hinayana level. The starting point is samatha practice, which is the development of peace or dwelling on peace. This practice does not, however, involve dwelling or fixing one's attention on a particular thing. Fixation or concentration tends to develop trance-like states. But from the Buddhist point of view, the point of meditation is not to develop trance-like states; rather it is to sharpen perceptions, to see things as they are. Meditation at this level is relating with the conflicts of our life situations, like using a stone to sharpen a knife, the situation being the stone. The samatha meditation, the beginning point of the practice, could be described as sharpening one's knife. It is a way of relating to bodily sensations and thought processes of all kinds; just [page 23] relating with them rather than dwelling on them or fixing on them in any way.

Dwelling or fixing comes from an attitude of trying to prove something, trying to maintain the "me" and "my" of ego's territory. One needs to prove that ego's thesis is secure. This is an attempt to ignore the samsaric circle, the samsaric whirlpool. This vicious circle is too painful a truth to accept, so one is seeking something else to replace it with. One seeks to replace the basic irritation or pain with the pleasure of a fixed belief in oneself by dwelling on something, a certain spiritual effort or just worldly things. It seems that, as something to be dwelled on, conceptualized ideas of religion or spiritual teachings or the domestic situations of life are extensions of the ego. One does not simply see tables and chairs as they are; one sees my manifestation of table, my manifestation of chair. One sees constantly the "me" or "my" in these things; they are seen constantly in relationship to me and my security.

It is in relation to this world of my projections that the precision of samatha is extremely powerful. It is a kind of scientific research, relating to the experiences of life as substances and putting them under the microscope of meditative practice. One does not dwell on them, one examines them, works with them. Here the curiosity of one's mind acts as potential prajna, potential transcendental knowledge. The attitude of this practice is not one of seeking to attain nirvana, but rather of seeing the mechanism of samsara, how it works, how it relates to us. At the point of having seen the complete picture of samsara, of having completely understood its mechanism, nirvana becomes redundant. In what is called the enlightened state, both samsara and nirvana are freed.

In order to see thought processes (sensations and perceptions that occur during the practice of shamatha) as they are, a certain sense of openness and precision has to be developed. This precise study of what we are, what our make-up is, is closely related with the practice of tantra. In the tantric tradition it is said that the discovery of the vajra body—that is, the innate nature of vajra (indestructible being)—within one's physical system and within one's psychological system is the ultimate experience. In the samatha practice of the Hinayana tradition, there is also this element of looking for one's basic [page 24] innate nature as it is, simply and precisely, without being concerned over the absence of "me" and "my."

From the basis of the samatha practice, the student next develops what is known as *vipassana* practice. This is the practice of insight, seeing clearly, seeing absolutely, precisely—transcendental insight. One begins to realize that spending one's whole time on the details of life, as in the samatha practice, does not work. It is still somehow an adolescent approach. It is necessary to begin to have a sense of the totality. This is an expansion process. It is parallel with the tantric practice of the mandala. Having started with what is called the *bija* mantra, the seed syllable in the middle of the mandala, there is then the expanding process of discovering the four quarters of the mandala. Working with the seed syllable has the samatha quality of precision, looking at the definite qualities of things as they are. Having established the seed syllable, one puts other symbols around it in the four quarters, one expands one's mandala. Similarly in the vipassana practice, having established the precision of details, one begins to experience the space around them. In other words, in making a pot, the importance is not so much on making the pot itself, but on shaping the space. Just so, in the vipassana practice the process is one of trying to feel the space around the pot. If one has a sense of the space one is going to create by producing a pot, one makes a good potter. But if one is purely concerned with making a shape out of clay without having a sense of the space, one does not make a good potter; or a good sculptor either, for that matter. In this way of beginning to relate with the space, vipassana is gradually letting go, a releasing and expanding.

From this point it is then possible to get a glimpse of the *shunyata* experience. The obstacle to the shunyata experience is the split between basic being and one's concept of it, between one's being and one's projections. All kinds of questions, problems and obstacles arise in relation to this division. The reason that the first glimpse of shunyata becomes possible at this point is that, having seen the details of things as they are through samatha practice and experienced the space around them through vipassana, one begins to relax. One begins to [page 25] experience the needlessness of defending or asserting oneself. At this point shunyata emerges as the simple absence of those walls and barricades of defense and assertion. One begins to develop the clear and precise experience of seeing a tree as just a tree; not one's version of a tree, not a tree called such-and-such, but a tree just as it is. The culmination of the experiential process of the development of intellect is the experience of shunyata, which is the experience of the non-existence of duality. The research work is already accomplished; the process of searching for something has been laid to rest. This is the attainment of prajna.

From this point the intellect begins to turn towards *jnana* or intuition. Up until now the learning process has been regarded as receiving teaching; it has been an experimental course of study with the object of finding out who, what and where we are. In that sense the practices of both the Hinayana and Mahayana levels are a step towards the understanding of the mandala within the body, the mandala within consciousness and the mandala within the environmental situation of one's life. According to the tantric tradition, three levels of experience are always necessary—outer, inner and secret. The outer experience is relating with form; the inner experience is relating with the subtleties of form. The subtleties of form are the space, in the sense we have referred to of a pot and the

space around it. The secret experience is that the form and the space are the same, that there is no difference between form and space.

On the level of the secret experience the subtleties are no longer an object of concern. If one keeps attending to the subtleties, then that itself becomes a veil—one is still relating to the situation as a learning process, rather than the actual process of experience. But it is not possible to arrive at the level of direct experience without going through the learning process of understanding scientifically. The practice of meditation in Buddhism begins with scientific research in which one learns to make friends with oneself and learns what one is. Having completely and thoroughly understood that, then one can expand into the further dimension of understanding which is the level of direct experience without any props.

Excerpt on the Progression of Meditation
From <u>The Bodhisattva Path</u>
From *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*
Chögyam Trungpa; Edited by John Baker and Marvin Casper
Shambhala Publications, Boston & London, 2002

[page 167] We have discussed the Hinayana meditation practice of simplicity and precision. By allowing a gap, space in which things may be as they are, we begin to appreciate the clear simplicity and precision of our lives. This is the beginning of meditation practice. We begin to penetrate the Fifth Skanda, cutting through the busyness and speed of discursive thought, the cloud of "gossip" that fills our minds. The next step is to work with emotions.

Discursive thought might be compared to the blood circulation which constantly feeds the muscles of our system, the emotions. Thoughts link and sustain the emotions so that, as we go about our daily lives, we experience an ongoing flow of mental gossip punctuated by more colorful and intense bursts of emotion. The thoughts and emotions express our basic attitudes toward and ways of relating to the world and form an environment, a fantasy realm in which we live. These "environments" are the Six Realms, and although one particular realm may typify the psychology of a particular individual, still that person will constantly experience the emotions connected with the other realms as well.

In order to work with these realms we must begin to view situations in a more panoramic way, which is vipashyana [page 168](Pali: vipassana) meditation. We must become aware not only of the precise details of an activity, but also of the situation as a whole. Vipashyana involves awareness of space, the atmosphere in which precision occurs. If we see the precise details of our activity, this awareness also creates a certain space. Being aware of a situation on a small scale also brings awareness on a larger scale. Out of this develops panoramic awareness, mahavipashyana (Pali: mahavipassana) meditation: that is, awareness of the overall pattern rather than the focusing of attention upon details. We begin to see the pattern of our fantasies rather than being immersed in them. We discover that we need not struggle with our projections, that the wall that separates us from them is our own creation. The insight into the insubstantial nature of ego is prajna, transcendental knowledge. As we glimpse prajna we relax, realizing that we no longer have to maintain the existence of ego. We can afford to be open and generous. Seeing another way of dealing with our projections brings intense joy. This is the first spiritual level of attainment of the bodhisattva, the first bhumi. We enter the Bodhisattva Path, the Mahayana Path, the open way, the path of warmth and openness.

In mahavipashyana meditation there is a vast expanse of space between us and objects. We are aware of the space between the situation and ourselves and anything can happen in that space. Nothing is happening here or there in terms of relationship or battle. In other words, we are not imposing our conceptualized ideas, names and categories on experience, but we feel the openness of space in every situation. In this way awareness becomes very precise and all-encompassing.

Mahavipashyana meditation means allowing things to be as they are. We begin to realize that this needs no effort on our part because things are as they are. We do not have to look [page 169]at them in that way: they are that way. And so we begin to really appreciate openness and space, that we have space in which to move about, that we do not have to try to be aware because we already are aware. So the Mahayana Path is the open way, the wide path. It involves the open-minded willingness to allow oneself to be awake, to allow one's instinct to spring out.

Previously we discussed allowing space in order to communicate, but that kind of practice is very deliberate and self-conscious. When we practice mahavipashyana meditation, we do not simply watch ourselves communicate, deliberately allowing a gap, deliberately waiting; but we communicate and then just space out, so to speak. Let be and not care anymore; don't possess the letting be as belonging to you, as your creation. Open, let be and disown. Then the spontaneity of the awakened state springs out.

Response to Question about Vipashyana
From "What is the Heart of the Buddha?"
From *The Heart of the Buddha*
By Chogyam Trungpa

[Page 8] Student: Rinpoche, could you say a little bit about vipashyana mediation? You mentioned it in your talk, but I'm not really sure what it is.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Vipashyana is a Sanskrit word which literally means "seeing clearly." In Tibetan we use the word lhakthong. Lhak means "superior" and thong means "seeing." So lhakthong means "clear seeing," "superior seeing."

Vipashyana begins once we have developed substantial shamatha discipline of being precise and mindful, on the spot, all the time. In shamatha, sound, smell, feeling, thought process, and everything else are looked at, but with such precision that they are nothing other than stillness. They don't produce further bubbles, or further percolation, of any kind at all.

You might say, "Ah, I thought of my father telling me no." At that moment, both your father and the idea of him saying ((No, don't do that" are divided into now, now, now, all the time. Everything is chopped into that level of precision, into a grain of sand. That is shamatha.

Usually, memory is predominant in everything you experience. If you are sitting in a meditation hall and the smell of food comes from the kitchen, you think about what kind of dinner they are cooking for you. Or else, you feel the ache in your buttocks and back and you want to [page 9] shift around. Shamatha means that everything is simply looked at. It is sliced up, but not aggressively; it is just looked at- look, look, look.

Through shamatha you are capable of looking at these experiences as individual entities, without referring to the past and without thinking about where they are going, or what they are going to do to you. Everything is without beginning and without end, just on the spot. If you think of onion soup and how you would like to go out and get onion soup, it is only on the level of thought. So you chop your thoughts-now, now, now.

Out of that comes vipashyana. On the level of vipashyana, you chop thoughts because of your training in shamatha, but at the same time you bring them along. The world is a panoramic view, but at the same time things really don't hang together the way they ordinarily used to.

Things are made out of pieces of simple realities, primitive realities. Even if you smell onions for a long time- for half an hour- those smells are chopped into pieces: you smell them, then you don't smell them, you smell them, then you don't smell them. Otherwise, if there were no gap, you couldn't smell at all.

Experiences are not continuous at the ego level. We think they are all together, in cahoots, but

it doesn't really happen that way. Everything is made out of dots. When experiences are chopped into small pieces, some realization of the unity of the display could come out of that. That is vipashyana.

You begin to feel good when, for instance, you touch a rock, because you feel that the rock is not a continuous rock, but the rock of the moment. When you hold your fan, it is the fan of the moment; when you blink, your blink is of the moment; when you meet your friends, they are friends of the moment. Nothing is expected and nothing is demanded any more. Everything is seen clearly.

Clear seeing: that is the definition of vipashyana, which is the result of shamatha. Things could be seen as a great display, as a Disney world, or whatever you want to call it. You realize that things are not all that together. But because they are not together, they are fantastically colorful. The more you see the mark of discontinuity, the more you see things as colorful. In order to see color you have to take a rest; then you see color again. So you see, you rest, and then you see brilliance again. That is the precision of how to perceive the phenomenal world.

BEAUTY AND ABSURDITY [83]

From *The Teacup & The Skullcup: Chogyam Trungpa on Zen and Tantra*

Judith L. Lief and David Schneider, Editors

Having discussed the ground-how the basic practice of dhyana, or the tradition of Zen, could be developed-the next stage seems to be the question of how concentration produces appreciation. At this stage, you are actually trapping the crazy monkey. So it is a twofold process. First, you develop a sense of accuracy in relating with your thoughts and your mind--with the neuroses and all kinds of things that develop in one's mind. Secondly, you put all that into a certain perspective, as workable. You make a relationship with your thoughts, you work with the thoughts. So this process could be represented by the analogy of trapping the crazy monkey.

The traditional analogy for the monkey-mind is an ox or an elephant. In Tibetan we call that mind *sem*. Mind, or sem, is the intelligent state that relates with objects. It is fickle in nature, constantly moving, and [84] this movement leaves impressions behind. The mind leaves impressions, and it also takes on the burden of others. Mind is a constant state of movement. Sometimes, extraordinarily, the mind extends itself into speeding along very fast; and at some points, it seems to slow down, but that is also an expression of speed. Whether it is slow or fast, the nature of mind is restless, completely restless. At times, there may be room for irritations or obstacles to pass through, but even the occasional stillness of mind lasts no longer than a fraction of a second. That is the definition of mind.

Awareness, or intelligence, is quite a different and separate category from the mind. The intelligence, or consciousness, has less speed and does not carry a burden. It also expects some hospitality: this particular intelligence expects to be accommodated. Intelligence or awareness is therefore referred to as the rider or herder who works with the ox or the elephant or the monkey. Awareness regards the mind as its property; intelligence, or consciousness, is the owner of monkey-mind. The idea is that the monkey is supposed to have been domesticated a long time ago, but, somehow, we did not get around to it. So now we have this big project of setting a trap and trapping this monkey.

The schema is that there is consciousness, which is the intelligent aspect of the mind; and within consciousness, the most sane aspect is the awareness fraction or portion. The monkey-mind is caught in the trap because of the constant practice of sitting meditation, which provides a camouflage. Being completely still, it is complete entrapment. But at this point it is still a game. We are uncertain as to whether we are going to trap the monkey or not; it is uncertain; it is still a challenge. It could be regarded as a big joke, but nevertheless we are pursuing it and going ahead with it.

One of the problems with the monkey-mind is speed. The intensity of the speed, instant by instant, has prevented us from taking a good look at [85] this particular monkey, so it has

become a myth. We are uncertain, and question whether such a monkey exists or not. But the monkey-mind is finally caught in the trap purely by constant patience and forbearance. As practitioners, we do not react against the displays that monkey has provided us: the discursive thoughts and subconscious gossip. The monkey has provided us with all kinds of things, but we continue to remain still. We are faithful to the technique of awareness of breathing and walking.

By the practitioner's sheer discipline and sheer patience, the monkey finally feels that there is no life around it or around the trap. As the monkey begins to relax a little, but still practices its inquisitiveness—suddenly it is caught in the net by our sheer stillness and faithfulness to the technique. The monkey struggles and tries to get out of the net, but that net was well-prepared a long time ago by highly accomplished craftsmen, who handed down from generation to generation the tradition of how to provide such a good entrapment. Every knot in the net is well-produced, and it is very tough and functional. So now the monkey mind cannot get out of this trap. Knowing that as well, the monkey makes only feeble attempts, a kind of tokenism. Another analogy for this process is that of capturing an elephant or an ox, as demonstrated in the Zen oxherding pictures.

In the end, the monkey turns out to be not all that monkey-like in strength and solidity-it turns out to be a gorilla! It has power and strength, and it is worthwhile training this gorilla as a vehicle. Sometimes it is ferocious, sometimes slightly stupid, but nevertheless it is very powerful. So that is another realization: this monkey-mind is not all that feeble. It is not as weak, inquisitive, and speedy as we thought it might be.

In the practice of meditation, in dealing with this gorilla, once we have captured such a creature, we have to examine it and study it. We cannot just do something with it without knowing its habits and its behavior—patterns that might have to change. This is called vipashyana practice, [86] or in Tibetan, *lhakthong*, which literally means "clear seeing." *Lhak* is "superior"; *thong* is "seeing"; therefore, lhakthong could be translated as "superior vision" or "clear seeing."

Now that this mind has been captured by the discipline and techniques we applied, we have to examine it carefully to see what we can do with this animal and how we can use it--whether we could use it as a farming ox or a vehicle or a baggage carrier. So we look at this discursive thought finally entrapped in the net of discipline and see what we can do with it. This provides a first step, some hope, because after all the trips that we have gone through, the hypothetical ceases to be hypothetical. It finally becomes reality. After all, we are not kidding ourselves and pretending to be meditating, we are actually doing something with our mind—and this is the proof.

Lhakthong is called clear seeing because it is awareness of every detail and at the same time it is very spacious. It goes beyond a breathing exercise alone. There is a sense of openness and a sense of appreciation of the environment around oneself. The focus on the breathing is no longer the important point-you focus on the totality of the breathing. The space around you

becomes extremely important and extremely powerful. At that point, mindfulness becomes awareness, which is the next stage of practice.

Awareness also means comprehension. In other words, you cannot just be aware without being intelligent. The notion of wakefulness still continues at this level, but awareness not only means seeing; it means that seeing, as well as the product of seeing, is being perceived properly. So first you see something, but you do not quite perceive it. Your vision has to be very clear to see properly. Then, having already seen, there is still constant discipline, which continues afterwards. Having seen things as they are, the object you discovered comes back to you and you begin to comprehend. That is, you begin to understand what you have seen, rather than purely seeing. That is the difference. It is like the difference [87] between things perceived through a camera lens and things perceived by a human mind. One is completely mechanical: things can be seen as clearly as possible by a macro lens, but that lens does not transmit its message back. In the case of consciousness, the awareness process is a level of perception that utilizes what is seen as a part of its working situation. Through awareness, you get a very abrupt, definite, and clear perspective of the spontaneous working of perception and reality--suddenly! Vision and perception happen constantly; and with lhakthong, seeing and knowing take place at the same time.

We now realize that this gorilla has all kinds of potentialities. This gorilla can be trained in domestic manners, in every sense of the word. At the same time the intelligence, the conscious mind-which is the hunter of this gorilla--has established its ownership and trust and understanding. At this point, the speedy mind becomes somewhat workable--even highly workable.

WORK, SEX, MONEY

REAL LIFE ON THE PATH OF MINDFULNESS

Chögyam Trungpa

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17

PANORAMIC AWARENESS

There are two kinds of positive thinking. One kind is thinking that the future is going to be all right, which is based on panic and concerned with security. The other one is not living in the future but living in the present. The present situation is open—you could almost say solid—and real, definite, and healthy. There is an appreciation of the richness in the present.

Believing in the present is antipoverty, because it doesn't involve wishful thinking of any kind at all. It is there already and you don't have to wish for anything. It's solid and real, in a sense much more real than "me" and "myself." In the Buddhist tradition, we have a belief in buddha nature, *tathagatagarbha,* which has been described as the most positive thinking of all. Some schools of Buddhist thought would say that tathagatagarbha, or

buddha nature, is not some kind of abstract "nature" but rather a living buddha inside you. Sometimes people visualize the buddha within, with a complete body. Certain other schools within Buddhism have said that it is too dangerous to believe in such a real thing's being there, because that approach could also be taken toward ego as being something solid and real inside you. These schools criticized that approach as being eternalism, one of the two extremes, the other being nihilism. In some sense, however, eternalism is more positive than nihilism. However, buddha nature has nothing to do with a solid, egoistic sense of self. Basically, it is the essence of being awake, which is already there. We don't have to think up something positive and make the best of it.

This kind of positive doesn't try to push away the negatives. Even perceiving the negatives is a vision of the positive. That's why we speak of panoramic awareness, which is basic positive thinking. Relating with panoramic awareness could be said to be a way of freeing ourselves from the chain reaction of karma, which is based on hope and fear. As we discussed, karma is a chain reaction that is based on panic or uncertainty, on one hand, or also a chain reaction of goodness in the smaller, one-sided sense of good versus bad. On the other hand, the positivity of panoramic awareness is restful. It opens the situation and brings spaciousness and a meditative state of being. At the very moment that is present, there is no furthering of karmic cause and effect; no karmic seed is planted or developed. When that positiveness is there as we are dealing with situations, we can speak of meditation in action. In that way, meditation in action is just as important as sitting meditation.

Panoramic awareness is the basic trust that the space is there already. The whole point is that we don't have to get it; we have it. When we say, "How do we get it?" that is the voice of poverty. Panoramic awareness *is* buddha nature. It may depend on the intensity of the awareness, how fully it is developed, but in any case it is some state of "awake."

To say that panoramic awareness is free from negativity sounds like there is still some poverty there. However, we are not imprisoned at all. This positive state of being is so fundamental that it doesn't need relative support from anywhere. It's the positive of transcending positive and negative. It is transcendental.

It's not a naive possibility, like saying, "Everything's okay," meaning that things are defensively okay. You tell yourself defensively, "Keep smiling," and you tell yourself "I am happy," and you try to believe that. Instead, panoramic awareness is realizing that everything is healthy, everything is fine, but you don't have to make a big deal out of that. Your awareness provides you with basic understanding that doesn't involve defensively proving anything to yourself. Rather it is believing, having faith in, and seeing the situation *as it is*.

Being in an egoless state sharpens your intelligence because there's nothing in the way. You don't have to manage two things at the same time anymore. There's always just one thing to deal with—that's why it's called nonduality. So your skill in dealing with any situation becomes sharper and more precise. Your sensitivity in dealing with other people is also heightened.

We hear so much about the egoless state, but then when we experience it, we might feel doubt: "There must be something more than this!" It is said that the secret of mind seems too easy to be true. Egolessness doesn't mean thoughtlessness, a state without thoughts. There will be thought patterns anyway. For instance, when you read sutras, there is prose in them that you can follow; they contain thought patterns of the Buddha—how he views things, how he thinks, how he presents a situation. Also, in many cases when questions were asked of the Buddha, he supposedly just smiled and didn't answer; he left the questioners to work out the answers. Even then, a subtle thought pattern is still there. So of course, there can be thought patterns without ego. As we read descriptions of enlightenment, it sounds very dramatic and glorious, but actually when we expe-

rience a glimpse of it, it doesn't seem to be as glorious as the descriptions. The descriptions make us expect too much.

Once panoramic awareness is there, it grows. Or rather it is gradually uncovered; the dirt is gradually removed and the awareness shines through. It shines through. You can't really nurse it. Panoramic awareness has to grow by itself. It's like the description of the *garuda* hatching. The garuda chick grows inside the egg, and when the shell breaks, the garuda can fly without further nursing. Once the space is there already, you don't have to do anything with it. Just go along with the action. It is self-fulfillment. That's why the notion of spontaneity comes in here.

If you solidify the space, then that becomes the watcher, the abstract quality of your intelligence. Then there's really no space at all. The watcher is like a chemical that solidifies things. There are various degrees of intelligence, and at a certain stage, the intelligence could become the watcher. That's a limitation we are facing. First there is duality, this and that, and then we begin to be aware of that, which could be said to be a very healthy step toward awakening. But then we begin to identify with that duality so much that there is a danger of making the space into characters with personalities. So what one has to do is sort of undo everything. First of all, depersonalize the awareness of duality, and second, the natural duality should also be dissolved. It's a going-backward process, an undoing process.

Once you begin to relate directly with the basic intelligence, once you have already acknowledged that, then as the situation develops, that basic intelligence becomes stronger and stronger, more real. It grows by itself. It's like when you first begin to awaken from sleep. You open your eyes; then you begin to hear sounds. That process of waking up continues until finally you get out of bed and walk about.

Taking a leap, which we discussed earlier, is the beginning of acknowledging basic intelligence. We struggle with that. You don't want to believe that there is something fundamentally

secure that doesn't need to draw security from anything else. When you begin to realize there is such a thing, that could be frightening as well as pleasant. In many cases, we feel that if we acknowledge that, we will lose our occupation, the basic occupation that keeps ego busy. So we have to push ourselves into it.

There is a subtle journey going from the *shunyata* level of recognizing the emptiness of our habitual patterns to the *mahamudra* level, the attainment of vajrayana vision in which one is working directly with the energy of a situation. First of all, you perceive space, and you are in the space but still conscious of it. Then, at a certain stage, you lose even the notion of space. Sometimes you become heavily involved with "that," and you lose track of "this" altogether. That's just fascination taking over, rather than a realization of egolessness. The difference is that in the case of being one with the situation, there is no sense of being off balance, no sense of being on either side of the this-that equation. In that case, there is no need of a scale. In the case of fascination, there is a scale, and the weighting toward the object is heavier, but there are still two sides of the scale. In the case of being one, there's no scale at all. There is no sense of power on one side or the other.

There is also a difference between being awake and being overpowered by your experience. That sense of being overpowered means that there is still a scale with two sides. When you are overpowered by the situation, you are captivated, and there's a sense of stupidity. You may feel very calm, but there's no sense of dignity and no sense of sharpness.

With ego in the picture, it's more a case of overcrowded ground than not having any ground. There are so many things between you and the ground that you can't perceive the ground at all. There's a spiky quality to the ego-oriented experience. First there's irritation and then a larger sense of irritation, and then losing a sense of direction, and then finally, being completely flipped out.

Whenever anything irritates us, it's trying to communicate

with us. Usually we are looking for an answer rather than trying to communicate with irritation. There is sanity operating, but usually we don't try to learn from that at all. We try to do something with that irritation rather than just relate to it. There's no point in trying to ignore irritation completely. It's a matter of experiencing the basics of the irritation. The point is to acknowledge its presence rather than try to suppress it. The approach is not analytical particularly; it's more instinctive.

When we talk about relating with irritation here, we are talking about how to handle it at the beginning. When the first flash of irritation comes, just try to feel the abstract quality of it, the presence of it, and in that way you set a proper balance. Then the irritation doesn't become overpowering, and you don't become overpowering toward the irritation either. The next step is then dealing with the specific nature of the irritation. At this point, you have already set up the right relationship with the irritation, which allows you to handle it in a much easier way, as opposed to a confused way.

When the first flash of irritation occurs, it throws out a cloud of confusion, of bewilderment.* You are so shaken up by it that you do something sudden or panicky and upset the whole possibility of skillfulness and dignity. Then everything becomes very pathetic. Then each subsequent time you try to deal with the irritation, because you handled it wrong at the beginning, the whole situation becomes an ongoing emergency. When you try to deal with that emergency, another emergency pops up on top of the first one. Then the whole situation becomes very spiky or freaky, or whatever you want to call it. If you are able to relate with the irritation properly at the beginning, then it doesn't throw out bewilderment or confusion; rather, irritation presents itself as it is. Then the emergency doesn't arise at all, so

* In the last chapter, the author was speaking of bewilderment as a groundless state before ego or karma is solidified. Here he is speaking of it in a more conventional sense of equating bewilderment with confusion.—Eds.

you have time to deal with the situation. There is space, room to move about, slowly.

Generally when irritation pops up, we automatically think that we are obliged to do something with it, without knowing what to do. However, we could work with it in the same way that we work with everything in meditation. That's the whole point about meditation: you can be doing nothing but still remain brilliant. This takes away the fundamental speed connected with the irritation, which is not speed in any real sense anyway. It's like rush hour. We call it rush hour but actually we are not really rushing—just the opposite.

The courage to work with ourselves in this way comes as basic trust in ourselves, as a sort of fundamental optimism. In the beginning, you act like a warrior, and then you actually become brave. It's like the visualizations in tantric practices. When you visualize yourself as a deity, for example, first you have your belief, your version of you, which is called the *samayasattva*. You visualize yourself as the deity; it is your version of you. Then along comes what is called the *jnanasattva*—the body of wisdom, the buddha-nature quality—which arises as another visualization in front of you. That visualization comes to you and is united with your basic notion of yourself. So finally you become Buddha completely; you become the deity completely, and you begin to act like one. That is called vajra pride. That's an important part of visualization. The important part of that pride is to believe that you *are* that—you have three eyes, you have three tongues, and you have flames around you, or whatever it is that you are visualizing. You *are* that, you really are! Visualizations are not just fantasies. They are a part of you, so the pride is believing in that part of you. If you have the potential of growing a beard and you don't shave, then the beard grows. It's part of you.

In the process of visualization, finally you begin to visualize the whole world as a mandala, a sacred space, and every sound as mantra, or sacred utterance. The whole world and everyone

in it is included. Such vajra pride, or indestructible pride, does not need any relative reference point. It is inborn belief that doesn't need relative support. In fact, once you begin to check back to your relative reference world, once you begin to doubt, you lose the vajra pride. You might be afraid that you can't survive without relative support, but you survive better if you don't have to question your talent, if you don't have to compare and look for relative support. You just work with what you can do. It's a fundamentally positive thing. Relative support actually diminishes your talent, because you begin to question yourself, you begin to compare yourself, you begin to have doubts. Comparing yourself doesn't help. It diminishes your confidence.

Vajra pride might seem to be a dangerous path that could easily stray into a kind of false enlightenment. The danger of vajra pride's turning into ego pride comes when you start using it to suppress the negative things you feel about yourself, your irritation with yourself. You try to use the logic of vajra pride for that. Then it ceases to be vajra pride anyway. It's impossible to turn 100 percent vajra pride into ordinary pride. But once you try to use it for mundane purposes, it is no longer vajra pride.

At the beginning of the path, ego may seem to be in control of the situation. In fact, the whole spiritual journey may start out as a gigantic ego trip. The ego brings us to the dharma by saying, "Gee, I'd like to get enlightened and do all this stuff I've read about." We have to use that. You just begin where you are. It's quite a simple process. You start with ego's version of enlightenment, and at a certain stage, ego finds that it is threatened by your commitment to the path, and it begins to wear away, to drop out. At that point, we are approaching the cliff we need to leap from, which is suicidal for ego.

There is actually a succession of sudden shocks until you fall off the last cliff. Whenever there is a cliff, ego tries to avoid it, tries to come back to a safer place by using the same logic constantly and by not being willing to take any chances. At a certain point, ego begins to find that its version of enlightenment

doesn't match the teachings, the genuine dharma. But it ignores that. It creates it own teaching. Whenever there's a cliff, it says, "No, I'm not going over that cliff. I'm going to survive; so I'll make my own teaching." When a situation feels very uncomfortable, I would say there is *more* reason to approach the cliff then, because there is some gap, some crack that has appeared. When neurosis is coming up more vividly, there is often a gap. So that's a great opportunity.

When you actually make the leap, there is no landmark at all, not even limitlessness. It's completely all or nothing. Or you could say it's either one or everything. You can afford to leap; therefore you don't have to hold on to anything.

At the same time, when we talk about *all*, or unity, that doesn't mean to say that the situation becomes completely depersonalized. There is still *all* of that particular person's point of view, even when we are speaking of the buddhas, the awakened ones. That's why there could be different enlightened realms, which we often refer to as the three *kayas: nirmanakaya, sambhogakaya,* and *dharmakaya*. Even within the ultimate realm of dharmakaya, Samantabhadra, Vajradhara, and many different types of dharmakaya buddhas exist.* They are *all*, therefore they are *one*. They are all; therefore they are individual, personal.

I hope that you will be able to put into effect what we've discussed, in practical ways. No doubt what we've talked about

* The three kayas, or the *trikaya*, refer to three fundamental aspects, or bodies, of enlightenment. *Kaya* literally means "body." Dharmakaya is the ultimate realm of wisdom beyond reference points. Sambhogakaya is the realm of compassion and communication. It literally means the realm of enjoyment. Nirmanakaya is the buddha that takes human form, which refers to the historical Buddha but also to the enlightened teachers we may encounter now. In Tibetan vajrayana Buddhism, the dharmakaya is personified in visualizations. Two of the most important dharmakaya buddhas are Samantabhadra and Vajradhara. The point the author seems to be making here is that even in the realm of ultimate truth, there is still an immediate, personal quality to wakefulness or sanity, as personified by these buddhas. In fact, the universal quality gives rise to the personal quality of enlightenment.—Eds.

might clarify your problems, but at the same time, the discussion might confuse us more. That confusion is the starting point. It is what we have to work with in everyday life.

We have been talking extensively about the importance of appreciating and working with our mundane life as a source of sanity and awareness. Often there is a perceived conflict between our ordinary life and sitting meditation. Seeing a conflict between those two comes from the inability to perceive the background of panoramic awareness that is present in our daily situations. There is always an undercurrent of panoramic awareness that acts as guidance. That is the source and inspiration for being skillful in daily life. Relating to that does not mean having to be rigid and careful, or overly watchful. Nevertheless, there should be some acknowledgment that the space of awareness is there. There should be just a fraction of a second of acknowledgment. Through this acknowledgment, a sense of spaciousness spontaneously arises that provides the right perspective, or distance, between action and reaction.

For the beginner, relating to this awareness may require some level of watching oneself or deliberateness. In the long run, however, watching doesn't come into the picture. For instance, if a chaotic situation happens, there is uncertainty about how to deal with that, and that uncertainty flashes back on us. That uncertainty itself becomes space. In other words, each time there is doubt, the doubt itself brings a kind of bewilderment, but that bewilderment becomes space, spaciousness. In that way, a sort of natural, inbuilt understanding of the situation happens. In that sense, there is a shock absorber that is always present.

That kind of awareness is based on a certain amount of trust, or optimism. Basically, nothing is regarded as a failure or as dangerous. Rather, whatever arises is experienced as part of a creative and loving relationship toward oneself. That subtle confidence and optimism automatically bring skillful means, because we realize there is no need to be panicked. We have a

warrior's attitude toward life, which could also be described as faith or belief in our life, or possibly as devotion to our experience and our world. Whatever happens, we always have a fundamental positive quality about our experience of life. Such faith could be said to be the source of an almost magical performance. If a person relies on that confidence, it is almost as though she is going to perform a miracle, and she is taking quite a chance that the miracle might not happen. However, because she has confidence, she almost knows it will happen, and she does what she has to do, and the miracle does happen. That kind of fundamental positive approach runs right through all situations in dealing with life. It also becomes a meditative experience, because it is a purely optimistic attitude without watcher, without ego, without centralizing in the self or being careful. This whole positive flow can only happen if there is no centralized security. Instead, there is basic faith and belief in one's wholesomeness, in one's fundamental healthy situation.

THE 1973 SEMINARY TALKS

CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA, RINPOCHE

This is the transcript of talks given by Rinpoche at the first Seminary, a twelve-week training period of intensive study and meditation held at Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

Hinayana - Mahayana

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MEDITATION TECHNIQUE

Abstract: Discipline means total involvement in the practice. Mindfulness of breathing. Posture; sitting on a chair. Walking practice. Meditation mudra. Some ambition, commitment to oneself. Don't plan.

I thought we might discuss particular techniques of meditation. In the practice that we've been doing, people have developed somewhat -- I wouldn't quite say a discrepancy -- but somewhat individualistic styles of their own needs. So far the practices that we have been doing, including meditation in the retreat situation, have been individualistic in style. And for long-term sitting practices like this, I feel we need a somewhat systematized, uniform practice. The course that we are going to study intellectually is the theory and practice of meditation which would also be related with that. I feel that people have been able to tune themselves into whatever they were practising before, have been able to work with it, but still need lots of discipline.

In this case discipline is not how many hours you sit, not missing fifteen minutes, and not taking a nap between sitting periods; it is total involvement in the actual sitting practice. We could cheat ourselves just physically being here. On the other hand, we could be very honest, seemingly honest: "since I can't handle myself in sitting, I might as well go to bed again." All those situations seem to be not quite to the point of total involvement. In the Buddhist tradition, meditation practice is generally total involvement: body, speech and mind are completely, totally involved. That is the shamatha practice. And the vipashyana practice is total involvement of body, speech and mind, plus you are also totally involved in awareness of the environment around you. You are involved so much that there is no individual entity left to watch itself any more, which is the shunyata level. People have received meditation instruction or encouragement of some kind toward practice in this gathering here at the seminary, and the approach that I encourage in all of you is a sense of involvement in sitting practice and meditation in action, in everyday life situations.

In our situation here, it is not exactly dealing with day-to-day life in terms of the hassle and bustle of business life, jobs and so forth. When we eat, when we sleep, whatever we do here is somewhat less hassled, unless you have created your own world of paranoia which is extra entertainment.

We are starting at the beginning; we are beginning at the beginning. Your commitment to the practice thus far is such that we are at least able to handle a situation such as this long-term sitting process, which is a tremendous achievement, from now on throughout the seminary and

throughout the rest of our lives. That is why I feel that the people here are worthy enough to begin at the beginning, tough enough to begin at the beginning, courageous enough to begin at the beginning. You stepped onto an elevator and somebody pressed the button and you have no choice. That is the pattern generally, but particularly so in this case in that you are committed for three months, which highly signifies that your totality is involved and you admit it. You had a chance to say "I don't want to come here." All kinds of chances. The warnings were given at least several months in advance. And you ignored the warnings, or possible problems. You knew what you were getting into, but you still went on, and here we are, and that's good. So we are here to really work, really commit ourselves to it -- those of you who have been studying with me for a long period and have had constant contact with me and those who haven't had that contact, but still commit themselves into the same practice. There are very few cases here who haven't had a great deal of contact, and for whom the relationship with what we're trying to do is new. But they still try to jump in and share the experience with us, which is also the same thing. Nobody came here without at least three days' notice. And everybody knew exactly what's going to happen. Meditation is a way of committing ourselves into the teaching. The teachings consist of your involvement with yourself; the teachers only act as spokesmen, purely spokesmen. So involvement with the teachings is involvement with yourself.

The idea of a sitting practice of meditation developed into different styles in different countries. All kinds of levels. The approach of my lineage, the Kagyu lineage of Buddhism, is surprisingly close to the Theravadin order of Hinayana Buddhism, and quite equally we could say that it is close to the Soto Zen tradition of Japan. The Zen tradition is practising Hinayana Buddhism in the light of Mahayana inspiration. In Tibetan Buddhism, in this particular practice of meditation, what we are doing is practising Hinayana in the light of Vajrayana. Nevertheless, we have to practise in some obvious, ordinary, simple, strict, direct, clear level.

There have been enormous misunderstandings about the techniques that people might use. Lots of people here have received instructions in interviews directly with myself and in discussions with other people, and so forth. I divide them into several categories:

People who are able to tune into openness directly -- I try not to give them a technique but just open, sudden flash, open directly. And such people have been doing that and are successful, until you come to a situation so restricted that you have no chance to share your experience with the outside world, so to speak, and you're constantly sitting -- like what we are doing. Then such a direct flash of openness becomes a problem because we begin to question whether that open experience we

felt was genuine or whether it was hallucination. You have nothing to do but sit and let the openness happen, but then all kinds of thoughts begin to churn up in the mind and auditory problems, visual problems, physical sensations of all kinds begin to take us over. So such instructions some have received are valid on their own merit, but at this point of intensive training practice, I feel you should come back to the original conservative approach of breathing; awareness of breathing practice.

And those who have already received instructions on the awareness of breathing are people who are keen on instruction as to how they could handle, how they could start at the beginning, rather than looking for openness or a sudden flash as such. Those people who have received techniques on how to approach the breathing can still continue.

But let me refresh your memories about what we have discussed before in terms of the breathing technique that has developed. Let's not classify the different styles of breathing practices and so forth belonging to different levels of shamatha, vipashyana, mahavipashyana, and shunyata. Let us just discuss very simply and directly what it is necessary to do here. In this particular type of practice of intensive sitting periods, as I already mentioned, we are dealing with body, speech and mind simultaneously, and developing a sense of precision, developing a sense of accuracy. There's no room, none whatsoever, for imagination or improvisation. That includes sitting practice as well as walking practice.

Awareness of breathing in this case is actually more mindfulness of breathing, which is the sense of the breath, and being with the breath, the subtleties of the breath. We do not have to be too scientific concerning our lungs, our nostrils, hot and cold temperatures that breath provides, the impression breath provides on our lips as we breathe out; but just the sense of the ongoing survival mechanism that governs us -- the breathing, becoming mindful of the natural breathing. Mindful here is not looking at, not thinking about or imagining something better than pure breathing, something higher than pure breathing, but just natural breathing. You have a sense of breathing out, going out, and breath dissolving. Inbreath is the gap. One doesn't have to follow the inbreathing as drawing in; just let it drop. Inbreathing is just insignificant space, gap, coming in. And then outbreathing again.

And breath is connected with the way you sit. Straighten your body, but not to the extent of being military in style. When breathing becomes self-conscious, that is a reflection on your posture. As far as the style of posture is concerned, you can use just a simple cross-legged style or half-lotus, or the kneeling posture from the Japanese

tradition; any of those seem to be accurate. All are good. And you have a lot of chance to change them around if you feel that your body is strained and you would like to change your posture. But by no means is just any old way of being on the floor workable. By no means is that workable -- because it distracts, destroys your natural flow of breath and also it interrupts your sense of ongoing spaciousness. You're involved with all kinds of one-sided feelings, as opposed to a balanced feeling of an ongoing process.

The question about sitting on chairs also seems to come up. If there is a particular problem of endangering one's physical defects, if people have any strains on their knees or their back, or have been injured in an accident and so forth, there's no point in trying to strain yourself; and therefore you might sit on a chair. Or if your body is in a decaying, old-age state, so that you can't fix yourself in the proper position. In those sickness situations, old-age situations, or if a particular strain has developed, then it would be recommended to sit on a chair. Sitting on a chair is known as the Maitreya asana; it is accepted. But when you sit on a chair for a long time such as this, if you sit on a chair, you automatically lean back and don't move your body for a long time, apart from the walking practice. If you lean back all the time, if you have a sense of the security of the back of the chair, that makes a strained body, and makes your circulation extremely weak. It is quite possibly unhealthy from that point of view. If we like to have something to lean against, that's not recommended. So in other words, the idea is to sit upright without anything to lean on. It is direct, upright, self-contained, and related with the floor, space and earth; so you can feel the space around your body.

The question of walking practice. Walking practice has a very interesting effect on our psychology. Sometimes we feel that for the first time we are walking naked, that we have no pockets to put our hands in, and we do not know what to do with our hands, how to handle our body and so forth. That's one of the problems. The traditional approach to walking practice is that as you stand up when the gong rings, when you get up -- or wake up -- the awareness of breathing is switched onto mindfulness of the legs, mindfulness of steps. So precisely the same way you deal with your breath, you deal with the movement of your right foot, left foot. And that should be dealt with spaciously with no particular extraordinary articulation nor just pure sloppiness; both require effort. In this case try to do it as effortlessly as possible. Extend your leg, heel, sole, toe, heel, sole, toe in a very simple relaxed way. The Zen tradition of holding the hands is part of the aesthetic practice of the ongoing movement that you are making. But that doesn't seem to be absolutely necessary, as long as your arms are making a good balance, and not self-conscious. Just let go, whatever way you feel is workable.

When you sit, the posture of the meditation mudra is generally recommended. But again this posture, -- (hands palm down on knees) -- which is called relaxing the mind posture, is also recommended. So the particular mudra, particular posture is not important, but rather the totality of the whole thing, that there is some kind of unity. You wouldn't do just any good old thing, but there is some sense of totality, a balanced thing that could develop.

The Theravadins put less emphasis on the posture, and the same with the Tibetans, but the Japanese tradition of practice puts tremendous emphasis on the sitting posture. They take it very literally. As we are Americans here, we have to develop the middle way. We have access to all the traditions. That's in fact the merit of being American; you have access to all the disciplines. But if you get carried away, you could trip out into spiritual materialism. So we have to pay attention to ourselves rather than trying to become or trying to tune into a particular type of trip. It seems to be necessary to remind yourselves that you are in the United States; you are in Wyoming; you are in Jackson Hole; you are in the cafeteria meditating -- pull back to that when you begin to wander about. Pull back to that: "My name is this; I am meditating here, at the seminary; I have three months to go." Such a reminder seems to be extremely important. One doesn't have to become ego-centered from that point of view -- that I have a project to work on that I have to achieve: I'm going to attain enlightenment; if not at the end of these three months, I'm going to make it in my life. We don't have to be that corny. But we could develop some kind of ambition. And discipline, real discipline of some kind plays an extremely important part.

I think a lot of the problems that students have with sitting practice is lack of commitment. But that is not a negative statement, in that you haven't joined the party politics properly. Lack of commitment in this case in lack of commitment to ourselves. We feel ourselves self-conscious, trapped in this particular situation, unable to make the heroic leap of quitting altogether, and unable to handle the situation. It is a very awkward situation. And this awkwardness leads us to meditation practice, in fact, which is beautiful. Everybody, all of us, feel that we are somewhat inadequate in some area or another. Either we feel we are uninformed, or else we feel we are not quite making it in what we should be doing. And all those doubts and problems come out of lack of commitment. Commitment not to the teachings, the beliefs of Buddhism, but lack of commitment in terms of making a good job of ourselves.

We need to have some kind of ambition in this case. If there's no ambition, there's no real commitment from that end. Then all kinds of possible entertainment that could happen, happen in our minds and

we are hardly sitting here at all. We are a long way from here; our minds are miles away. And one would encourage it, because it is entertaining; you have your private movie show. One could imagine "I would like to get out of this place. I will drive out. I will hitch-hike. I will fly in an airplane. I'll get to the other end, then I'll go to such-and-such a place. I'll do this, this, this, and I'll stop at such-and-such gas stations, if I am driving. I'm going to handle myself this way, that way. I'm going to meet my friend so-and-so. I'm going to make my contacts with so-and-so and get a job or --". Endless things. There are constant, endless things. You could entertain yourself that way. But, for the very fact that you haven't done that, your body is still here; your mind is taking the trip. But mind is suspended by the leash of karma, of being here. So physically you have to be here. You can't fly without an airplane; you can't speed without a car. You can't achieve your wishful thinking because you are bound whether you like it or not. Physically, psychologically we are indebted, and the reason why our bodies are here is because psychologically we are bound by expressions of all kinds of neurosis; bound onto solid ground. So I think the sense of hopelessness again plays an extremely important part.

There's one other very important request I would like to make of everybody. Unless it is extremely practically realistic please don't think about what you are going to do after you leave here. Please don't. Or don't ask me. Just settle down here. Let yourself rest and just go along day to day. 9:30 is over; there is 10:30 to go. That's good. It's very realistic. And now it's lunch-time, tea-time, dinnertime, bed-time. That's good. It's more realistic. Rather than any other business adventures: "I'm going to be president of Antioch University; I'm going to be the president of United Airlines; or I'm going to be the stewardess. I'm going to be my own self-made Guru." -- whatever comes up. It's impractical. We are here yet so there's no point in it. We have to finish another three months. There's no point in doing all these things. This actually happens to be true.

You might feel a sense of freedom that you can, so to speak, love it and leave it, as the American expression goes. But that slogan is a political, imaginary slogan, an unrealistic one. We can't just quit. We can't forget our past. Otherwise, we wouldn't have any more birthday parties. Now you are twenty-three years old, but instead you would become one year old again. So on the whole, meditation practice is to relate with our past. Make our previous experience the best job, and continue into the present situations.

But make no business deals between yourselves, and no planning unless it's absolutely necessary -- that you have to send your children to school in December or January, or that you have your course to teach, your rent to pay -- those are very realistic ones. But apart from that,

the little things that go on in our head are not important. And in fact it destroys your master plan. If you plan too much now, you'll get confused: the plan is planning you or you are planning the plan. The whole thing gets very muddled, confused. Everything that comes up in our state of mind is related with just thinking, thought process, thought process, thought process, thinking.

The other day I was talking with some of the people here about restlessness at night and insomnia, or early-morning headaches, in the sense of a feeling of too much head when you get up. Those symptoms may be caused by using your eyes too much. When we subtly begin to get tired of our sitting practice, what we generally do is entertain ourselves by using the only last exit that we have -- which is visual or auditory. And if there's too much speed involved with the vision or listening, then one tends to get insomnia, because you are so hyped up and you are trying so hard to get a new approach, another entertainment to occupy yourselves in the sitting practice. And that makes you completely cranky, like little children who are put to bed too late -- they become neurotic and cry a lot, destroy things a lot. So, in that kind of situation, as you look out, relax your eye muscles and don't try to make visual perception sharp and clear. Open your eyes, and just diffuse visually, which also relaxes and makes less neurosis in your back, neck, head, shoulder muscles. A lot of them are from using the sense organs too much. Over-active sense organs make things worse.

I would like to invite questions and discussion. Anybody asking questions would be extremely helpful to others as well, so let's discuss.

Discussion:

Q: I have a feeling that my question isn't going to be helpful to anybody else... (indistinct)... I find that I have the best balance, the best sense of being grounded when I'm on the floor. But if I have to be on the floor too long, then I try to sit through a lot of pain and I find that I'm practically crippling myself. So I would like, if I have the choice, I would like to sit most of the time on the floor, and then, if I find it is too hard on me, to sit on a chair. Because in a chair I don't try to sit back. Sitting back in a chair is more a strain on the back than sitting on the floor.

R: I think that's a good suggestion actually. I don't think anybody can compete with you. That's a good one, yeah. Well, don't strain yourself. But at the same time there are two levels. You have psychological pain which is translated into physical pain, and it feels physically unbearable because it is psychologically unbearable. That's one problem. And the other problem is that, actually, physically you are inadequate, and you can't handle it, There's no point in trying to say

that it is purely mind. Taking care of one's body is important. So I leave it up to you to assess that. I think you can sit on a chair if you feel you can't handle it, but try.

Q: Rinpoche, would a lot of heavy tension in my chest be related to posture?

R: Chest is definitely related with the back. If your back is not straight, then there's too much front, not enough back.

Q: But doesn't that make your back sore as well?

R: No, traditionally not. You might get some itches -- you know, the kind of tingling things. Or some area of your back might be numb.

Q: Well, my back and my neck and my legs, and finally my chest, I can't stand it, it seems awfully... (indistinct)

R: I think that's connected with the back and neck area.

Q: There were two or three times today where it seemed that my breathing stopped, or at least I couldn't detect it, and I didn't quite know what to do. You know, it just stopped, like that.

R: Well, let it be that way. Let it be that way. Let it be that way. It's not a problem, you know. You don't have to act out especially.

Q: But it doesn't come very regularly. The breathing may go in different rhythms.

R: Yeah, that's fine, that's fine. Breathing is usually related with the psychological state of one's being. If one is excited, or relaxed or slightly anxious, breathing becomes all kinds of ways, but the idea of using breathing is just to go along with whatever comes up, no matter what the nature of the breathing.

Q: I find that very often my eyes are just closing by themselves. I'm forcing them to stay open, and they just shut. I'm just falling asleep, and jerking awake. That can go on for hours at a time. And is there anything that we can do?

R: That's a very interesting problem that I haven't mentioned to anybody actually so far. As your breathing goes out, there is also a sense of space behind you as well; you are surrounded with space rather than it being a constant ongoing process in one direction. There's a sense of space all over around you, and also a sense of lightness. A lot of these probblems could be holding back, and trying to make things too methodical

as well -- that everything would be regular. And there is a sense of body, and sense of being careful that meditation should go smoothly.

Q: If we have a lot eye strain, do you recommend that we close our eyes, or leave them open, and if we leave them open, do we try not to blink very much or--

R: No, if you try not to blink, that is strain. Or if you close your eyes, that also could be strain as well at the same time. It's the psychological state behind the whole thing with the eyes: you're demanding a visual reference point, bringing it back. When you look at objects, you don't purely look, but you're trying to bring them back to your brain all the time. Transporting the visual object into your brain is the hassle, rather than looking at things. So the idea is to just look without bringing anything back to your system. It's just carelessness, almost visually careless in looking at things; just being that way and not trying to pick anything back. You can close your eyes; that's okay. Or you can open your eyes. But still you do the same thing -- when you close your eyes, you're also expecting some kind of visual perceptions at the same time. And if you close your eyes for a long period of time in sitting practice, you might have difficulty in that the whole thing becomes switching on to meditation and then switching off; finally you begin to walk or you finish meditation, so there is too much of a gap, which is not particularly recommended.

Q: I don't understand how you intersperse the gap with the inbreathing, versus an awareness, or mindfulness of the breath going out.

R: Well, you have a mindfulness of breathing going out, and then you cut that; then you have another mindfulness of breathing going out, and you cut that. In other words, you go out with the transport and then suddenly you have no transport. Then you start again. The gap of the inbreathing becomes extremely spacious so the whole thing doesn't become an ongoing speed of out-and-in, out-and-in all the time. There's some kind of leap, miniature leap involved.

Q: Is there a little effort involved in cutting off the--

R: Yeah, a little effort, but you could feel very refreshed at some point. Yeah.

Q: In relationship to that, is this really always then kind of thinking of yourself as going out? I had the same problem that Jim seems to have, which is that I get tied up into not being able to stop concentrating on the inbreath as well as the outbreath.

R: Well, you see there's a sense of being too faithful and trying to

accomplish the regular way. The whole thing becomes very linear -- you go out and then you come in; you go out and then come in. You have no rest, and everything is extremely hard work. When you go out, then nothing happens; then you go out again, nothing happens. It's very clean-cut. You see, the point is that if you go out and come in, go out and come in, and on and on, that makes you in the end very heady and quite possibly creates lots of tension in your back. And in fact, inbreathing is extremely dangerous to one's system, and also -- as they mention in the books -- it provides you with all kinds of symptoms: you hear a high-pitched voice, high-pitched noise in your head, and you feel very heavy-headed as if you are wearing a tight hat or turban, and you're carrying a rucksack on your back and all kinds of things. "In" is more demanding, and "out" is in a sense, you know, threatening, but still it's a much freer approach.

Q: Well, in terms of this spasmodic breath that you spoke of before, supposing that your breath got to the point where it was all inbreath and very little outbreath, and all these symptons manifested, which has happened to me many times. You say it's very dangerous, but do you still just go with it or what?

R: You have a longer space, longer gap. Unless you have a tremendous struggle breathing in, and it has to become a deliberate effort.

Q: In which case--?

R: In which case the problem is that it's not going out enough. The psychological state of going out enough. And then inbreathing becomes another preparation for going out again.

Q: It's difficult to watch your breath without doing something with it. A couple of days ago I didn't even realize it, but I had been manipulating my breath. Then when I stopped manipulating it so much, I realized that I had been manipulating.

R: Don't try too hard to reach perfect breathing. Just, you know, just breathe. I mean, animals can do that. Just breathe.

Q: In coming back to working with the breath I find that I begin falling into like a trance. It makes me feel like I'm saying a mantra or something. Everything gets lost. Is that any problem?

R: Well, it would be a problem to you because you have attitudes toward it; otherwise it's no problem. Why can't we just handle the world as a very simple world, with human beings sitting here meditating, breathing. You know, it's a very, very simple thing -- we're sitting

here and breathing and trying to pass our time. I mean, it's got to be very simple, really it's got to be very simple. Otherwise we're creating another world and we've got to have something else to resolve that other world. It would be perpetuating a huge snowball.

Q: But that's what happens when you get into a trance-like state. I mean, physiologically it's not ordinary.

R: No, the thing is that if you relate with a trance-like state as also another thinking process, then it is just another thought, another sensation. It's no big deal, just another sensation. Often if you feel very high, heady, that is the result of pulling back your body, and too much body-orientation, which makes you obviously high.

Q: Is ringing and roaring in the ears a problem?

R: I think that's part of the tension, that you are trying to try too hard. And the sense of not being in contact with the space outside you, an introverted kind of thing still. But it's not a problem. If you try to quieten them, then they begin to roar more, and in fact play all kinds of music.

Q: One of my friends was saying that even the... (indistinct)... technique seems to be mastery of body. You know, it's like you can't get away from the body.

R: Sure, there's no problem. You have a body anyway, and you are using your body as a vehicle of meditation.

Q: Sometimes, when you are meditating, you naturally fixate on some particular process; you know, space it out. The thing is, you get lost sometimes in going through that slight effort that you said needed to be made in mindfulness. You forget yourself; you forget what you're doing and all of a sudden you wake up 10 minutes later and you were asleep. Somehow during that spacing out, your eyes closed and--

R: Things like that need more attention and a more careful, ambitious approach to trying to work yourself up to the point where you're going to become aware every minute, every moment. There's no other technique, no other way; it is neither body's problem nor breathing's problem. You are not being careful enough. You haven't registered the idea of awareness enough in your head, so you drifted away. That needs harder work. The idea of awareness has to become almost dogmatic. In a one-hour sitting practice, you have to pull yourself back at least 60 times. You know, that really needs programming, almost computerizing yourself that you've got to come back, you've

got to come back. And once you come back, the whole thing becomes spacious; once you come back everything becomes spacious.

Q: When I do that... (indistinct)... breath you know, and then I can't get into it because I'm too conscious of breathing, so I've got to kind of hang back a little to feel the breath.

R: It doesn't matter. That sounds like you have to be more bored, the boredom hasn't reached it. It's still too much like factory work, cranking-machines kind of thing. It needs more boredom of some kind.

Q: How much do we stress the Hinayana practice outside in our everyday life?

R: Well, there's not much outside in our daily life.

Q: I mean, you know, the meditation in action part. I mean, should we try to be extremely mindful like they do at Tassajara?

R: There has to be some kind of moderated approach -- that you haven't just got rid of another day and therefore have one less day to sit. That approach becomes extremely bizarre. On the other hand, you could be very righteous about the whole thing. But what I recommended is just a sense of totality, that you are already involved with that situation and that involvement is beginning to remind you. And not particularly being formal about it. It is as if you are haunted all the time, positively haunted. That this is your scene you're getting into -- you are in it already. The sense of environment is also important. Once you begin to sense the environment of totality, then that sort of echoes back on you. You don't have to be slow and gentle particularly, but I think that is also important. Often people use the spare times -- the times apart from meditation practices -- as if nothing happened, everything's going smoothly; they sort of suppress the memory that they've got to sit tomorrow, and don't speak about it as a rather painful ordeal, but, you know, "that's no big deal, ha-ha." That is not involved with the totality; you get the sense that that person is sinking in the ground. As every day goes on, sitting practice becomes their demand on them.

Q: I'm kind of uncomfortable about focusing on the outbreath. I find that sometimes I have a very natural tendency to follow the breath... (indistinct)... Then I start worrying about it, thinking I'm not supposed to follow the inbreath. Questions come up and I get very confused.

R: Well, don't analyze yourself, you know, just sort of -- breath is going out, go out and there; go out and there. You don't have to even think about "go out and there; gap; and then me." Just there, and there.

I mean, you don't have to be afraid of breathing again. I'm sure your breath won't stop if your self-consciousness didn't follow it. That's the interesting point: your breath will function normally if you don't have your ego. I'm sure your breath will be sure to follow all the time as long as you have a body, which is quite different from ego. So, you know, make it very simple, just-- (laughs)

Q: My experience of meditation is pretty much losing it and then coming back, and getting foggy and coming back, mind tripping and coming back. That moment when I come back seems to be very important. Like if I'm heavy-handed and say: "I'm going to breathe now," that creates all kinds of problems. So is it important to cultivate the feeling of self-acceptance simultaneous to coming back?

R: When you come back you have your body and your breath. You can't escape from that.

Q: What about the embarassment that you have?

R: Well, that's what I mean. Sometimes discipline becomes embarrassing. You become trippy or you become self-conscious; you've been too formal or something. I think in that case, you need more discipline of coming back to the breathing.

Q: Coming back is just part of the action?

R: Yeah, just come back.

Q: You're already back then as soon as you realize it?

R: That is the interesting thing about it which makes it very spacious, in fact. You don't have to prepare and then let go, count down any more. You are right there when you begin to think there's one question of something, then you are there.

Q: At some point in my sitting, my hands begin to get sort of tense, and I have to develop the attitude of pushing myself a little more: in other words, not changing my posture so that I can look more... (indistinct)... find out more about it, but at the same time this instruction is also somewhat aggressive, in the sense that I feel like I'm... (indistinct)... like before getting a shot in the arm. I'm wondering if that attitude is positive?

R: It sounds like you're going to the extreme. I wouldn't say too, but slightly extreme. One has to take care of one's body. You have to get back to Colorado after you leave here, so one has to take care of one's body. I think, you know, it's a very delicate thing, extremely delicate thing, how much heroism and sacrifice you make out of it, or how much

there's a sense of genuine contact with the totality I was talking about. When your body relationship becomes unreasonable -- that is to say when you relate to any pain you have in your body as purely psychosomatic -- then your attitude to your body is too heavy-handed and you don't have the sense of totality of body, mind and speech. The speech in this case being just ongoing energy, the pulsation of your system, and so forth.

Q: I still have a problem sitting this way. I have to shift... (indistinct)... because of the pain in my legs, or in my ankles.

R: Well you see, the idea is that often we could waste a great deal of time by contemplating "should I shift, or shouldn't I shift; is it psychosomatic, or is it the body?" We could waste a lot of time. So if you feel that it is an actual thing rather than dreamed up, then do it immediately -- shift your posture. That's very important.

Q: What about your legs falling asleep? Say if the circulation is stopping.

R: That's a question of getting used to sitting because--

Q: That's what I mean. The leg falls asleep, the circulation stops, but I think I should keep sitting.

R: You should change. I mean that's a real thing; that's not psychosomatic. So you should change your posture.

Q: What's the average posture duration?

R: There's no such thing. People who are used to sitting for a long time, like three hours a day or something like that, have less problems because they are used to not moving for three hours a day, and other people who haven't done such a thing would have more problem because they are not used to sitting that much time. I also find that a lot of Zen students have developed a psychological clock, a physical clock within the system of their body -- when the forty-five minutes have ended they become restless. And before that, they have perfect posture and everything is fine. You know, all those things could happen. I think there is no normal thing, but it's based on how much sitting practice you've been doing.

Q: You mentioned not to fix the eyes too strongly, not to bring back the image, but do you keep the eyes fixed on one central place?

R: Doesn't really matter; it's up to you. You find your way.

Q: A pain in the upper back, like in the backbone between the shoulder

blades, is that more the result of physical or mental strain?

R: Well it's very difficult to distinguish those two. I think it's not necessarily the result of physical or mental strain, but it's putting too much pressure on the body and mind together, trying to work too hard.

Q: More relaxed?

R: Well, not necessarily relaxed, but just don't try to do anything with it. Just go along with it.

Q: In following the breath, I tend to get hung up on the end of my nose. Is that a problem?

R: I think that's a problem. That seems to be one of the problems of deliberate breathing; some kind of case history of the breath. You know, breathing obviously comes from your lungs and your nose and so forth.

Q: You mean trying to be too detailed about it?

R: Yeah, but the idea of breathing is just the feeling of breathing coming out of your nostrils, rather than where it actually begins, how it flows. From that point of view it's very general and very vague, but as your breathing goes on, you experience the whole thing. It becomes very specific. There is a pattern as your breathing goes out; a sense of it really happening. So it doesn't have to be your nostrils particularly at all. Like when we hear a noise -- we can relate with the sound rather than having to relate with our ears. We heard the noise to begin with, but there is a sense of the sound traveling through the space, that kind of thing.

Q: ...(indistinct)...about breath, when you're just sitting with a straight back and have mindfulness of sitting here and being in the room, and you feel your breath just happening. But as for me, whenever it comes to the breath itself, then always the inbreath happens first and it comes very strongly and the outbreath gets lost. And if I get too conscious of the breath, then it becomes almost a constriction in my chest.

R: It sounds like you're especially breathing for that particular way, subconsciously. If inbreathing comes first, that's fine.

Q: It seems to be the dominant, and stronger--

R: Well, you have more gap. You don't have to follow it, just let it be that way. Allow yourself more rest as inbreathing comes, and

outbreathing becomes more of a journey, however little this journey may be. Let it be that way. And I think that that's a question of physically holding up as well, holding up unnecessarily.

Q: Too much emphasis on posture?

R: Too much emphasis on posture and holding up; you are breathing more than is comfortable. You see the idea is that breathing and posture are complimentary: If you breathe awkwardly, you are not sitting properly; that is to say, you're sitting too much. If your breathing becomes unworkable, or if your breathing becomes awkward, you don't have good posture any more; you're straining your body. So in either case, breathing becomes a speedometer of your posture.

Q: Now I'm totally confused, and I'd like to know whether I'm doing the wrong thing. I find that my best way of relating to the situation is sort of an intuitive awareness of the body. It comes and goes, but I'm not conscious of any particular pattern of breathing... (indistinct)... of the body is breathing, and if I get into trouble, then sometimes I begin to think: "where am I constricted? Am I in good enough, strong enough balance?" Are these practices wrong? Is it wrong to think about, or to feel about your whole body?

R: It's just purely the breath. That's the most important part. The body becomes insignificant and the space and the breathing become more important in this case. Thoughts come up with the sense of body, sense of me being here. And thoughts become transparent if there's no central authority being here; if it's purely taking activities in the space.

Q: There seem to be various small self-improvements going around. Like now I'm trying to work on my eyes, and somebody else is trying to lose weight, somebody else is trying to quit smoking and so it seems like it kind of puts a level of expectation into the day. Like "I hope I won't overeat at lunch time", or things like that. Shall we try and like somehow just let these things flow through?

R: Those are their personal responsibilities and I feel that I shouldn't interfere with what they're trying to do. It's the same as interfering with what kind of clothes they're going to buy. They should help themselves. As long as that approach doesn't become righteous; particularly when roommates have heard 20 times again and again that an improvement is happening. Then it becomes rather problematic actually. So as long as it doesn't become a real strong trip, everybody has the right. This time is a good time to improve whatever -- grow more hair or improve their teeth or you know, it's okay. In fact this is probably the only time they have for awhile. I feel we should provide hospitality for it.

Q: I feel a strong pressure in my forehead that comes and goes during the day, meditating or not meditating. What is that?

R: I think it is something connected with the pressure of your eyes. If you're straining your eyes, you begin to hit the back of your head and you begin to bounce back on your forehead. That tends to happen. So the visual sitting practice is just trying to let go very simply and not be too harsh on it.

Q: Relating to the question of silence--

R: Silence?

Q: In these long practices there seems to be generally a rule that there would be some form of silence, or control of talking, which degenerates more or less quickly to the point where the quality of conversation is exactly like everyday life; as much talking. Should we be worried about that?

R: Well, it seems to be unreasonable or impractical to try to develop complete silence because then there's no working situation involved. But there should be some sense of spaciousness in terms of conversation. That is to say, not deliberately trying to perpetuate entertainment for its own sake rather than what needs to be said, or what seems to be a learning situation. I think that should be left to individual choice. And also the community situation is extremely contagious -- if somebody triggers off neurosis, trying to con somebody onto their side to agree with them, in order to do that you have to use all kinds of words and ideas and concepts, to become a successful con man. You know that you are conning and that you are trying to pull that person son onto your side, but at the same time, you can't help doing it. Those things are obvious to oneself; nobody has to remind you particularly. So I think it's very much the challenge of meditation in action actually; indulgence becomes a problem, and we should worry about indulgence, we certainly should, because indulgence is destructive to yourself as well as to your brothers and sisters in the Dharma.

We are late for our dinner.

VIPASHYANA (LHAGTHONG)

Abstract: Vipashyana (lhagthong). Contemplative and meditative. Bringing together knowledge and the meditative state. Awareness, inclusion of the conceptualizer. Direct perception of lhagthong. Intuitive apprehension of the Dharma; seed of discriminating awareness. Seven attributes of lhagthong experience.

The next subject we have to study is vipashyana, which is often translated as "insight". The Tibetan word for that is lhagthong: lhag is clear or perfect, thong is seeing; so clear seeing, perfectly seeing. Lhagthong could be regarded as a meditative practice or contemplative practice. There are two types of lhagthong. The one is called je gom, which means contemplating on a certain aspect of the meaning of reality and meditating upon it. The other type is called jog gom, which means simply rest, and meditating on the abstract or intuitive level. So there are two types of meditations particularly involved with lhagthong.

Then there is lhagthong dagme togpai sherab. Lhagthong is again the clear seeing. Dag is the self, ego; me is negation. So dagme is "egoless". Togpa is realization, and changing togpa to togpai makes "of"; sherab is "knowledge". So "knowledge of egoless understanding", which is equated with the idea of discriminating-awareness wisdom.

Whenever we begin with the idea of lhagthong or vipashyana, there is a sense that we are including intellectual as well as intuitive knowledge in the teaching, bringing them together. So lhagthong is regarded as extremely important. The vipashyana practice is not purely sitting meditation practice alone; it has the scope of pre-prajna. We could say that infant prajna, or embryonic prajna is lhagthong. One of the definitions of lhagthong is "the flame that burns the fuel of conceptual ego-mind."

Let me set you some kind of guidelines as to how to relate with these subjects. Each time we discuss a particular issue like shamatha or vipashyana, whatever, traditionally the definition is given in terms of an example, imagery. And from the definition there are categories of different types of subjects that contain different qualities, different attributes. So the definition of lhagthong is that which burns the ego mind -- that is the basic statement of what lhagthong is all about. Therefore it would be a misunderstanding to regard vipashyana as a technique in meditation practice after shamatha alone; it is something more than that. It has been said that lhagthong is that which brings together knowledge and the meditative state of mind; prajna and samadhi. That which brings prajna and samadhi together is the lhagthong experience; clear thinking and complete awareness.

Thus far, when we have discussed the vipashyana aspect of the practice of meditation, any kind of awareness that we practice is more mindfulness than awareness. The sense of being there and sense of bare attention to what's happening psychologically, physically, emotionally, whatever -- fully being there. Those are all mindfulness practice. But from vipashyana practice onward, any kind of meditative experience, meditative concentration that we might use is regarded as awareness practice -- being aware rather than being mindful.

The definition of mindfulness, absolute ideal mindfulness, is like a burning candle uninterrupted by wind: there is a sense of stillness, and a sense of ongoing accuracy; everything is noted, perceived. And everything is recycled, so to speak. The practitioner is not looking for external material to reinforce the effort or the methods that he applies to the practice. Rather than getting a supply from outside, it is self-contained. Therefore it is like a candle burning undisturbed by wind, self-contained. It is being mindful and relating with the eight types of consciousness, and just simply being there precisely.

In the case of lhagthong practice, it becomes slightly more adventurous, because now we begin to include the intellectual aspect in our psychological makeup. The clear seeing begins to bring about a sense of relationship. The intellectual messenger, the conceptualizer, begins to become active and begins to develop discriminating awareness.

We should be very careful about that particular term or idea of discriminating. It is not discriminating in the sense of throwing away or rejecting certain things, like racial discrimination, which is the idea of rejecting what is seen to be inferior as opposed to the superior. In this case when we talk about discriminating, it means that everything is seen precisely and clearly and nothing is rejected. Everything is included, but not in a vague, happy together way, the ordinary notion of an ecumenical spirit of some kind. Everything is included, but on its own merit -- whether it is worthy or unworthy, destructive or creative, whatever; everything is seen clearly as is. But at the same time, they have their names, categories and concepts. Everything is placed very clearly and fully; so things become very precise. And that is why the idea of bringing together prajna and samadhi is the characteristic of lhagthong.

So the example of lhagthong is like a flame burning fuel, the knowledge and the clarity burning the fuel of ego-mind. And the characteristic of lhagthong is the combination of knowledge and the meditative state. We might ask: how come there is a meditative state if the whole thing is entirely based on the discrimination-awareness principle which is busy labelling and trying to pinpoint things? The basic notion of the meditative

state of lhagthong is a sense of vastness, a sense of spaciousness because you no longer have to be mindful, but you can be aware. So we could say that mindfulness is a journey from the outskirts to the central point. In mindfulness practices, you find mental activities, whatever, and you begin to note the mental contents as being active; and then you focus your attention and you begin to develop a sense of well-being by observing, seeing things as they are in their own light, which is a journey. In the case of the awareness practice of lhagthong, it is direct in the sense that it does not take journey or preparation to find the subject matter; it doesn't necessarily demand putting your effort into it at all. You just perceive things simply, directly, whether you perceive mental contents or whatever. That perception itself is the expression of lhagthong. We could say quite safely -- as has been said by Taranatha, and all the great teachers who have experienced lhagthong -- that lhagthong is like riding an elephant: you think you are riding the elephant, but in fact the elephant is carrying you. So there is a sense of lahgthong coming upon you rather than you working towards it. It does not need cooking up, so to speak.

Jamgon Kongtrul and the great teachers of the Kagyu and Nyingma lineages always try to make a point of the superiority and importance of lhagthong by saying that lhagthong experience sows the seed of the highest intelligence in our state of mind. It awakens the intelligence to realize that the literal interpretation of the Dharma is no longer important; the real interpretation of the Dharma becomes more important. That is one of the important points. The Dharma is not purely technical and doctrinal any more. One begins to realize that the essence of Dharma can be felt rather than simplistically memorizing ideas and categories written in books in a technical, scholarly way. So from that point of view, lhagthong is that which awakens the intuitive understanding of the practice and the teachings. Without lhagthong, without vipashyana practice, there is no way we could prepare ourselves to comprehend the subtleties of the teachings. So lhagthong practice goes from the Hinayana level up to the Maha Ati level of Vajrayana. It is regarded as an extremely important starting point for the development of discriminating-awareness wisdom.

There are several attributes of lhagthong experience largely based on intellectual sharpness developed by practising vipashyana meditation, rather than on meditative experience itself. The first one is relying more on the sense of the teachings than on the word. Thus, there is some trust in oneself as we begin to realize that we have the potential of wisdom, knowledge, in us. We begin to realize that it's a question of waking up rather then painfully cultivating. The second one is that a person also begins to understand extrovert and introvert in terms of relationship and communication, and sees the importance of going out and giving out, over the introverted notion of holding back, which is

called the search for reality. The third attribute, the search for the basic nature of reality, is developing a very logical knowledge that is not confused about logic; basic logic. One can simply figure out or discover the origin of thought patterns in communication. The practitioner of lhagthong is not completely freaked out because someone is rude or aggressive to him, because of their face value. He would be able to look beyond to the causal characteristics of that person's reactions. The fourth attribute is the ability to detect that which is not suitable, that which is a hindrance to the path, negative, positive or whatever. The fifth attribute is, having developed lhagthong, a person will be able to seek the wisdom, seek the good attributes. That is to say, the person is able to have some sense of allegiance, or some sense of natural instinct as to what is right for one and what isn't. He is able to tune himself instinctively into the appropriate situations. The sixth attribute is being not confused by past, present, and future, and complex patterns of thought process. Past is past, present is present, and future is future. So a person has developed clear thinking. Intellectually and intuitively a person is not confused by the time duration of the way things work. The seventh one is that a person has also developed relative reference mind. He is not completely confused by an issue: that issue is workable because it has connection with relative reference. This is developing the ultimate logical mind.

So those are the results of the clear thinking of lhagthong vipashyana experience, the process which sees very precisely and clearly. In fact, lhagthong vipashyana experience is the heart of Buddhism from that point of view. It sets the general tone of the psychology of Buddhism: that a Buddhist has clear thinking and an objective view of the world, able to see and use relative logic. So there is no chance that he will be swayed into any other trips or extremes anymore; everything becomes very precise, very direct. I suppose we could fully discuss the techniques of lhagthong tomorrow. Today, I would like to go through it briefly. According to Matripa, who was a teacher of Marpa, if a person is able to hold his discriminating mind in its own place, that is the perfection of lhagthong. That is to say, there is no suspicion as to a person's involvement in lhagthong experience. He is completely satisfied and feels completely at home with the lhagthong experience -- or possibilities of lhagthong experience for that matter. That person has no tendency to shop around for other techniques anymore. When a person's mind is clearly set on that discriminating-awareness wisdom, then he is a good student of lhagthong practice.

If we look clearly, there is a contradiction there: we are supposed to develop the highly discriminating, very powerful mind of lhagthong but at the same time we are not supposed to have any doubt, none whatsoever. We could say there is something wrong there -- that you're not

supposed to have any doubt, but at the same time you are supposed to have discriminating-awareness wisdom. Seemingly there is a contradiction, but actually there is none whatsoever. In fact, it is complementary in many ways. The contradiction only comes if we relate with lhagthong experience as something which brings a result or reward of some kind. As long as there is a notion of getting a reward from somewhere by practising this, then it ceases to become the practice of discriminating wisdom. We are not discriminating with the sharpness of our intellect any more; we are only concerned with "if I practise, will I get a reward," which is non-discriminating neurosis. In fact we are already bogged down into the usual samsaric pattern. So you can't say that is being very clever and smart any more. The attitude of a lhagthong practitioner is to not have a goal. When you don't have any notion of a goal at all, then you have nothing to lose and nothing to gain. And the only thing is that the mental plays, intellectual plays happening in your state of mind are colorful and provocative. That seems to be the point: the sense of trust and sense of faith is in you, in some sense, in individuals, and if you give up the notion of goal and achievement, then one develops discriminating wisdom and faith simultaneously. Usually, when we talk about faith, ordinary blind faith, we talk in terms of getting a reward; that is the basic notion of faith: "If I have faith in you, will you save me?" If lhagthong practitioners have no need for reward, but simply go and practise, it does not need any confirmation any more. Therefore lhagthong practitioners have developed the highest form of devotion and faith, because there is no need for a reward from that point of view.

The first level of lhagthong practice is called the practice of the infant. That is the awareness technique which we probably should discuss tomorrow. The practice of the infant is at the level of the first path of the Path of Accumulation; we begin from that level. That is to say that a person is just about to commit himself into his own intellect. He no longer throws away his intellect as being an obstacle to the path, but begins to make a relationship with intellect for the first time, having gone through the shamatha experience of precision and the sense of well-being, the sense of mindfulness, and so forth. We could discuss that tomorrow.

What we discussed today includes the idea of the practice of the infant and also the higher practice of developing discriminating wisdom. And the general notion is that starting on vipashyana experience is definitely a much bigger step than that of shamatha. In fact it is much closer to the basic sanity of Buddhism than general spiritual practice. That is definitely, clearly stating that now we have gone through our basic mental trainings and are ready to launch ourselves into the next area of cutting through ego, or egolessness. So a very powerful statement of Buddhism is vipashyana lhagthong experience.

Discussion:

Q: Would you say that in terms of the eight kinds of consciousness, the movement from shamatha to vipashyana is something like no longer making use of the manipulative tendencies of the sixth, seventh, and eighth consciousnesses together; and where they are continually reflecting around with each other, instead kind of a straight movement of the eighth without the eight kinds of consciousness, without any kinds of re-reflecting on each other?

R: You mean the eighth one?

Q: Well, I was thinking that all eight would still be present but you would begin to rely on the self-known quality of all of the contents, and so there would no longer be any need for the sixth, the seventh and the eighth to reflect around with each other. Does that sound over-complicated, or what?

R: No, I think actually lhagthong traditionally is supposed to operate on the level of the seventh one completely, and that's why it is very powerful: it cuts the underlying, confused, dualistic notions, discriminating notions, and introduces very clear and superior dualistic notions. In fact the Path of Accumulation at the ordinary person's level, before we become Aryans, has three categories, as I'm sure you have read in Gampopa: not seeing, wrongly seeing and partially seeing. And all of those are included in the Path of Accumulation at the ordinary level: a person has possibilities or a person has no possibilities, or a person has some possibilities but misunderstands. All of those are included in the seventh consciousness level, the unconscious level. Otherwise there is no movement any more.

Q: Obviously then, from an individual point of view, to have any kind of value or judgement would destroy this discriminative awareness. However, just by having not so much an individual value but some kind of higher value or higher good in mind, isn't it assumed that that's also bad in that it could distort the effect of discriminative awareness and that discriminative awareness will in some way naturally lead to that and not have any kind of higher order value in mind at all or--

R: Well, you see again the idea of discriminating awareness wisdom is that which cuts confused discriminations. And in that confused discrimination we could have the not known, not seen, the partially seen, and the misunderstood; can include all of them. In the case of the partially seen, one might have very high ideas, seemingly very powerful, transcendental ideas, and still something has gone wrong. But if there is any notion of allegiance towards your original discrimination, in terms of a superior or transcendental one, in terms of wisdom, that is kept.

In other words, in the case of partial understanding, the higher ideas of true nature are kept alive and any false misunderstanding is shed. So it becomes a super-sorting system that's developed at that level and one doesn't have to change altogether, you know. It's a question of a trend of thought which is valid throughout, which is being overgrown with all kinds of unnecessary things.

Q: Is this Hinayana level still or is it entering the Bodhisattva Path?

R: Yes, it is Hinayana level, but it is also a link to the Mahayana level. And I think as far as our practice is concerned, that could be only seen by practice. I thought we could discuss that tomorrow so that you will see what particular area is the Hinayana type of vipashyana, and what particular area is Mahayana. And that begins to lead into a prajna-type mentality from purely being aware of things which are quite subtle.

Q: What is the difference between mindfulness and awareness? Does awareness simply see more than mindfulness, or does it in fact begin to see things differently?

R: Mindfulness is limited and has the quality of waiting for something; it involves very subtle expectation. And awareness is almost one-shot. It doesn't have to wait for anything, but is being at that point on the spot.

Q: That expectation, does that refer just to seeing things as they are or to the realm of intellect? There's the expectation in terms of concepts about things.

R: No. It is expectation in the sense of confirmation of some kind. The journey that you take in your mental development or psychological development during your practice is very fast and the waiting as well as the getting what you want are very fast, but still there is some kind of conditional thing happening.

Q: If the whole thing of vipashyana is included in the seventh consciousness, then what is the role of the sense consciousnesses? What's happening with them?

R: The sense consciousnesses are what you work with in the shamatha practice.

Q: Yeah, but they continue to exist during vipashyana practice, don't they?

R: Yeah, they still continuously exist but they are trained already in some sense; they are raised into a transcendental notion of some kind.

Q: So that they're like good children behaving?

R: Something like that, yeah. It has already been straightened out.

Q: What I'd like to know is what constitutes their good behavior?

R: Their good behavior does not necessarily mean that everything is wiped out, but whenever anything occurs it is workable, it's flexible. There's a word called shin-jang (shin-sbyans) in Tibetan; it means utterly processed, like processed stuff that goes through a machine and comes out, like a laundry machine. The mark of being utterly processed, utterly shin-janged is like cotton wool: it sits anywhere you put it but softly without any awkwardness. That is the outcome of shamatha; it's always workable, always manageable. There are no corners left.

Q: Could you talk a little bit on how you can recognize confused discrimination, outside of something really blatant like racism or things like that. You said that discriminating awareness cuts through confused discrimination. Is that just your own, or--

R: Well, in this case you are everything and if you cut your own discrimination, you cut that of the others as well. That is general Buddhist logic. You don't have to work for the others, especially; having cut through yours, the others are your version of the others: Joe Smith is your version of Joe Smith, rather than that there is Joe Smith there, particularly. Maybe he is, but as far as you're concerned, there is no Joe Smith; there is just your version of him.

Q: So then you don't necessarily have to act, if somebody was being blatanly racist in some way?

R: Well, that's your version coming back to you. So if you speak for yourself from your projections' point of view or whatever, then the whole thing is dealt with, is answered. That goes along with all the logic generally in our Buddhist tradition. That's why phenomenologically the Buddhist approach is very simple: you don't try to manage two worlds at the same time -- your world and the other people's world -- the world is one big world. It is the world of duality, of course, but that doesn't mean it is separate. The notion of duality is so together, it is therefore seemingly separate. So there's no problem. Ordinary duality, ordinary discrimination is cut by the higher discrimination -- your discrimination of goal orientation, comfort orientation, whatever.

Q: You say that there's no confirmation of your movement through it. I was wondering what the seven attributes would be that you gave.

Wouldn't they be in a sense confirmation of the realization of--

R: No. They are not regarded as something to look for; they are just behaviors or patterns of things developed rather than something you should look for. Those are just their nature. You would be confused if you were looking for particular attributes. It would be like the story of the seven blind men looking for an elephant: If you think the elephant is like string or a tree trunk, you waste a lot of time looking for a string-like object, or a tree trunk like the elephant's leg.

Q: This is just describing what a person goes through?

R: Yeah, the elephant has legs like tree trunks, a tail like string and so forth -- it's just a general description. That style goes along throughout the teachings, all throughout the practice. Nothing is particularly held back: all the aspects, all the attributes of the experience are given to the practitioner right at the beginning. The definitions, and how those ideas should occur to you -- everything is given to you so that you would no longer expect any kind of mystery. You know everything back to front and that exhausts your expectation of anything extraordinary.

Q: It also seems to point you in a direction of looking towards "then I'm supposed to do this, and then there is this--"

R: Well that's sort of goal orientation. If you do that, you are destroying the ground for yourself.

Q: So these attributes would be recognized by somebody not in that particular practice or after you have left it.

R: During, after, so what? You know, it's just attributes and there's no reason to be excited about those things particularly. You are in the state of lhagthong and so what.

Q: In number two, the search for reality, it seems to imply that something begins to happen to one's paranoia in the sense that a reduction of paranoia brings a growth of... (indistinct)... sharpness. You seem to begin to realize you're... extrovert rather than introvert.

R: I think it's a question of reality in the sense of knowing the subtleties of communication in terms of words or in terms of situations. All the experiences in life involve that kind of subtlety, and those experiences are clearly seen. I don't think it has anything to do with paranoia, particularly; it's just a very relaxed notion, that once you've had experience of lhagthong, you've had a sense of generally going out anyway, expanding yourself. So at that point the discrimination is not applied anymore; paranoia is not applied any more. It either becomes irrelevant

or useless. Somehow, it doesn't become a big issue.

Q: This instrument you use to cut or to sort which is involved in the development of discriminating awareness or prajna -- it sounds as if it's simply sharpened, refined, ordinary intellect. Is that right, or is it already some transcendental element?

R: No, there is no transcendental element at this point. It's just a simple, ordinary one which might have the potential of becoming transcendental.

Q: And when you say prajna you mean something that could become fully transcendental?

R: Yeah, well, as far as prajna goes.

Q: Does prajna keep the quality the intellect has of being sort of like a mechanism and basically dualistic?

R: Sure. I think at this point duality is no longer regarded as a dirty word. Even more so in Tantra, but at this point we haven't even got to discussing dualism in the level of the basic split and basic twist and all those notions; we haven't come to that yet. So at this level of Hinayana, it's very simple and very direct and very undisturbed. The whole scheme seems to work and is very easy to deal with.

Q: My question is that when I experience my intellect and how it works, how it feels, what it's like, I'm wondering if I'm experiencing something which eventually is going to be totally left behind, or if there isn't some quality of it which is as real as prajna.

R: Well, there's a possibility of it being as real as prajna, and there's also the possibility that things are really junky. Both are possibilities, but hopefully within the realm of vipashyana, which it has to be anyway, as long as you have gone through the training of shamatha.

Q: Trying to trace the development of prajna, from duality on the Hinayana level to non-duality on the Mahayana level, we've been having some difficulties in this course, because we have been getting involved with, on the one hand, non-duality, and on the other hand the obvious existence of our bodies as we continue to go through this non-duality. In other words, the obvious continuance of some kind of watcher that continues even in Tantra. In fact, you look even more solid than most of us here. So something must be your body and continues as your body. The big problem is ontology. Buddhism will not make an ontological statement, and yet there is some quality of being that is happening there. It seems that philosophically it is tricky to deal with.

R: Well you see, the point is that we talk about duality as being something that we should transcend and the reason why it is so is because the notion of duality made a bad record right at the beginning of creating an ego. There was, you know, a bad record. Other than that, we have no grudge against duality.

Q: As a matter of fact Buddhism doesn't deal with ontology just because it doesn't want to further ego's trip. It's not that it rejects being as such. Is that correct?

R: Yes, I think so.

Q: So then, the importance of this philosophy is in some sense epistomological for it's dealing specifically with the ways--

R: It's more likely phenomenological.

Q: You don't want to use epistemological?

R: I think it is more likely phenomenological.

Q: What's the difference?

R: Phenomenology is experiential. Phenomenal experience would bring this kind of solid entities, to play ourselves into certain particular patterns of thinking, or behaving that way. The whole notion of ego is in fact phenomenological. It's not philosophy from that point of view really. It's just somebody who is explaining acid without taking L.S.D. It's purely experiential from that point of view and there's no problem really.

The point is that if you hold a grudge against all kinds of things said in the scriptures to be undesirable -- ego and the kleshas and negative thoughts that go against the teachings or whatever -- as long as you hold a grudge against them, then you misunderstand the whole thing; you are completely bypassing discriminating-awareness wisdom. And when you manage to kill them all, then you have nothing to discriminate. There's no student; there's no teacher any more; there's no compassion any more. There's nothing to be compassionate of, because you killed all the undesirable things.

Q: That's the problem presented in non-duality.

R: Yeah, that's why non-duality is still in the level of duality. Non-duality, the notion of non-duality should be grateful for the existence of duality. That's a very important point.

Q: Is this expressible philosophically?

R: Only in Tantra, I think I would say. One of the first verses of tantric literature goes: "invite all sentient beings, invite them to join the vajra mandala. Kill your father, fuck your mother and invite the whole universe in to a vajra feast". That's very definite dualism, but still very transparent and very clear. And there's little things, like in the Lankavatara sutra and other sutras which say: invite all sentient beings; there's no one who could be disregarded as an unworthy vessel of the Dharma. Everybody has Buddha-nature and so forth. But that's a rather weak attempt at that.

Q: Does the idea of alaya vishyana in some sense -- If you want to give some benefit of the doubt to the Yogacharins; if you don't want to put them down, just dismiss them as some kind of far, far out state -- Could you say that their idea of alaya vishyana is some kind of seed of this duality in Tantra?

R: I think so definitely, but the reason why the yogacharins weren't so successful is because they put forward their notion of eternity more than necessary; that's the problem. Like their notion of self-luminous existence, self-existing, self-luminous consciousness; there is too much notion of survival instinct, promise of being something believable. Apart from that the original idea seems to be okay.

Q: Would you say that it's too Pure-Land oriented then, in some way?

R: Yeah, all the rituals that go with Mahayana -- I mean like when the yogacharin Mahayanists take the Bodhisattva vow, they don't just take the Bodhisattva vow; they not only give their belongings to the guru and shrine but they burn five holes in the skull by placing a candle on it. And sometimes their fingers are made into a wick with oil poured around it, and they sit there for nine hours until the whole finger has burned down, as an offering, as their sense of dedication to their commitment to all sentient beings, for the benefit of all senteint beings. That's a big sensation.

Q: This issue keeps coming up in Bill's course. It seems the issue of being is also the issue of non-being. You can't say whether there's being or not. Is that the same thing as saying you can't say whether we know or not?

R: Well, the sense of being goes way back, far back, and is a very subtle point. If you are being, you don't have to know particularly -- do you see what I mean?

Q: No.

R: If you are being, you are being. So if you have to know you are being, then you are not being any more.

Q: So there's some self-consciousness?

R: Well, you could have consciousness of being but you don't have to necessarily have consciousness of knowing that you are being.

Q: Would you say that, although there is nothing particularly the matter with duality, aside from having created the bad record of creating an ego, would you say that nevertheless it's unnecessary?

R: Well, from whose point of view?

Q: From it's own point of view?

R: From its own point of view -- which its own?

Q: Pardon me?

R: Which its own? The ego? Or the--

Q: No, I can't accept that.

R: Can't accept what?

Q: I mean, by its own nature is what I'm trying to say.

R: By its own nature it's unnecessary?

Q: Yeah.

R: Well, that's not very clear actually. It could be necessary, because otherwise there's no occupation or it could be unnecessary because it begins to experience hassles that are involved. If you look at it from the ordinary point of view, both seem to be valid. Whereas if you look at from the wisdom of Buddha's point of view, of course it is unnecessary, it's ridiculous. But I don't know how much we can speak for him.

Q: From the point of view of the path?

R: From the point of view of the path, it's half and half: without ego, there's no one to tread on the path, and with ego we find it difficult to tread on the path at the same time.

Q: Is that why a rock is not on the path?

R: Rock? The rock <u>is</u> on the path! (laughs)

Q: I mean without ego, there can't be a path.

R: With ego there will be difficulty treading on the path.

Q: So we should be grateful to duality.

R: I think we should be grateful -- somewhat. It's not a question of being grateful actually. We probably begin to realize that it is not a particularly big issue.

Q: It is right now.

R: Yeah. (laughs)

Q: In the Buddhist sense, are epistemology and ontology the same thing?

R: I don't think they are the same thing, because the nature of reality is very definite from the Buddhist point of view, and it couldn't be used from different levels of thinking any more. It's one reality; one definite ultimate which is a very solid experience.

Q: What about "not this, not that, not neither, not both?"

R: You are speaking of one thing by using different terms. It's like saying the sun is not black; the sun is not brown, the sun is not dark, the sun is not light; the sun is not dawn; the sun is not dusk. Excluding all other possibilities, then you have the sun.

Q: Which is experienceable as such without any qualification.

R: Yeah.

Q: If everyone's experience of this reality was the same, if my enlightenment was the same as Buddha's enlightenment, perceiving the same thing, then isn't the epistemology the same as ontology if it's the same experience?

R: I think there's still some differences there. You see, the trust and respect for reality involved in the Buddhist tradition is immense. Actually the reality is regarded as one definite, ultimate truth; Buddhists have a clearly defined, unconfused, real idea or attitude of what reality is, what reality should be, definitely. It cannot be equated with any other ideas; it's very definite and it's very solid. So you can't shift that ground any more. It's very direct.

Q: Where are the descriptions of what reality is?

R: What reality is? Everywhere, in the heart sutra--

Q: That's describing what reality isn't.

R: That's describing what reality is. You'll probably find a lot in the Tantra, of course; how things work, how things are, but still the Tantric tradition uses negations like unoriginated, unborn, non-dwelling, all these negations. And this is the basic philosophical scheme developed in the Indian tradition: that it is much better to negate something than to confirm something. Which makes it much more clear that you have no ground to dwell on.

Q: I keep getting the impression from reading Buddhist scriptures, books about Buddhism -- as opposed to Western philosophy, which often tries to describe in positive terms the nature of reality, giving specific attributes -- Buddhists always seem to be more concerned with describing a way to be which is absolute, rather than what you will see when you have gotten there. It's the difference between what you see and how you are as you're seeing it. Buddhists seem to emphasize the "how you are" aspect rather than what you see.

R: Yeah, that's true. That's a good one. We have the same kind of problem with using jnana and prajna. From the Christian point of view, the Western philosophy point of view, knowledge is higher than wisdom. In the use of the Buddhist terms prajna and jnana, wisdom is higher than knowledge. Knowledge is still effort; there's still a knower, which seems to be the highest achievement as far as Christianity is concerned -- when you discover the knower, then you find union at the same time because you and God are united; the knower and known could become one. As far as wisdom, jnana, is concerned, it doesn't need a knower or knowledge; it's just being, the state of being completely. So the notion of being united with anything is still an inferior mystical experience. You are supposed to get something beyond when you begin to feel the union, something much more beyond than union. The allegiance to the union is important.

Q: Is prajna then the knowledge of union?

R: Prajna is the knowledge of union, yeah. Manjusri's sword making relationship with the ego and penetrating through, is the sense of union.

Q: So you are actually being self-conscious about the fact that you are not self-conscious, that kind of thing?

R: Something like that, yeah. It's still the sixth Bhumi level of application of something. You have the sword of prajna; you are striking the aortas of ego, whatever. There's a sense of copulation, idea of

union, and idea of appreciation of something involved, which is very definite and very heroic still. From the Christian point of view, it could be said to be the highest experience, that at last you feel the union.

Q: They burned a Sufi mystic who said "I am God." Would that be the jnana level?

R: Well, if he followed what he said; still, you know, why "I am"?

Q: He should have just taken over the planet!

R: He should have made a big hurt or something.

I think we should close our meeting. It's very likely, philosophical -- and good luck.

COMPARISON OF VIPASHYANA WITH SHAMATHA

Abstract: Development of non-aggression, in gaps of non-ego. In vipashyana more letting go and accommodation. Sense of otherness, echo of the breath. Serious literalness and romanticism. Dropping dogma.

We are going to discuss today the notion of lhagthong, vipashyana practice, in terms of actual meditation practice. But before we get into that, let me further clarify the attitude towards shamatha and vipashyana practice. Shamatha practice could be regarded as a way of quieting, pacifying the mind, and vipashyana could be regarded as a way of sharpening the potentials of psychological development. Shamatha is regarded as a cutting down process, in a way that gives you very little reference point, very little stuff to work on except its own ground. Slowly cutting into what is basically needed in order to quieten one's self. Shamatha is therefore development of peace.

As far as vipashyana is concerned, having already quietened, having already developed some basic work, one would be able to settle into what one has already practised or created, settle into what one has achieved. Then we could expand from that level, extending ourselves into sharpening awareness rather than cutting down any mental perceptions. So there's an entirely different approach.

So from that point of view, vipashyana is referred to as insight, and also it is the seed of prajna at the same time. The seed of prajna means preparing ourselves, so that we become worthy of listening to the teachings, and can hear them properly. We are able to perceive the subtleties of the teaching and the depth of the teaching. That is precisely the reason why vipashyana becomes an important practice -- it is the start of opening the door of wisdom, the gate of wisdom.

As I mentioned yesterday, any contemplative approach toward the teaching is also included into the vipashyana practice. That is to say, pondering on the subject of the Dharma intellectually is also regarded as vipashyana practice. Moreover, there is the meditative practice of vipashyana which is development of awareness. And that awareness comes from several different conditions, fundamentally being without aggression.

The definition of Dharma is absence of aggression. In order to perceive such Dharma, in order to understand such Dharma, we also have to develop a state of mind without aggression as well. Dharma in this case is any materials involved with our experience which are workable, which could be woven into the pattern of the path. The

absence of aggression in this case means a sense of non-ego, non-speed. You might find it difficult to understand this tall order because it would be impossible for beginners to develop such perfection. But the idea is that there is a momentary state of mind which occurs, in which there is an element of non-aggression and non-ego. That is to say, when we talked about the eight types of consciousness at the beginning, the eight types of consciousness, including the five skandhas are all momentary things. We develop our first skandha after the gap, and from there onward up to the fifth skandha, and then it goes back and comes out. So ego is not a constantly smooth running, highly secured situtation at all, but there are gaps of all kinds. There is a psychological gap which allows disorder for the ego, or the possibility of reasserting its position at the same time. There is that kind of gap which goes on constantly, a gap of non-ego, and then starting from the first skandha developing up to the fifth skandha and so forth. So ego in this case, the five skandhas, are regarded more as fickleness than continuity.

Because of that, the application of vipashyana is possible, to relate with those momentary open gaps which are unconditioned psychologically, unconditioned by dualism, unconditioned by passion, aggression and so forth. But it's very sudden, it's a fraction of -- it could be 100 percent of a moment. It's very fast, but also there is still that possibility in us, 100 percent of gap. The reason we can arouse the potential prajna in us by means of vipashyana is because there are those gaps, the possibility to insert, or to relate with the unconditional mind.

The technique or means of developing vipashyana practice is exactly the same as we discussed the other day -- the third foundation of mindfulness, effort, or the sudden glimpse of awareness which brings us back, unconditioned awareness which brings us back to the practice. One of the subtleties of this practice is that one could still apply exactly the same methods of meditation practice that we used in the shamatha practice at the beginning. One can use breathing, but in this case instead of being mindfulness of breathing, it becomes awareness of breathing. Awareness of breathing in this case means that there is a sense of precision, accuracy, and also there is a sense of accommodating in that one doesn't have to nurse the experience of being mindful constantly. In the case of mindfulness we still tend to trust a great deal in the messenger, so to speak, who brings back the message of what's happening and being mindful on the spot. The messenger also checks the sense of totality, the sense of well-being. The sense of thisness is still happening, rather than the otherness.

That seems to be the difference between shamatha and vipashyana. In the case of shamatha, some kind of importance is still made on thisness, in spite of going out with the outbreath and dissolving oneself into the atmosphere. Still it belongs to this area, rather than the other, or that. In the case of vipashyana, there is less emphasis on this and there is a very subtle and very faint emphasis on some kind of security and letting go, letting be. The other is more important. We can afford to let go more with the breathing.

Do you remember in the beginning, we discussed that the shamatha practice is purely relating with the verge of breathing, the outline of breathing, a light touch? In vipashyana it's slightly more than that. Not more in the sense of letting go of your breathing, mindfulness of breathing, awareness of breathing, making it much looser and more casual. But in the sense that the attitude to the breathing has the otherness involved. The breathing happens not only in its own accord, but also in the realm of the atmosphere around it. When we talk about the otherness, we are talking about the sense of atmosphere, the sense of totality completely outside of our body, and completely outside of our antennae's radiation.

Q: Does that make the difference between the physical space? Shamatha would be the physical space around you and vipashyana would be the psychological space?

R: Yeah. And it could be very difficult to actually understand exactly what we are getting into. But if a person has a really good understanding of the shamatha practice in its own sense of space, then the vipashyana practice becomes much easier to work with. In some sense the difference between the two practices of meditation is that shamatha is extraordinarily literal. In spite of its visions, its feelings, its sense of inspiration and discipline, it is very literal. Vipashyana or lhagthong practice is somewhat romantic in a way, idealistic. There is room for some kind of ventilation or fresh air. Quite possibly a person of early vipashyana practice who is used to shamatha practice would feel extremely guilty about that, for doing something unkosher. But that is just a kind of of hesitation, like when at a public swimming pool you don't want to undress. Although you have swimming suits available and can put one on, still even that's regarded as a big deal. Actually it's deliberately designed that way. First there is shamatha practice to tighten up the whole thing, make it into a really definite and ordinary thing. Beyond that, you try to let go of any notion of inhibition, product of that practice of meditation, while still retaining the heart of the practice. Which is to say that a sense of precision is still carried over, but a sense of freedom is added onto it. After we have practised shamatha meditation,

from then onward up to Tantric practices, most of the techniques are letting go techniques of all kinds. We think we have been letting go completely, but we find, because of the dogma that we were involved in, that we have been keeping something private, personal. And we find something to let go of constantly, each time, each practice that we are involved with -- Shunyata, Mahamudra or whatever.

In a sense vipashyana practice also brings appreciation of art -- art in the sense of how to handle ourselves in body, speech, mind, communication, anything. There is a sense of being resulting from shamatha practice and there is also the confident sense of how to be as well resulting from vipashyana practice. So the practice of vipashyana is more the study of movements, interactions. Sitting practice, for instance, relates with the breathing. Breathing is felt: you go out with your breath and breathing dissolves; you dissolve. But there is also a sense of some kind of echo. Not exactly a moderator, but a sense of echo. You have developed your mindfulness practice; you breathe out -- "I'm breathing out" -- being mindful of that. And then at the same time, you are aware of your mindfulness, so there is a kind of delayed action of going out and going out. Dissolve and dissolve. Space and space. And then going out and going out. There's some kind of shadow created by vipashyana practice, which is almost on the level of verbalization, of feeling that "it's happening, it's happening." It is not a confirmation but just a remark, a careless remark that sees things.

In other words, mindfulness is a very serious thing, and if you have awareness with mindfulness, you begin to see the seriousness of mindfulness. Your mindfulness is also lightened by it. It becomes much lighter, less heavy. But it doesn't become completely free and careless because you are still continuing your practice on the one base of basic training, basic practice. You can't develop a completely free style of practice outside the technique. The whole thing is still boring and technical in some sense. That kind of secondary spokesman, secondary mindfulness which is awareness, allows the possibility of extending ourselves to greater awareness practice.

In this case, we are not discussing Mahavipashyana or shamatha-vipashyana practice, or anything of that nature. We haven't gotten to the level of advancing enough or playing about enough. At this point what we are discussing is just the little shadow, the light shadow that goes along with your mindfulness. This is what is known as awareness practice. And we learn how to handle ourselves, how to work, because the whole thing is no longer awkward. With a one-shot deal, it becomes very awkward. But since there is a one shot deal as well as a soft landing of a secondary something, it allows us at least to be less awkward. The function of early vipashyana

practice is to make one less awkward. I think I have discussed enough of that particular subject. As far as technique is concerned, it's identical with the anapannasati practice of coming and going with the breath; it's the same thing. Maybe we should have a discussion, to make sure everybody understood.

Discussion:

Q: How does the slight echo get rid of the feeling of awkwardness?

R: The point is that if your basic mindfulness practice has gotten very clear and strong already, then the seriousness of the one-shot deal is lightened by repeating after you, like somebody repeats after you.

Q: You mean you're mindful of the one-shot deal?

R: Yeah. There's a little humor involved. As if you are saying something very meaningful, and somebody repeats it after you in back of you. That makes your thing have less impact, because somebody's already making a joke out of it. It's not as heavy, as literal as that, but there is that element of mindfulness and then awareness. Like when you settle down, dust comes up.

Q: So each action isn't quite as heavy.

R: Yeah, not as honest, and not as good, as it was happening in the past, as far as the pure shamatha practice was concerned. So that lightens up a little bit.

Q: There is a feeling of being breathed instead of breathing --

R: Yeah.

Q: How does that fit in?

R: I don't see any problems. If you try to make it definite, if you try to solidify the whole thing very definitely, then obviously you have a problem of not knowing your territory, not knowing what you have done. But if you have a sense of the awareness or the mindfulness coming toward you rather than you being aware of them, there's no problem. It happens, and it also dies.

Q: Still, that sense of not <u>ours</u>?

R: Not what?

Q: That sense that what is breathing is breathing by itself --

R: Well, you don't have to be aware of your breathing, particularly. Even at the level of shamatha practice, you don't have to at all. The point is that breathing is happening properly.

Q: So that's incoming and approaching--

R: It doesn't matter.

Q: Instead of me going after it.

R: It doesn't really matter who is who, what is what. As long as there is flow taking place.

Q: Would you say that this shadow of awareness seeing mindfulness is a kind of sophisticated dualism.

R: Yeah. We could say that.

Q: Are you saying that this echo cuts the seriousness ... (indistinct) ... gives up the whole thing at once?

R: Yeah, otherwise the whole thing becomes to serious, and it becomes self-destructive in a way. You are trying to work on something but your honesty and seriousness get in your way. (laughs)

Q: You spoke in the beginning about sharpness. The only way I can understand that is that it's not the awareness itself that becomes sharp, but the one-shot deal that becomes sharp, as a result of the awareness. Is that the way it is?

R: Yeah. The shamatha practice and its techniques become a more integral part of your vipashyana practice, because it has a real, definite strategy, and a definite, very solid thing. No longer wishy-washy.

Q: In other words, the shamatha doesn't disturb the vipashyana any more?

R: No, in fact vipashyana helps to redefine shamatha. Obviously there are certain things in the shamatha approach which are trippy, and any kinds of trips involved with shamatha are clarified by vipashyana. But nevertheless, you see, the whole point of the attitude of the nine yanas is that the next yana is not destroying the previous yana, but it is creating a congenial situation to clarify the previous yana. And that yana is the next yana, already.

Q: I don't know if this is going to be superfluous at this point. Please feel free to pass over it if it doesn't sound like anything -- but would you say that Yogachara and Madhyamika are related in the manner of the yanas that you just spoke of? In other words that Madhyamika included Yogachara, in that way?

R: I think so, but that could be said of <u>any</u> yanas, you know. That's why sometimes the analogy is used of the yanas being a staircase -- that if you don't have the first step, the second step couldn't exist, or wouldn't be useful.

Q: Right, that's the picture I usually see. But what I'm wondering now is, one stair in a staircase does not include the previous one, and what I'm wondering --

R: It should include the previous one. Otherwise that staircase is hanging out over, you know, a cliff. And it's not going to serve any purpose. If we were philosophers, we could say that shamatha practice, compared to the ordinary people's state of mind -- their lack of discipline -- compared to that, shamatha practice is madhyamika practice. But shamatha practice, compared to the vipashyana practice becomes the yogacharin approach, because it's too solid, and too fixed opinions are involved. And from that point onward, we could say the mahavipashyana approach is the Shunyata approach, Madhyamika approach; when it looks back to the vipashyana approach, then from that point of view the vipashyana approach becomes the Yogacharin approach. It's relative reference; all the time it's how fixed your opinions are on the spot. And the next yana manages to bring out the lightness of something or other that we never thought of in that yana we were at.

Q: So, would you say there are an infinite number of yanas then?

R: Well, yeah, it says that as long as there is an infinite number of sentient beings, there will be that many yanas. Traditionally there's supposed to be 84,000 dharmas, 80,000 yanas.

Q: If I understand this correctly, if a person is, say, working on shamatha practice, and somehow manages to be doing it, to be really into it, then he might find himself doing vipashyana automatically -- is that right?

R: Uh-hmm. That's possible, but usually it's necessary for the person's style of practice to be changed by the meditation master. He might find himself in it, but he might still feel guilty that what he's doing may not be orthodox enough. He's misled himself. So the role of the teacher, from this point of view, the approach to the

yanas, is that the teacher presents more and more and more of a free style of approach constantly. The first free style becomes orthodoxy, and then he presents another free style which is also orthodox, connected with next yana.

Q: Would you say that the echo you were talking about is some sort of leftover watcher?

R: Yeah, but it is definitely selfexisting awareness of some kind. It is not regarded as harmful or anything dangerous particularly.

Q: Is it the beginning of insight?

R: Yeah. That's the interesting thing about it -- discriminating mind, and discriminating wisdom are very close, and maybe discriminating mind is the seed of discriminating wisdom. There's a strong possibility of that.

Q: How does the intellectual development which comes from studying philosophy relate to intellectual sharpness of vipashyana?

R: Philosophy is also looking ahead of oneself. That seems to be the general approach: one has certain ideas, certain conclusions, and one is also trying to look ahead of oneself, to create further ideas and further conclusions to transcend oneself. This is precisely the general vipashyana approach, if not the prajna approach. And in the area of the contemplative practice of vipashyana, philosophical speculation, speculative mind, is regarded as vipashyana practice. That is the necessary thing which makes you a blind-faith person. It's a question of venturing out into different ground other than the ground that you find secure for yourself. That is the philosophical approach in Buddhism, rather than you are finding it very confusing to understand things, therefore you formulate new ideas to make sure you can stand on it. But the Buddhist approach to philosophy is just sort of a further leap. Create your own nest in the space.

Q: I'm a little confused about exactly what the practice is. Is the practice itself to see the shadow or to let go of the shadow?

R: See the shadow, and disown it. That's the same practice as we were discussing about the third mindfulness practice of awareness -- it comes to you and you just be with it, but disown it. That's the same thing. That will always be used for the technique of all practices. Any techniques, any particular tricks we might use for meditation practices are not regarded as something we should hang onto, but rather take advantage of, then throw it away. And you never lose it; it comes back to you. That's the biggest trick about it.

Q: In Los Angeles, didn't you talk about vipashyana practice as panoramic awareness practice?

R: Yeah, we haven't got to that yet today.

Q: You implied ... (indistinct) ... in other words your own abstraction, but taking a leap into something. Those things were written with respect to specific issues which to us are somewhat dead or not particularly vital. Is it worth revitalizing those issues and then dealing with these writings, or is it more important for us at this point in time to begin to realize what our own issues are, and to begin to try to apply the basic logic to new issues.

R: It goes both ways, actually. If you are able to tune into the subtleties of how the Madhyamika philosophy is developed, and you begin to develop some sense, almost a conviction, that you are Nagarjuna, you begin to look ahead from his point of view and from his eye. Often it is very trippy, and very contagious, and it sort of makes you high. But if you are really able to identify with it, then there's no problem because what you have to say happens to be also according to the text, and not only according to the text alone, but it happens to be true. (laughs) I mean, if you get the fever of the logic, the logical debate, actually you get into it. That kind of very powerful channel of energy. One doesn't have to try to manage the two things at different times.

Q: The problem comes though. We have been trying to do that in some sense, but then there's this immediate reaction to abstract one step further from that process and to criticize the whole process itself. In other words, not take his logic on one specific issue and get into that train of thought, but abstract from that and criticize the whole process. So that's why I'm asking, should we come up with new issues which are more vital to us?

R: Well, you could I suppose. But then in any case you think you are getting away from it, and you are developing your own independent opinions, but nevertheless, that opinion is right at the beginning inspired by the original opinion already. So I'm sure people will come back to the original issue. That's the contagious thing about it. There's no harm in testing your own adventurous trips, but fundamentally you'll come back. So we don't have to keep ourselves completely strict to the authority of the text alone, being too faithful to it, but a little exercise brings us back. Usually Buddhist technique is that, in the practice that you question, whoever is involved is subject to question, including the Buddha himself, the contradictions in sutras and the contradictions in shastras, and everything. And

sometimes when one goes too far, one begins to wonder whether one is really becoming a heretic or something. But somehow one comes back naturally.

Q: I'm still a little uneasy about that question because it seems there are two aspects involved in the philosophical process. One of them is the analysis and the other is the criticism. We seem to be getting into all kinds of criticism, and we haven't been listening to any analysis that applies to us. We learn how to criticize the skandhas and the ayatanas, and that's okay. But if we really understand what the skandhas and ayatanas are, then we work that out ourselves ... (indistinct) ... onesided and I'm uncomfortable about that.

R: I don't see any problems with analysis and criticism. If you are purely looking for criticism in the level of rebellion, rebelling against authority or something like that, then you can create any kind of criticism. But such criticism becomes flawless, because there's no root of real intelligence; it's purely for the sake of rebelling against authority. If any criticism has its root in analysis, an analytical approach, then the criticism also becomes a target itself because you are putting out a statement in which you are criticizing the subject matter, but still you are putting your ideas onto it. And it also weakens you as well at the same time, because you have dogma already and that could be easily challenged unless the person is extremely fishy and slippery, and doesn't get to the point of being challenged but keeps recreating its own criticism of criticism of criticism. Which is often the case, and is very annoying actually. Sometimes I feel you have to grab hold of the person and shake him.

Q: ... (indistinct) ... insufficient grounding in analysis ... grab onto.

R: He's what ?

Q: I have an insufficient grounding in analysis.

R: Well then, why don't you create your own ground? Which is rather dangerous -- you're putting yourself in the target, being the target.

Q: What should we be doing in our meditation now? Should we try this out?

R: Well, we are going through all kinds of meditation experiences in the next -- how many days have we, something like forty? -- twenty-two talks then. So it's going to be very funny if you try to do all of them. I think generally that our practices up to this point are more or less in the vipashyana area and shamatha area already, and

a lot of people have been doing the things that I am describing today and tomorrow and so forth. Basically just keep going with what you have been doing, which has all these elements in it already. We don't have to change our techniques, since the awareness of breathing is the same thing. Everything is the same, and I'm sure people feel quite familiar with this. Although there are new, subtler ideas, more elaborate ideas being introduced that would be further help to their practice, I don't think anybody is in the position, at this point anyway, to practice Shunyata or Mahamudra techniques that we will be discussing later on.

Q: Rinpoche, this may be a strange question, but is there any hint or any danger of a strange apathy in the vipashyana practice? It's like you don't possess your own thoughts in a sense, you don't possess your breathing, and so it seems that you could get so unattached to various thoughts, that it could get apathetic.

R: You mean being too possessive?

Q: Not being possessive at all -- maybe it's being too possessive, I don't know.

Q: Isn't apathy another thought?

Q: Yeah, but it seems like everything goes through -- like for example, there's been like a lot of interest in discussion around the Middle Eastern crisis, and you feel like you don't know how to relate to that at all at this stage. It's not really in the realm of my experience, except it's like a thought.

R: That sounds good. Well, after all, it is thought rather than experience. You haven't been in the Middle East yet. I mean it doesn't really matter. I don't think it's all that problematic at all. The whole practice is based on, as you know, working with ourselves rather than becoming a spiritual person as such. You know, like "you shouldn't have worldly thoughts about the Middle East war, domestic feelings about your family or things like that" -- it doesn't apply in this case. Any thoughts you might have are part of the whole thought complex and one doesn't have to separate them in any way at all. For that matter, anything that happens in daily life situations, you don't have to sort them out -- that this is good and this is bad particularly -- except for only one problem: if you are not being aware of your patience and discipline, and you begin to indulge yourselves into one area, such as missing a sitting practice a particular hour, then that becomes problematic. (laughs)

Q: I have a question about abstract effort. The way you describe it, it's a technique or even a trick you say, but the way we cultivate it is by working through the general environment of applying effort. So it seems that the way these flashes occur is spontaneously, out of our immediate control. And I can't see how we could apply that spontaneous arising of effort to breathing to create a new type of meditation. You know what I mean? It seems that it would just happen while we are doing our breathing. And where does the separation between the shamatha and vipashyana happen?

R: The shamatha-vipashyana happens at the level of--

Q: No, I mean between the end of shamatha and the beginning of vipashyana.

R: Yeah. It happens in the level of sort of a new attitude that there is a sudden abstract flash, and then faithfully hold back to shamatha practice, or else the sense of the shadow that we've been talking about. It's not quite going back, way back, but halfway through, making use of that flash and not trying to go right back. It is approaching from the outer realm rather than the inner realm. As far as the flash is concerned, there is no difference at all. In fact the vipashyana type flashes of awareness have to grow out of the shamatha type at the beginning. The early parts of your vipashyana practice will be still shamatha type awareness, but then you begin to realize that there is a different approach already that is so seeded to the unconscious mind, and begin to create another type of flash which is vipashyana type. But that probably happens much later.

Q: Are these shadows coming from the seventh consciousness?

R: Something like that, I would say, yeah.

Q: Are they coming out of our own experience?

R: Yeah. You can write that down.

Q: When you say that we don't come right back to the breathing, in the whole way you described vipashyana, it almost seems as if there's not so much of the other kind of effort involved.

R: The other kind?

Q: Well, you spoke yesterday of two kinds of effort. One was that abstract flash, but in order to ever have the possibilities of that abstract flash, we have to have some of the more usual kind of effort.

R: Yeah, yeah. I don't mean to say you don't come back to the breathing as breath, but you don't come back to completely being absolutely one with the breathing. You don't bring yourself back, but you have the technique of awareness of the breathing rather than mindfulness of the breathing. You do come back, you do need some technique to work on definitely.

Q: You said to Jim that you can't sort of automatically fall from one practice into another or into vipashyana without feeling guilty, but supposing that you just have a feeling suddenly that you fell into a current, that you can relax your effort and it gives you quite a feeling of ease and security. And at the same time you know that it probably won't last and you will have to switch back onto the other thing. But couldn't you feel that you are on the right track? If you are not going to hang onto that track, but are willing to get back any time that some experience comes by itself?

R: Experience comes by itself?

Q: Yeah, that you just switch from one to the other?

R: That what?

Q: It just happens that you switch from one to the other. If something happens that before you had to make an effort suddenly there is no effort and it's a totally different relationship to the atmosphere.

R: Well, I don't think there is any problem, as long as there is an ongoing technique that you can hang onto. As long as there is a discipline that is the basic core of the whole journey. As long as that is going on, the attitude doesn't make all that much difference at all. And when you have the basic technique you will be aware of it naturally or be mindful of it naturally. So it doesn't really matter. But you do need some kind of definite discipline of some particular technique, like the walking or the breathing or whatever.

Q: There's a sobriety about it, a soberness.

R: Yeah, that is the epitome of being down to earth, being on earth, breathing.

Q: In light of what we said about technique, why did you have some of us start with practically no technique at all which is--

R: I thought we discussed that some time ago.

Q: Well, I couldn't accept it with what you're saying now.

R: In what sense?

Q: Well, what's the point in doing that if you have to start with discipline to begin with? What's accomplished by just doing without it?

R: If you don't have anything to do while you sit, you have no working basis. I mean, you wouldn't have any handle, so to speak, on how to go about it. If you just sit there, then you have thoughts and dreams and everything, and it doesn't bring any kind of concrete situation. Are you questioning about that?

Q: Not that; that makes perfect sense. But then you said at the beginning, the first day whenever it was, that some of us had started without really starting with the breath, but just sitting.

R: Oh I see, yeah. You mean somebody without technique?

Q: Yeah.

R: Well, you see, in the beginning practice of meditation, it's not so much that I'm going to meditate, and I'm going to sit, and what can I do. But you have to develop some sense of being yourself. And in many cases when people come for a first interview, I don't give them breathing technique, but just ask them to sit. And usually what happens is they find it very difficult to just sit, and they ask what else can I do, apart from just sitting. And the technique is just brought about from that level. A lot of people get frightened or put off by a set technique. It becomes too mechanical. And there are all kinds of implications like that involved. Rather than just relating with themselves. I think that has been the case for a lot of people who didn't receive technique to meditate on anything. It was just to, so to speak, lure them into the meditation practice.

Q: Do you feel that the shamatha practice is a way to deal with aggression?

R: Well, the whole of Buddhism is a way of dealing with aggression. Shamatha is the starting point, definitely, yeah. Literally, shamatha means development of peace, absence of aggression, definitely. Because the aggression comes from speeding, rather than particularly being angry. Anger has so much speed involved in it, and confusion at the same time. So shamatha brings clear thinking and slows you down because the only thing you have to work on is your breathing. Definitely so.

Q: Once you start getting caught up in your emotions during meditating, how do you get detached from it?

R: Detached?

Q: Well, like what if they start controlling you?

R: Well, I mean, you must have something to do with that. They are not away from you; that's one of your things.

Q: So what's the right--

R: So if you are going to fight back, they are going to fight again, because you are putting energy into it. I suppose the only thing is just to relate with them, and regard that as part of your projection. And if you know that completely and you have trust in that way, then they cease to become a big deal automatically. Emotions are also kind of an attitude and you need some kind of encounter attitude, to receive them properly rather than excluding them.

Q: In terms of the three major types of experiences you mentioned a few days ago that occur in shamatha, and were kind of signposts along the way -- how do they relate to leading up to this? I mean, do they lead up to the vipashyana?

R: You get similar experience in the vipashyana as well. Similar identical three types of those things. They are not particularly leading necessarily, but they are signs of shamatha experience being completely accomplished, and you then get vipashyana type of those three.

Q: In the one that's depressive, is there any danger of the person feeling suicidal?

R: I don't think so. That has something to do with the technique, actual technique that the person is doing. If the technique has less emphasis on the body and more emphasis on the breathing and space, I don't see there's any problem of a suicidal notion. Whereas it is highly possible if a person is closing himself in and working on the body and bodily tensions and meditating upon it, he begins to realize the body is the obstacle to enlightenment and would like to destroy it. That has been known in the past and I think it is highly possible if that's the case. We should stop, I suppose.

The Basic Practice of Shamatha

An Excerpt from Talk One: Shamatha

1974 Seminary Hinayana – Mahayana Transcripts

Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche

From tomorrow onward you will be sitting a lot--sitting practice is regarded as the heart of Buddhism, also as the heart of the nontheistic tradition of meditation. All of you have received instructions from me; we have created personal interviews and we have all talked to each other. It's amazing that there are so many "interviewees" here. In the past we discussed two approaches to sitting practice: one is the strict discipline of following the breath, and the other one is a sense of just improvising, trying to sit and feel what happens with you. These are the two categories that were developed in my interviews with individuals here as far as I can remember.

But at this point I would like to make a blanket policy, which should be much better and more workable. Also, if you are going to sit for long periods of time with such a number of people, there is more demand on your state of being, and in fact, on your basic existence. So I would like to suggest following the basic practice of *shamatha* at the beginning of your sitting period, strict *shamatha* practice--well, it's not exactly strict. Certain schools make a very primitive practice out of *shamatha.* What we are doing is not primitive practice, but strict practice; there is a lot of difference between the two. What we are going to do is not primitive practice based on the peasantry level, but strict practice, in the sense that there's no way to move around, no way to jiggle around, no way to maneuver around your practice. You do what you are told to do. That seems to be one of the basic points. If there's no way to relate with discipline then there's no way to develop yourself; you are constantly swirling around and you find yourself drifting into all kinds of situations.

The sitting practice of meditation here is basic mindfulness practice. We are not doing awareness practice as such--that might come later--we are doing mindfulness practice as opposed to awareness practice. Some of you might feel you are regressing and back to the A- B-C-D level, rather than moving on to something more advanced and glorious, but it is necessary to do it this way, to develop your meditation at the mindfulness level.

To begin with, *shamatha* practice has a lot to do with your posture. It is recommended that you sit crosslegged as opposed to hanging out in any convenient posture. You might say, "Suppose I lie down and meditate, wouldn't that still be valid?" Somehow it doesn't seem to be so. Not because there is a rigid rule that says so, but due to practicality--once you sit, you sit properly; you have a straight spine, your breath doesn't have any strain, and your neck doesn't have any strain. Sit upright, crosslegged. You can change your posture and rearrange yourself. There's no point in punishing yourself, constantly trying to strain yourself and your posture. But sit properly so there's no strain on the breath. If you sit properly, you are there. Your breathing follows naturally.

It's the difference between animals and human beings. Animals find relaxation by being horizontal. Horses can sleep that way, they could even meditate that way if anybody taught horses to meditate. Snakes and lizards and horses and cows could meditate that way, horizontally. But human beings don't walk on four feet. At this point of evolution we have no chance of going back, so we've got to walk on our two feet. That is why the vertical posture

always happens, even when we sit. If you want to eat, you can't eat horizontally. You would find it very uncomfortable to be eating horizontally on the dining room table. You would want to sit up in your chair and eat that way. It's the same thing with your meditation, it is a vertical process rather than a horizontal one. This is a given situation for us; we can't do otherwise. Since we are formed this way, we should do it this way. The Buddha sets an example for the human being; the Buddha sits upright in the meditation posture. It's not particularly anthropocentric, in the sense that human beings are regarded as the highest beings particularly. In this case it's a question of what our make-up is--we go along with our make-up.

So posture is very important. In contrast to the animal style it's upright, and not too tense in the neck. You just sit up very simply. I've noticed that when people first see something very interesting happening on the movie screen, everybody sits up in perfect posture. And when things get slightly dull and uninteresting in the movie, people begin to do all kinds of things. But in the first instance they have perfect posture. That's an example for us. I mean it is happening; it is your life; you are up and you are breathing. It is very personal and very direct. You are you are sitting upright; your head is forward, neither up nor down, but erect. So posture is regarded as very important, extremely important in this case.

The attitude towards the breath in meditation is that there is breath coming out. Once you are set properly in your posture, there is breath coming out of you. The *shamatha* approach of relating with the breath is that as the breath comes out, you become the breathing. You try to identify with it completely, rather than just watching it. You are the breath, the breath is you.

So breath is coming out of your nostrils, going out and dissolving into the atmosphere, into the space. You direct a certain energy and effort toward that. As for inbreathing, should you try to breathe in and that way deliberately try to draw things in? That's not recommended. You should just boycott your breath, boycott your concentration on the breath. When your breath has gone out, boycott it; let it dissolve; just abandon it. So inbreathing is just space. Physically, biologically, you do breathe in, obviously; but it's not a big deal. Then another breath goes out; be with it. So it's out, dissolve, gap; out, dissolve, gap; out, dissolve, gap. You are constantly opening, abandoning, boycotting, something of you that wants to follow through. So boycotting in this case is a very significant word. If you hold onto your breath, you are constantly holding onto yourself. Once you begin to boycott the end of the outbreath, then there's no world left--except that the outbreath reminds you to tune in with it. So you tune in, dissolve; tune in, dissolve; tune in, dissolve.

Thoughts arise in the midst of this practice: "Well, back at home--How can I do my calligraphy? --How can I compose another article? --How can I finish *Loka* magazine? --What 's happening in the financial scene at Karma Dzong? --I hate so and so who was terrible to me. –I would love to make love if such-and-such a person were only here. --What's the story with my parents?" All kinds of thoughts begin to arise, naturally. If you have lots of time to sit, there are endless thoughts happening constantly.

The approach to thoughts is actually no approach. When I feel an ache in my neck, okay, I think "ache in my neck." Reduce everything to the thought level rather than getting involved in the concept. Usually what happens is that if you have mental chatter, you just call it your thoughts. But if you have very deeply involved emotional chatter or fights and struggles in your

mind, you call that emotions and you usually give it special prestige. You think that it merits special privileges by being called emotion. “I’m actually angry; it’s *more* than my thought—I feel so horny, it’s more than my thought." Somehow, in the realm of the actual mind, things don't work that way. All of them are thoughts; all of them are thoughts, *all* of them. It’s just thinking--you're thinking you’re horny; you’re thinking you’re angry. It’s a thinking process which takes place all the time.

So the idea of *shamatha* practice is to depersonalize the thoughts. Your thoughts are no longer regarded as VIP’s in your life, in your meditation. You think, you sit; you think, you sit; you think, you sit. You have thoughts, you have thoughts about thoughts, you have thoughts about thoughts about thoughts. Let it happen that way; call them thoughts. You are thinking; you are constantly thinking, nothing but thinking. You are not really angry--you may have physical repercussions from it, but still it’s the thought process making you do that. You might have erections in the middle of your sitting, but still it’s your thought. Your mind gets erected first; your body becomes erected afterwards. Usually that’s the pattern. So there is a constant thinking process, constant thought, nothing but thought and thought pattern.

But there is a limit at some point. If you strain yourself, your leg, your back or something because of not rearranging yourself, that is going too far. By thinking and thinking and thinking of thinking, you can impose intensity on your body, which undermines it. In other words, you regard the body as your little brother; you tell him, “Shut up. Big brother is more important. *I* have to deal with that.” In this case, that is not really a good thing to do. Rearranging your posture is necessary; at some point it’s good to do. But at the same time, it too, is a thinking process. Relate to it as a thinking process.

The next problem, or challenge, rather, is walking meditation practice. Last year when we had walking practice in Jackson, a lot of people treated it as an opportunity for dramatic display. … . Actually, everybody tried to compensate. When you sit, you can't do very much. When you stand and walk, you can at least exercise your self-existence. That became a very troubled and problematic situation. Walking was regarded as comic relief, when you could do something extraordinary, self-exploratory or self-expressive. The poets walked their way, the theatre people walked their way, the freaked-out people walked their way. I think that’s not particularly advisable. Since we have a chance now to review what happened last time, we can bring this issue to the surface.

Walking practice is the same as sitting practice except that you're walking. Instead of paying attention to your breath, in the walking practice you work with the movement of your legs. Your body is still in good posture. You raise your right leg, swing out, touch your sole, and press it on the floor. The left leg is released from its tension, swings across, touches, and presses, and the right leg swings across, touches, and presses. It’s a very natural walk, a very ordinary walk. Often there's an attempt to run around and beat everybody, or to walk *very* slowly. All of this is unnecessary affectation. You should be careful to notice that your awareness has changed, to notice the shift in your awareness. In fact, walking meditation is very important; it relates to your everyday life situation much more closely than sitting practice. Walking meditation means that you are getting up from your meditation cushion and beginning to get into walking in the street, speaking and working. Therefore walking practice is regarded as very important preparation. It's a transitional period, although in this case it's still part of sitting practice. So you have to pay heed to it. Hopefully you can do it somewhat

deliberately, but at the same time freely.

….

The point here is to bring things down to the everyday living situation as much as you can, and to make things very real and personal. The whole process of *shamatha* practice, which we will discuss more tomorrow, is to develop a detailed experience of things as they are and to become very direct in relating with details of personal experience. That seems to be one of the basic points.

….

Another thing I would like to mention is the focus of the eyes when you are looking at things. Sometimes if you are paying too much attention to visual details of colors and everything, you find you're getting a tight neck and a headache, because the expenditure of visual energy is much greater than your physical expenditure. In ordinary life, we walk, we move our bodies, and we look, so the whole thing is balanced. In this case we are sitting still, so the only thing we have to do is listen and look. And there's not much noise outside to listen to either. Therefore everything's concentrated in your vision alone. So there is tension. The idea is not to focus too much in the visual situation, but just to open your eyes and see. You may look at it, but the point is not to manipulate your visual hallucination.

….

You see, what happens here when you sit is that all of your trips begin to come out. It's like churning out all kinds of vomit, all kinds of diarrhea. Your whole stomach opens, your whole brain opens in front of everybody else, and everybody exposes their trips to you at the same time. So a lot of exposed charnel ground appears. That's necessary, as long as you don't make it into a trip, thinking how glorious you are and beginning to love your shit. But I think there are possibilities of accepting the charnel ground. That seems to be the basic point of having a group of people here together at the same time. Some kind of bond could develop among a hundred and twelve people, each of whom knows everybody else's trip. That is an immense feast. So let it be that way. You can't get away. Everybody's going to bulge out in some way or other. You can't keep your privacy at this point. I think part of the celebration of the special situation happening here is that a hundred and twelve people are sitting together, and everything's open to every one of them. You are exposing yourself a hundred and twelve times to everybody else and in turn they are doing it to you. Maybe that's the real meaning of sangha, everybody understands you and knows you, and you know them as well. So there's nothing to hide, nothing to be kept secret. Everything's everywhere.

Talk 4 Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, 73 Seminary; Oct. 5, 1973

FIRST FOUNDATION: MINDFULNESS OF BODY

Abstract: Faith -- sacred and magical aspect of the practice and the dharma; power of unconditioned truth.

Working with the eight consciousnesses: the four foundations of mindfulness.

Mindfulness of body. Being right there. The breathing; mixing mind and breathing. Just experience. Body practice stuffy and elementary. Importance of boredom. Walking meditation. Levels of mindfulness.

Before we get into the idea of meditation practices that we are going to study today, I would like to insert, still at this early stage of the Hinayana level, some Vajrayana principles involved in the practice of meditation and working with the eight types of consciousness -- the notion of faith and the notion of endurance in the practices of meditation. I think it is very important to know that in the basic Hinayana approach, faith is referred to as simple trust, having met a competent teacher. The teachers were divided into three types of categories: the first one being somebody who has attained enlightenment, the second one being somebody who is close to attainment of enlightenment and has explored the depth of oneself and others, and the third one being, if he's going to be a teacher, the teacher should be at least well versed in the Dharma intellectually, experientially. Those were the general categories of relating with the teacher. And from those categories seemingly Hinayana's approach is that the person develops some kind of trust and sense of warmth, friendship towards the teacher. And you just do as the teacher says.

But there's something more than that if you look at it from Vajrayana's point of view. There is the notion of Samaya. And also there is the notion of danger involved in relating with the teacher. The Hinayana approach to relating with the teacher is to inspire oneself about the positive qualities of the teacher and how much benefit one gets. But there is very little mention if one has developed doubt or disobeyed the subtleties of the command of the Dharma, the order that was given. So there is definitely the tantric element involved even from the Hinayana level. The teacher is related as the embodiment of the teachings and therefore the teacher has the power to lead you into this spiritual path and present you with the highest transcendental experience of enlightenment. But also the teacher has the power to destroy you. And if there is anything in the realm of commitment of practice of meditation that goes wrong or one quits or decides to look into other areas, the notion of punishment is very clear. Which is a Vajrayana element that comes into even the early stages of the practice of shamatha.

There is the magical aspect of the meditation practices. You might ask where this magical aspect comes from, how it comes to be. It is because there is a sense of tuning oneself into an entirely different way of thinking, as opposed to our ordinary way of thinking, samsaric way of thinking. We have decided to relate with the truth, the Dharma and decided to tune into it. And that tuning oneself into, committing oneself into that stream, that flow means that one is automatically entered into some kind of spiritual power. Nothing particularly exciting or extraordinary, necessarily magical. But there is a sense of power and there is a sense of mystical energy, so to speak, that one is involved with. The reason Dharma is regarded as sacred as opposed to other things, opposed to adharmas, is because its contents are outrageous in the way that the contents are in touch with the energy of the world, the cosmic flow, so to speak, of the world. So there is almost a magical element in that. And in fact the Dharma is not the Dharma particularly because it's so sensible and so true in the ordinary sense, therefore it is workable and it works. But there is that element of the magical quality of it. So the unconditioned truth like Dharma has extraordinary power in it.

In the Mahayana approach this power is referred to as a spell, mantra. The attribute of this particular power is described in the Prajna Paramita Hridaya Sutra as being a possessing power. And in the Hinayana level, that power is referred to as merit, and practising Dharma, involving oneself in the Dharma, is a meritorious deed. Which is quite different from the ordinary idea of bargaining tit for tat -- if I do good, I'm going to get a goodie -- something more than a mere exchange of accumulating good karma, therefore you have the reward of that good karmic act, or whatever. It's something more than that. It's a very tantric thing. Even at the Hinayana level, there's tremendous energy and power, and hidden power, so to speak. This approach, to say the least, is corny or bizarre according to the popular idea that there's magic involved. But there is some kind of magic involved. That is the cause and the fact that we are creating in the simple practice of meditation, which relates with the eight types of consciousness. Also the practice of that particular miracle, putting it into effect.

So let us not regard it as a purely mechanical process, which leads you to enlightenment. But tuning oneself onto that higher truth is the essence behind it. And such tuning oneself onto higher truth by practising meditation can only be done by a competent teacher who also has the message of the lineage and the personal experience that has been handed down through the lineage. Otherwise we could quite possibly read a book, extraordinarily written and clear and scientific, just a book on how to meditate on the eight types of consciousness; and we could attain enlightenment if it's approached from a purely scientific level alone. The reason why that is not so is because there is that abstract magical quality which is handed down generation to genera-

tion; that accompanies the experienced teacher who also has tremendous common sense and wisdom, as well as being the holder of the vajra, the mystical power.

The mystical power from this point of view is nothing more than just sitting simply and employing a simple technique. But something happens to you. And actually it's quite different from mere imitation of the rest of the lineage.

I think that particular aspect of the magical quality is very important to know. It's true that Buddhism is very scientific and ordinary and extremely straightforward. But nevertheless there is some kind of power, we must admit; even the simplest teaching has tremendous power behind it. It is not that you are converted into it, therefore you become a true believer, therefore you happen to zap yourself by convincing yourself into it. But there is something other than just purely power of suggestion alone.

Within that basic introduction, of power in the truth, is the turning of the wheel of the dharma, Dharmachakra.

The eight types of consciousness we discussed yesterday are the working base, on which we work on the practice of meditation simply by not exaggerating the levels of these different consciousnesses or disrespecting them. So there is a sense of balance, some sense of respect. When a person sits and meditates, it is a special situation; it is a sacred act of some kind. It has been said by Petrul Rinpoche that even if you have impure thoughts in the meditation hall, those thoughts are regarded as sacred thoughts. Most impure, most crude, or confused, whatever, even those are regarded as sacred thoughts. So a sense of discipline is in itself important, whether you have accomplished the discipline or not. If you fall asleep on your cushion, or feel that you haven't actually sat and meditated at all -- as soon as you sit on your cushion, you begin to venture out all over the world, and the only thing that reminds you is when the gong goes and you realize you are meditating supposedly, physically -- even such daydreams and things like that become important. It is a sacred activity. Not that the sitting practice of meditation has to be absolutely solemn and rigid, necessarily; but it is that kind of attitude that one is involved with a certain definite system, tradition, which is valid and which has its roots in solid thinking, a definite approach, an extremely valid thing to do.

There are three types of approaches one can make in the shamatha practice. One is called being aware of, being mindful of, where the thoughts are derived from. Another is being aware or mindful of where the thoughts dwell. And the third one is being aware of where the thoughts vanish, go. It is not particularly that you are supposed

to manufacture one and then let them come, and let them go and let them dwell. But you have thoughts in any case and you be with them, and these thoughts are generally connected with one or the other or all of the eight types of consciousness. Generally, our sense perceptions, physical well-being, bodily postures, and discomfort, and comfort, and visions, and sound, and smell that one experiences act as the fuse. And then, when those sense consciousnesses begin to wear themselves out a little bit, one becomes slightly bored with them, and turns into the subconscious mind. Conversations are replayed or particular experiences of one's life are projected back in the form of a cinema show, and so forth. And then there is a kind of a gap, a little gap, where things don't happen and nothing occurs in the mind. Physically one is seemingly comfortable, and somewhat rested with sound that goes around and visions that one sees around. One is somewhat settled down. And then one digs up some further excitement by looking into our personal relationships, emotional involvement with people. Are people being nice to us or nasty. Or a particular scene in a particular context; planning one's future or the sense of jealousy and sense of passion. All kinds of thoughts begin to come.

So those are the general patterns that happen. And all of them should be experienced. I would rather use the word experience, than even being aware, because when you say we have to be aware of it, then we are getting into another area of being watchful, which is in itself its own project, and you find you're a slave of your own awareness. That somehow doesn't work and becomes too self-conscious a practice. And in order to free ourselves from too much self-conscious involvement or deprivation of the senses or emotional playback, a technique is introduced. In this technique, it talks about the four foundations of mindfulness: mindfulness of the body, mindfulness of livelihood, mindfulness of effort and mindfulness of mental activities or the intelligence.

To begin with, mindfulness of the body is that sense of being right there on your cushion, which is partly influenced by bodily sensation and partly influenced by audiovisual sensations and consciousness. At this point it is not so much meditating on anything particular at all, but just being with one's body fully and completely. As much as we can, we are right there, sitting there. And that kind of sense of being there is also a very penetrating experience. That sense of being transcends the ordinary level of self-consciousness even. You might occasionally experience that you feel you are being there, you are watching yourself being there and the watcher watches itself. But that is another little phase, another little project that wears out quickly, and then comes back into experiencing of being.

And the technique universally used in all Buddhist traditions is the

breathing. Because breathing is expression of the sense of being there. Like you say: "I think so-and-so is asleep because I can hear him breathing, snoring." And you also check out whether the person is completely passed out or not by feeling whether the person breathes or not. So breathing is an example of being, actually. There's nothing particularly mystical about breathing. I don't think the early Buddhists even thought about using breathing in the same logic as the idea of prana, or anything like that at all. Just simply breathing.

In the Kagyu tradition, a little special technique of breathing practice which is employed is the experiencing of chung ne dro sum. Chung is where the thoughts arise; ne is dwell and dro is where they went; and those three are accompanied by ying rig se wa. Ying means space; rig means conscious mind; se wa means mixing. So mixing the mind consciousness. Sometimes it's called also lung sem se wa -- the mind and breathing mixing together. Whatever it is, the idea is that sense of space. And one doesn't have to deliberately try to mix the mind and the breathing with solemn effort particularly. But like you feel the well-being of your body, in the same way you could feel you are breathing, a general sense of breathing.

I think one of the problems that meditators usually experience is that there is a slight, almost subconscious guilty feeling that you ought to be doing something, rather than just experiencing what goes on there. And when you begin to feel that you ought to be doing something, then you are automatically presenting millions of obstacles to yourself. So if you actually feel you are what you are, and this is not particularly a project as such, but just a way of being, then there is also fundamentally a feeling that sitting there and working on the breathing is valid and approved and it is okay and it's done. It is normal practice. It's nothing extraordinary, particularly. Sitting there and breathing is a very valid thing to do.

The special approach of the Kagyu tradition teaching to the shi ne or the shamatha practice, is that in awareness of body, it is suggested that deliberately holding back on one's body is unnecessary. In fact there was a big controversy in Tibet on that particular technique. The Kagyupas were equated with the pig -- that they just meditated like a pig; they just sit and breathe. You're supposed to explore the inside of your body, the rising and falling of the abdomen and so forth; that is regarded as the intellectual approach to meditation. So there were all kinds of attacks on that particular technique. The Sakya Pandit said that if anybody is practising the Kagyu style of Mahamudra, he's creating a seed for the animal realm in his next life. And then there was refutation of that: Padma Karpo challenged it and said that when you said that if anybody's practising the Kagyu tradition, it is not an attack on the teaching; it's an attack on the person. Equally you can say that

if anybody's practising the Sakya tradition, he could also sow a seed of being an animal again.

The stubbornness of that approach is regarded as something too faithful, something too believing, something too unadventurous almost, and too solid. And that particular approach has been challenged constantly by the other schools. But nevertheless it seems that we have to develop some sense of a true-believer quality at that point. If you are becoming completely self-conscious of even your practice, seeing yourself sitting on the cushion and meditating is hilarious. It's very funny. Too solid and too solemn and too believing and too gullible, almost. Somebody told you to do that and you do it and sit on the cushion, breathing. But nevertheless one has to develop the step of knowing what one is doing. People get a lot of reinforcement if they are observing and watching one's lungs, air going through nostrils and the rising and falling of the abdomen. It becomes a self-existing occupation and it is something that, generally, we don't do when we sit and breathe; we just sit and breathe.

Of course suggestions had been made that the rising-and-falling-of-the-abdomen approach is also too self-conscious a practice and will create suicidal tendencies. All kinds of attacks have been made. I don't think we have to take it all that seriously. But nevertheless that stuffiness of the self-sturdy feeling of being in the body is reinforcing more than what we are. So the idea of mixing mind and breathing and mixing mind and space is highly recommended in the Kagyu tradition, particularly.

Also it seems that that particular approach of watching one's body is an extremely elementary level. If people have no span of concentration at all -- they can only hold themselves one minute -- then it has been highly recommended to work on the body, because breathing, purely breathing alone, would create a way of drifting one's span of concentration away from you. And according to the story of Buddha, he taught this to extreme cases. He had a disciple who was an extremely stupid and forgetful person, and he began to teach him. First he taught him meditating practice, and he couldn't do it. He would forget what he was doing. And then he asked him to be the sweeper in the vihara. He had a broom and he taught him to repeat these two words: "sweep and clean, sweep and clean," which went with the motion when he was doing it. He was able to sweep, but he forgot the words; and he would come to him again and say: "what's after sweep?" And the idea of rising and falling of the abdomen was introduced to him when he memorized "sweep and clean" properly, without any difficulties. "After that, now go and sit and feel your lung going up and it will go down. Just go with it. And then it will go up; then it will go down and go along with that." And he didn't have to remember up and down; he felt it.

Then the next step is with the outgoing breathing, and the sense of space which comes later. Counting breathing is introduced also very popularly, even in the Kagyu tradition. The tradition is that you count every outbreath up to ten and then come back to one. And that seems to be the starting point where you learn how to be able to relate with space and outgoing breathing. So the counting makes special note that breathing is actually going out. Even if breathing is shallow or rough, that outgoing breathing has a label; it's named by numbers. But the incoming is just preparing to count one, two, three, and so forth. Each time, one part of the breathing is more emphasized than the other one. That's the technique.

Jamgon Kongtrul recommended that maybe for a certain type of people unable to handle their general breathing situation, awareness situation, it is not necessary to do so. And I've been trying to follow that direction of just simply a sense of being. The outbreathing is an expression of being. Inbreathing is an expression of confirming that you are being. Outbreathing is breathing in more oxygen in order to be alive; so it plays a more important part. And also psychologically it helps to make less emphasis on the thisness and sense of ongoing process. And also strangely enough, you find that the attention on physical being, the awareness of body, becomes more precise if you begin to feel that sense of going out. Relating with oneself in terms of going out automatically confirms that you are breathing without any difficulties. Your breathing is no problem; you don't need an iron lung. The inbreathing is a sign of struggle -- like if we are short of breath, we breathe in. There is a stuggle involved. So outbreathing is a sense of relaxation and a sense of well-being, physical survival, existing.

Often we find that the thought process, thinking process, can freely function at the same time that we keep our heedfulness on the breathing. And that is quite a common thing which actually happens with a lot of us. Once we begin to develop a sense of the rhythm, that rhythm of being aware of the breathing is quite independent. Meantime we can entertain ourselves with all kinds of thoughts. And the problem with that seems to be -- it is not regarded as a problem, by the way, at the beginning, first of all, but a sign that you are not actually in contact with the breathing properly. Its monotonousness keeps you in basic guesswork -- you just guess that when you breathe in you breathe out automatically. And you are not even in contact with the well-being of the breathing at all. Therefore you could venture something else out. In other words, awareness of breathing, mindfulness of breathing is a way of creating obstacles to the subconscious dreams or the mental activities. The technique should provide this obstacle, a nuisance of some kind, that you have to keep hassling back there. Unless you are able to do that efficiently,

then you don't achieve the ideal cool boredom that we have been talking about.

If you don't get properly bored, then you are not in tune with the magical power we have been talking about. Everything happens very smooth, on the surface level. You are not in tune with the magic of the lineage, the spiritual energy of the lineage. So the boredom plays an extremely important part, and in fact quite simply we can say that the barometer of our accomplished meditative practice is how much boredom we create for ourselves. This kind of boredom is rather light boredom. It has its uneasy quality, but at the same time boredom becomes less of a big deal. Boredom is just simply another expression of experiencing well-being.

The walking meditation practice is also part of that sense of bodily sensations. As you walk you have a natural sense of the movement of your legs, and you don't have to try to keep both the breathing and the walking simultaneous. It becomes similar to what we were discussing -- the thought could happen and the awareness of the breathing could happen at the same time; it has that kind of nature. So walking is simply that movement of your legs which becomes the same as breathing. There is a sense of relating with the outside, an open-space situation. You are using your legs as you would an oar to stir water if you were in a boat. If people become self-conscious of their bodies, then they might feel that they have to accentuate their walking -- either with a sort of dance-type movement or else very solid and steady, meaningful walks. And they are unable to relate with the legs. And then one begins to be self-conscious about arms and head and back, including the hair on your head. And that is again a sign of being unable to relate with the movement of your legs, completely. If you feel perfectly comfortable with your body, when you walk, you don't have to introduce anything else -- just simply walk as you breathe. Ideal walking practice is like slow-motion of ordinary walking, rather than deliberately slowed down. Slow motion in a film of ordinary people walking.

Which also helps to associate oneself with awareness of body. Awareness of body, mindfulness of body, is basically to feel a sense of being. And any kind of bodily sensations -- an ache in the back or itches or sensations of hot and cold, whatever one experiences -- they are included in the general breathing or walking situation, rather than specially trying to sort out that particular problem. In other words, when any kind of reminders come up in the bodily awareness, that awareness is included in your technique. The technique is kind of a shock absorber in some sense. Awareness of breathing is more accentuated if there is an itch in your back or if there is self-consciousness of your foot, or if there is a hole in your socks while you walk. All of those little

self-consciousnesses are a reminder of the general rhythm that goes on with the body.

So the whole thing is trying to cooperate one's whole basic being and concentrating on the technique of awareness of breathing.

There are several levels of mindfulness one can achieve. It is like the images shown in the oxherding pictures of Zen tradition: First, there is a sense of watching yourself. And then there is a sense that you don't actually have to watch yourself, because you can feel your own footprint; that is a level of how confident you are with yourself. And then as you go along, you begin to feel that you are very much in control of everything. The sense of being is always present there. You could ride on yourself and complete the accomplishment of experiencing proper being, total being. And then as you go along beyond that, you can ride on yourself, and play a flute as you ride on yourself. The sense of well-being is so solid, so definite, you can even extend greater awareness of not only the sense of being body, but the sense of well-being of livelihood and so forth.

Which comes to the second stage of mindfulness, of the livelihood. And I think we should stop there today.

Discussion

Q: If you have trouble emphasizing your outbreath as opposed to your inbreath, would you recommend counting?

R: I don't think it is necessary, actually. You know, then you begin to feel you are weakened, your concentration is weakened, by using counting. I think one of the problems of having difficulty is because one doesn't feel one's sense of being there enough. If you really experience the sense of being, you have no problem.

Q: I suppose it tends to happen automatically that if you're trying to emphasize your outbreath, then perversely your inbreath becomes more important. It seems you become more mindful of that almost by perversity. I find myself anyhow. Every time I try to emphasize the outbreath I wind up noticing exquisitely every activity of my inbreath.

R: Well, again there's a sense of duty, which is not quite the idea. The idea is a sense of well-being rather than a sense of duty.

Q: Then that drifts off altogether.

R: Yeah, I think it could be very simple; it could really be very simple. Just a sense of being. There is a sense of being and a sense of rest, sense of being and rest.

Q: You said the counting was on the outbreath?

R: Yeah, always.

Q: I kind of got the feeling that if you counted on the inbreath then you'd be able to follow the outbreath.

R: No, that means you're following both ways and you're sort of hooked up in that.

Q: I can have some feeling for where thoughts derive from and where thoughts dwell, but I've been thinking about where thoughts vanish and I wonder if you could say anything about that.

R: Where a thought vanishes is: when the next thought begins to arise arise, the previous thought has already disappeared. But you can't usually experience the vanishing of your thoughts purely by itself. Because if you are aware of that, you are not seeing the vanishing of the thought, but rather you are into sustaining it. Vanishing thought is purely in terms of contrast with another idea coming up, and the previous thought, you know, subsided.

Q: You said at the beginning that you gave us two types of meditation and one was just to be; and now we're just to be, but with breathing out. I don't see exactly what the difference was. At the beginning you told us, you told some of us, through your interviews with us and everything, that we should just sit, just be. You told other people to watch the breath. And now you're saying, it seems to me like you're telling us just to be, but be with the breath too.

R: Well that's saying the same thing. Some people find it easy to do without the breathing, provided with a short sitting practice. They find it easy to do because you have no hassles with anything. Just, you know, just be there. And traditionally that's the outcome of the breathing practice, breathing technique. The shikan taza practice of Japanese tradition is the same thing. Also, in the Tibetan tradition, the formless meditation is actually without breathing, referred to as really formless, and some people find it easy to pick up that. You see in the interviews and the practices that people so far have been going through, particularly in terms of interviews, it's not so much giving meditation instruction as such, so far what I've been doing, but it is inspiring what you can do with yourself. If you suggest to somebody, count your breathing or just do the breathing, it is bringing them down rather than raising them up. And actually people have managed to do so; except when they come across, you know, long-term sitting practice.

Q: Do you want us then to, if we find it easier to forget the breath, you know, to just --

R: Well, I think in situations like this, it would be advisable to start with the breathing and then at some point breathing, you know, falls away and you just go along without any breathing awareness. That seems to be the best, so there are some systematic things happening.

Q: Rinpoche, I will get that sense of well-being for a moment. Then all of a sudden this thing happens to me like: "uh-oh, what am I doing wrong because nothing hurts. You know, where does that come from?

R: Well, you see, that's the whole thing. I mean, you don't have to be afraid of that at all, you know. The whole idea of meditation at this point is not particulary to create dhyana states of ecstasy or absorption at all. But a sense of being is the problem that we have. We never experienced a sense of being before. And the meditation practices are to arouse your trust of something.

Q: The point is that I'm just not trusting that space or whatever?

R: Yeah, you could afford to treat yourself, rather than the whole thing should be completely punishment or something, torturing process.

Q: It feels more surprising than feeling that I have to punish. I mean you are sort of struggling along.

R: The discipline is keep going rather than create problems for oneself every minute.

Q: Yesterday when you were defining the eightfold consciousness you said it was a sort of sparkiness of reassuring oneself that one exists. Is that the same sense of being that you're talking about here on the outbreath?

R: Something like that; but the sense of well-being is a mishmash of a lot of things. It's the basic feeling of being totally egoless and also some pinches of the eightfold consciousness and a little touch of deception as well. So if you tried to define that, it would be too complicated to do. But it happens so far that we <u>can</u> afford to indulge ourselves into it. That's much safer.

Q: The sense of cool boredom that can arise, is that the same kind of boredom that exists in basic space?

R: Yeah. Very much so. Like the mountains would experience.

Q: Do you experience that then only when you are no longer projecting

onto basic space?

R: Yeah. Because otherwise it couldn't become boredom; it would be entertainment, still.

Q: But still, at the same time, there's no particular cessation of thought processes?

R: Not necessarily, not necessarily. But thought processes become less entertaining and they are transparent.

Q: Can cool boredom then be equated with hopelessness?

R: Very much so. That is hopelessness in fact in its most absolute level.

SECOND FOUNDATION: MINDFULNESS OF LIVELIHOOD

Abstract: Sense of respect. Second foundation of mindfulness: survival or livelihood. Well-being: inapplicable notions; unconditioned well-being, including irritation. Survival. Sharpening of the senses.

I would like to further emphasize what we discussed in the early part of my talk yesterday on the sense of reverence and respect. It is something more than just purely attitude; it is something that one actually experiences in terms of one's relationship to oneself and the world. And that experience is being able to see the level of contact, the process of contact with the phenomenal world. The contact generally is divided into preparing, proceeding and touching. And actually one can experience that sense of magic or sense of majesty, sense of beauty, and sense of well-being not only in the meditative state alone but in ordinary states as well.

That leads us to the second foundation of mindfulness, which is livelihood. In Tibetan it is called tso wa. Tso means surviving; tso wa means the "sense of survival." Having already related with the bodily sensations and sense perceptions of the eight types of consciousness in the state of meditation practice, there is a further venturing out, into the level of a further sense of well-being in the practice of meditation.

Let me describe this idea of well-being clearly. There are several types of well-being, notions of well-being. One sense of well-being is that you are secure therefore you can afford to relax, you can experience a sense of well-being. Another type of well-being is that you can venture out more because there is a basic sense of security operating, so you have no hesitation as to how to extend yourself out. And the third type of well-being is well-being in the sense that you are ready to defend yourself or conquer others -- a sense of power, so therefore a sense of well-being. Then there is another type of well-being, which is that physically one feels that one is on top of the world, feels extremely healthy and comfortable -- you have just had a good meal and the clothes you're wearing are elegant and comfortable; the company you have is exciting, amiable; everything is completely secure. It is similar to somebody who is in a ski resort, I suppose, and actually skiing. The idea of vacation.

When we talk about well-being in terms of a meditative state, we are not talking about any of these at all. It's a question of appreciating one's own basic state of being, rather than well-being conditioned by that or this. The analogy given in the scriptures is that well-being of body is like a mountain -- no mist, no rain, simply majestically

solid. Well-being of speech is like a string instrument disengaged from the strings, so that the string instrument doesn't have any desire to communicate with the musician any more. And well-being of mind is referred to as a lake, a great lake without interruptions, with no waves, no wind; just simply being, majestically. No ripples, no waves.

Those three types of well-being are referred to in the scriptures as chok jak. Chok has this feeling of perkiness, sort of a sense of cheerfulness. And often chok is also a synonym for a ladle, in the soup. The ladle is uniquely curved and shaped; it has its own self-expressive perkiness. It's bigger than a spoon, but not too big, so as to be a cauldron. It's something that you can handle, but at the same time it's definite; you can hold it in your hand. And jak means simply "rest," "put down." So those two in combination make the sense of well-being. Chok jak. And chok jak nam sum, the three types of chok jak, are the body, speech, mind -- like the mountain, the musical instrument, and the lake.

So in this case it is a basic sense of well-being, rather than the conditional sense of well-being, which is certain conditions provoking a sense of well-being, comfort, entertainment, anything at all. And this basic sense of well-being is also the sense of survival or livelihood of the second mindfulness.

Physical sensations -- take the example of an itch on your shoulder while one is sitting meditating. The automatic reaction is to scratch and get it over with. But there is another way of relating with that. The question is not to get away from it, but to relate with that particular itch. It becomes an expression of the sense of well-being. In other words, basically if you feel irritated and tense, feeding irritation and tenseness further by doing something else does not help; not at all. Whereas just relating with irritation itself is an expression of that survival, for the very fact that you are capable of experiencing irritation. Your psychological state is fine, refined, sensitive and intelligent; you can tell certain-certain such-and-such irritations are arising and happening in your body or state of mind, whatever. The sense of well-being in this case is relating with the physical sensations and psychological tension as an expression of well-being.

This is by no means a myth or hypothetical ideology. It is true that such a thing can develop as an example of the three types of well-being, body and speech and mind. There's no point in suppressing any notion of the sense of survival which comes up in our mind, the sense of security which comes up in the mind in sitting meditation practice. That in itself could be regarded as a sense of well-being. Usually, unless you feel completely comfortable, you can't feel the

subtle irritations.

And similarly, when there is a basic sense of mindfulness of the body in meditation practice, working with the breathing and so forth, then there's also a sense of mindfulness of breathing which extends itself out into a subtle sense of -- some kind of effort in a way, that the concentration has to be maintained and the breathing has to be maintained, has to be kept alive. That little sense of effort is an expression of the sense of well-being, sense of survival, which is necessary and which has to develop. Otherwise, if you have no reference point, none whatsoever, and you are completely, so to speak, spaced out, then you don't have a chance to experience well-being, nor do you have a chance to develop good meditation practice either.

So the idea is that trying to achieve a high ideal, perfect meditative state is the problem. The sense of perfection in this case is the hang-up. In other words, any awkward situations that occur in the state of meditation practice are regarded as mindfulness of well-being or the second mindfulness practice.

This is a very essential kind of experience. When one's mind is made relatively tranquil and relatively quiet by means of breathing technique, one begins to discover the subtleties of sight, subtleties of smell and feelings and hearing; everything begins to arise that sharpens one's consciousness. And it's a question of being able to relate with that thoroughly, completely.

Of course, we have practices of a similar type, like the sensory awareness practices developed recently in this country, using the example of Hinayana meditation practices. The difference between that type of practice and this practice of the second foundation of mindfulness is that, in the case of sensory awareness practices, you don't have, to begin with, a proper mindfulness of the body, and there's no technique involved, such as breathing. The only technique is purely to jump into the level of the second foundation of mindfulness -- of the physical sense of well-being, survival -- which then cuts us off from actually communicating with the sense of what the body is, and actually relating with the six types of sense perceptions.

You do not deliberately try to arouse your sense perceptions by stroking your body or extending your arm, grasping a stone, or listening to the brook, or playing sensual music. But all those situations do happen in the midst of nowhere. You may be sitting in a quiet uninspiring room, sitting and meditating. There's no source of entertainment, none whatsoever. But at the same time, when your mind is completely clear and simplfied purely into the techniques of breathing meditation, you begin to discover an entirely new world. That world

is extraordinarily beautiful and colorful, bright and loud. And you find that you are completely bombarded with all these sense perceptions. Sense consciousnesses become highly sharpened.

People do develop those situations by artificial means, such as taking LSD or mescaline, peyote and so forth. They do get these experiences. Such bright color and vision that they haven't seen before; this time they begin to see it. But the problem is that we know this is the product of a certain particular drug, and we are so intrigued that we become inspired to explore further and further and further until one's whole conscious perceptions become numb, and then you lose track of it.

A meditation practice of this kind does not have such a frivolous and numbing quality at all, because physically and psychologically you are completely well-balanced. You are not influenced by drugs or dogma or the bliss or whatever. You are at the level of being extraordinarily bored and extremely intelligent, because the boredom and intelligence both act as real clarity. The boredom is the cool fresh air, mountain air, and the intelligence is the moderator or the spokesman that notes the particular events which takes place in one's sensory world.

So the sense of mindfulness of livelihood is an extremely important part of the four foundations of mindfulness. We could say that the first one, the mindfulness of the body, is establishing the basic ground of discipline and finding the techniques. And the second one we could say is -- having established one's situation and having already related with the techniques -- rediscovering a brand new world, which is the old one already. Old new world.

We could create this kind of experience in meditation. It is the experience of prajna in some ways, but let us not trip out on that at this point. We have a long way to go before we discuss that. Nevertheless there is a hint of it. And it is by no means an extraordinary experience; it is a very ordinary experience. When we sit, settle down on our cushion, sit and meditate, we begin to discover a seemingly new approach to sight, smell and so forth. And if we relate with them more, we then achieve a certain discipline. The awareness of breathing does not have to become laborious any more. It's just self-existing breathing which happens and you just go along with it.

The analogy for this particular type of meditation is the three chokjaks -- that of the mountain, the musical instrument, and the ocean or the big lake. Those are the analogies for it.

Maybe we could have some discussion on this, and go on to the other two mindfulness practices in the near future.

Discussion

Q: I don't understand the word "livelihood" exactly and what you mean by it. Usually I associate the word livelihood with earning a living, having a job. Livelihood doesn't make sense.

R: Well, that's the same thing. In this case, it is another form of earning a living. You are working on your survival situation, appreciating the survival situation that you have. Sense perceptions are appreciated more and you feel that what goes on with your body and your state of consciousness are worthy of respect and there are further subtleties involved. So it is rediscovering your world.

Q: And what survives? Is that the meditative state?

R: Not necessarily. It's appreciating the survival-ness of it.

Q: Well it's hard to equate survival with anything you've ever said before. Usually one thinks in terms of letting go, death of the ego; there is nothing to survive.

R: Well, yeah. That's purely from the philosophical level of the greater vision. But nevertheless, there is consciousness, there is body. We are not concerned with the greater security. That's precisely what I meant when I was describing the wrong types of well-being. And this is the right type of well-being, which fundamentally may be egoless and free from all the dualistic notions of all kinds, but nevertheless there is a personal experience of immediateness. You can't negate it if you taste a good cup of coffee. You can't say that there is no coffee, that there is no me to taste; there is such a thing. It's that kind of actual immediate appreciation. The meditation practice is to learn to appreciate the immediateness of what's happening right there.

Q: So there <u>is</u> something to hang onto there.

R: Well, obviously, there's world and you. That doesn't mean to say that we're going against the Buddha's teaching of egolessness. Yeah, there is something, definitely. There is the working basis of the Path. And there is this magic that I've been talking about.

Q: I don't understand why the first foundation of body in particular guards against the possibility of an egotistic meditation in later stages. What special quality of preparation does it have which would prevent meditation from having an ego quality to it? You said that, because we've gone through the foundation of body, there's no possibility of getting into an ego-centered or egotistic meditation later on. Why is it really that that is the correct preparation?

R: It is so because you don't have to build anything at that point. You just pay attention to what is happening. And that is particularly the technique of identification with the breathing, which is a very real thing and has no suggestion of anything other than just simply paying attention to your breathing, your walking. Which simplifies a whole lot. There's no security other than that -- that you breathe, that you sit.

Q: Rinpoche, would this be the meditation from which you could study the fact that it speaks about in the Abhidharma -- that you can start studying the actual processes that go on when the sensing of an object occurs?

R: Yes. Particularly at this stage; the second foundation of mindfulness is particularly appreciating the details. But in this case appreciating the details of what goes on in one's own body and mind and speech alone -- rather than adventuring into the world outside.

Q: So the part of the Abhidharma which would study things outside would come in the further practice of meditation.

R: Yeah.

Q: In the three approaches to shamatha -- the being aware of the arising of thoughts, the dwelling of thoughts and the vanishing of thoughts -- I can relate to being aware of the vanishing of thoughts because at that point you kind of come down and you notice the difference. But I have no idea of how you could be aware of the dwelling of thoughts, if at the time the thought is happening you're so completely immersed in it that noticing it would cause it to end.

R: Not necessarily. There is a sense of being self-conscious of your thought.

Q: If you were doing that, wouldn't you be permitting your thought to go on so that you could look at it rather than going back to the technique?

R: You see, the whole thing is a very light touch, rather than a definite one. You just have fraction-of-a-second flashes of the continuation of the thoughts, as well as the arising of thoughts. You see them pop up and you see them happening and you see them vanishing -- which doesn't take a long time, particularly.

Q: And that kind of flash wouldn't be enough to remove the energy of the thought?

R: It would. You see, thought can only vanish if there is a light touch of awareness. If there is a heavier touch of awareness on thoughts, then

you're doing something quite different. So the light touch is what's called mindfulness. You don't have to be mindful and hang onto it or, you know, heavyhandedly come out, but just bare attention, purely bare attention.

Q: Would you approach that from the vanishing working back or--

R: Any way. It doesn't have to go through that sequence necessarily. The whole thing is, you know, when we begin to put it into words, it sounds like a very definite practice of some kind. But actually -- particularly in the area of the awareness that we are talking about, mindfulness that we are talking about -- it is just a little emphasis without pressing on it. Just touching. Awareness is just purely touching and relating with it. Fundamentally not owning it particularly, but just, kind of, a little move.

Q: And that's like watching the breath -- just appreciating it, observing it, rather than--

R: Yeah, that seems to be the problem that we are having so far in our circle here; we have difficulty with the breathing because we are trying to remold, reshape, remold -- like dough. Then, of course, once you begin to further reinforce it, breathing becomes too complicated.

Q: When the "new world" starts emerging, doesn't that kill the cool boredom? When the new world starts appearing, how can you be bored?

R: Well, again you see, the point is that you are not getting into the world and beginning to dance with it particularly at all; you're just purely paying attention to what's happening. It's a very distant approach. And because it is a distant approach and because the discovery is so precise and so good, so obvious, then looking for further entertainment becomes irrelevant, and you are sort of thrown back to your boredom. But boredom doesn't become irritatingly bored. Boredom becomes just realizing that instigating further possibilities doesn't work. In other words, the sense of boredom is realizing you can't trick yourself any more. It's a very light touch.

Q: I'm still confused about what's supposed to be actually happening when I'm sitting. I sit and I watch the breath. Usually I either focus on the breath or I'm distracted. And I'm not as aware of my surroundings as I am of the breath. And I'm wondering about, you know, you described ways to be mindful of the thoughts, and you described becoming aware of your sense perceptions. Does this take place simultaneously with awareness of the breath? Does it take place between being aware of the breath? Does it take place after sitting meditation?

R: Well, that happens at the same time as your breathing, awareness of breathing. There's a sense that you're sitting there and breathing. And there is a sense of awareness of totality. And the more light the touch of awareness on the breathing, that much other areas begin to arise as well. I think one of the problems we have is that if you try to put too much emphasis on the breathing and make that heavy-duty, then you will kill the whole thing. And you find yourself breathing deliberately, very heavily, and you become very tight and tense. It becomes like a machine. So the idea is that awareness or mindfulness breathing is a very light touch, that almost breathing doesn't exist. You go out with the breathing and breathing dissolves. It's a mere suggestion of 25 per cent effort. And then a lot of possibilities arise around you. As you become one with the breathing, your mind is not completely, one-pointedly involved with the breathing alone. You begin to feel the effect of the clarity; the breathing becomes a working base. Like if you don't have bodily defects in functioning, then you can walk easily, move your arms easily, wink easily, breathe easily. And you can do other things; you can think in the meantime as well. And the whole thing could coordinate together. So it's a question of just a light touch on the breathing, which would then allow other areas to be explored. Meditation then becomes total experience. Do you follow?

Q: I suppose I'm too conscientious. But usually I'm very aware of the shifts in my consciousness. I'll say to myself: "Now just take a look at the trees; now go back to my breath."

R: Do you remember the analogy that Buddha gave the musician? He wouldn't tighten his string and he wouldn't loosen his string? You edited that part of it.

Q: It sounds as though what you're describing is somewhat more passive.

R: Well, yeah, it is. That's why it's called shamatha, "development of peace." It's a very light touch, you know. It's not regarded as a project, particularly.

Q: It sounds like you're allowing awareness to be whatever it's going to be.

R: Precisely, yeah. Precisely.

Q: The breath is just there.

R: Breath is just there. Yeah, that's right.

Q: Just as you're aware that the breath is just there, would your awareness tend then to divide itself into six other fields?

R: You could, you could. But still there's no problem -- there's the unifying factor of well-being there always.

Q: Well, are you more interested in general, fuzzy well-being, or in a sort of light but precise observation of six other things.

R: Light but precise observation, yeah.

Q: Of specific areas?

R: Yeah. You see, one of the problems that we have is that we feel we have to involve ourselves in things 100 per cent, if not 200. And a very interesting thing is that in meditation, you begin to discover that we don't have to be involved in things 100 per cent at once and become very heavyhanded; we can radiate our consciousness in all directions and be able to detect every area.

Q: Should attention to smell and taste, feeling, etc., be equally light? And equally going on with the breathing?

R: Yeah. Equally light, yeah. It depends on whether your approach is lighter at the beginning; you have more to go then. Which makes it complete, total. Otherwise it will be lopsided; you thought you were sitting perfectly and when you get up at the end of the meditation you find that you have pins-and-needles which you never noticed before.

Q: It would really be a mistake, then, to look out the window at the mountains and say, "Oh, I mustn't do that." Because that's really making it very heavy.

R: Well there's no reason to look at the mountains at this point. No reason to look at the mountains. Everything's right there.

Q: I know, but, uh, (laughter) but I would, say, find myself telling myself that--

R: Oh I see, yeah. Well, you see, meditation becomes an imprisonment for you, rather than an expression of freedom. I think too much seriousness becomes an obstacle at that point.

Q: Now that you've given us a clearer sense of how it actually should be -- at times when it's perfectly obvious that we're nowhere even close to it, is it worthwhile then to make a distinct break of just saying I'm going to take a rest for two minutes, or is it still better to stay with what might be a very strange or irritating state that you know couldn't possibly be what Rinpoche talked about. I mean, in other words, just to break off something of that nature; or to still keep working with it in the hope that gradually it will sort itself out.

R: Well, you see, for one thing if you are not working too hard, your meditation becomes less demanding. You can get into it after a few seconds and you can live up to your timing without any difficulties. Unless the problem comes from physically not being used to sitting for that much time. That could be a problem, because it's purely a biological, physical thing; even when we drive, we work very hard trying to stay on the road. You're physically sitting down, but still it is work. And apart from that, in our society we never sit without doing anything, nothing whatsoever, for more than half an hour, and if you do something, you feel guilty that you should be doing something else. Therefore physically getting used to it might be difficult in the beginning. But apart from that, there's no hang-ups coming up; any irritations could be further regenerating meditation at that point.

Q: I have the same difficulty that Michael has with the inbreath. Part of it comes from the feeling that if I relax and let my mind, you know, as you say, extend your awareness in all directions, I'm as much aware of the inbreath as the outbreath -- not particularly more so but about equally. I find that I have to guide my attention to try and become aware of the outbreath, which, of course, creates all kinds of problems.

R: Outbreathing is a way of communicating to the sense perceptions. It's like extending out your tentacles and leaving at that level. And inbreathing is just allowing room, space, to be. I think that if your approach is not too heavyhanded, there's no conflict.

Q: I have a really archaeologically old problem, which is that I have my meditation and I have your meditation. That is to say, I was meditating a long time before I met you and I got to trust a certain kind of meditation, or not even any kind of thought-out method, but just what happened. And for the past three years I've been feeling guilty about this form of meditation. So I try and counteract this by following the breathing. And if I do this light touch that you're talking about -- which is obviously the intelligent way of doing it -- then these various habits of mine, what I consider in some way bad habits of mine, reassert themselves. Which seems to be similar to the Sakya habits of following the movement of the breath all over the body, etc. If I take a light touch, then this kind of absorption automatically asserts itself and it's very powerful.

R: So?

Q: So there's no chance that one will remain in this light touch of boredom. In other words, there are all kinds of attractive directions involved.

R: Sure, in theory, yeah. But in practice it will be entirely different.

Q: Well, when is that going to happen?

R: Next time you sit.

Q: So I should observe this dichotomy between my meditation and your meditation?

R: I think it will have to be self-liberated by practice, rather than trying to draw a line. As long as your approach is light and right there. That kind of meditative state is actually happening right now, while we're talking, at this very moment. There is a sense of room and people -- there are a lot of us here -- and you are listening to a particular voice which, it could be said, is like the breathing. At the same time, there is expansiveness. That is a real, ordinary thing, a very ordinary thing that happens to us, which we can't actually work with. When we begin to decide to sit and meditate, we try to become somebody else -- that seems to be the problem. That is why the term or idea of shi-ne, the shamatha, "peaceful," and the term "liberation" are used a great deal; because it is already there. You just have to tune into that kind of state of being. Particular timing and particular sitting periods make it more definite; they draw the line -- that it could actually be made into part of the path, made into discipline. And you can invoke the magic involved in it.

Q: It was my understanding that you said attention given to the breath should also be given equally to activities of the body, speech and mind. Is that right?

R: Not necessarily. It happens. The body is just a sense of solidness. Speech is the movement and the mind is sort of the overall intelligence that goes on. But you don't have to try to split hairs at that point.

Q: What I mean is that you said 100 per cent of your attention doesn't go just to your breath, but you also might feel your thoughts--

R: Well, if you decide to pay 100 per cent attention to the breathing, then other problems arise. Whereas the idea was just to pay a certain amount of attention, like foreground vision, to the breathing, and the background just happens.

Q: But still somewhat the focal point is on the breathing? If you find you're spacing out, the focal point is still on the breathing, rather than some other attention spot?

R: On the breathing, yeah. Otherwise, if you begin to cultivate the

others, that becomes very irregular and confusing. Because once you pay attention to a particular sensation and you think you are cultivating a relationship with that, then suddenly it drops you and you have to find another one to latch onto. So the breathing is the ongoing situation; the rest comes and goes.

Q: Can you say something about relating to drowsiness?

R: That's also connected with effort. If you put a great deal of effort particularly into the visual material, if you put too much attention into exploring visual sensations, that automatically creates a sense of tiredness and a sense of needing room to rest and sleep. I think you can't do anything on the spot when you're the slave of your own doing. But you can work in the long run developing light-touch mindfulness, rather than heavyhanded mindfulness.

Q: You said that this type of meditation occured after you had already been able to study the eight types of consciousness. You said in the first part of this lecture that you can see them in the first kind of mindfulness, breathing mindfulness. And that confused me a little bit, because it would seem to me, at this time when the new view of the phenomenal world would start to occur, during the second kind of mindfulness, that that would be when you would start to see at least those five of the eight consciousnesses. So I was a little confused when you said you could see the eight types of consciousness during the first stage of mindfulness, of breathing.

R: Well, you do relate with them, but in the second level it becomes more clear, because you have established your relationship and you feel secure with what you're doing. You have an ongoing relationship with the eight types of consciousness already at the first level. And then second level is more an exploration of those consciousnesses, the subtleties of them.

Q: How does this fit in with the nine yanas -- the two types of mindfulness that we've had so far? How does it fit in with the nine yanas and the other description we've had of the five paths?

R: We have nine and we have five, four and eight. (Laughs). As far as the five paths go, the simple shamatha meditation is the first and second paths -- the path of accumulation and the path of unification. And in terms of the yanas, it is the first yana and maybe the second yana -- Shravakayana and Pratyekayana, the level of Hinayana meditation practice.

Q: So the two types of mindfulness are within shamatha? Both of them that you discussed?

R: Well, there are four types of mindfulness practices. They are not practices, but four stages, shall we say -- the four foundations of mindfulness practice.

Q: So they're within shamatha?

R: They're within shamatha, but they could also extend to the vipashyana practice as well.

Q: And what you were discussing today, does that have a partial entrance into--

R: No, no. This is purely shamatha, because it only involves your own body and mind and you never have made an attempt to go out more than your body. So it is still restricted to your physical body sensations and consciousness.

Q: Would it still be within the path of accumulation then?

R: Accumulation, yeah. That is the difference between the practice of the ordinary person as opposed to even an Arhat or Bodhisattva.

Q: At times when there's relative quiet within the mind, I was thinking more on retreat than here -- it doesn't seem to happen here -- the sense perceptions sort of sift themselves out, you know. Like I've noticed that sounds will become very precise, and they seem to occupy all the attention. There's almost no awareness of touch or visual things. What's that?

R: I think that if you try to fight it, then that particular consciousness fights back at you, to get acknowledgement, to make you pay more attention to it. The whole thing is that there is a kind of political warfare going on inside you and the eight types of consciousness are fighting among themselves over who is your favorite one.

Q: I'm trying to get a little better idea of the mindfulness of survival. Would you agree that, in meditation, it is taking pleasure simply in being alive? Would that be a way to define it also?

R: Well, it depends on how you do it. Not just: "For what I'm about to receive, may the Lord be truly thankful." But there's a sense of subtleties. Not only are you appreciating it, in the conventional sense, but you feel that it is your command, that you have things at your disposal and you are appreciating the details of it. It's more a question of appreciating the details than the larger sense that something is given to you and therefore you should appreciate it. Like it is a good day today, you know.

Q: It's a gourmet sense of oneself rather than a crude one.

R: That's it. You got it.

Q: In this kind of beginning of acceptance of self, there is a kind of loss of self-consciousness and that seems to manifest itself in a feeling of much broader possibilities. Now is that well-being or is that ego?

R: I think that's well-being, definitely. There's a sense of appreciation, spacious appreciation, rather than hungry appreciation that what you've got is yours and therefore you should consume it. But some kind of appreciation of spaciousness. In other words, the whole environment is absolutely unparanoid. There is lots of room for everything, including your own appreciation.

We might have to close at this point. It's three minutes to five.

THIRD FOUNDATION: MINDFULNESS OF EFFORT

Abstract: Third Foundation: Mindfulness of Effort. Right Effort: not excitable or just dutiful. Ordinary effort. The abstract watcher, sudden jerk, reminder, leap. Danger of entertainment. Working hard as the groundwork environment; inspiration to the practice.

Since the next foundation of mindfulness is effort, we might feel that there is some kind of contradiction in the sense of well-being which has developed, and the sense of organic familiarity, organic appreciation of the sitting practice. Seemingly contradictory, you would say. We had the same kind of question last time: how could we develop a sense of effort and a sense of well-being at the same time?

I think effort is something very extraordinary. There is an effort to achieve something and we try to struggle, try to get through something. Struggle, a sense of struggle, and pushing. Once this struggle has picked up momentum, then it speeds along in the fashion of a roadrunner. In fact, the only problem is slowing down; we have to put on the brake.

Then there is another effort: you're dragging along with a tremendous attitude of meaningfulness, seriousness. There's no sense of uplift, or of inspiration in the work, but there's a sense of being dutiful. (I'm talking about general effort, by the way.) One just tags along and tries to eat up one's life like a worm inside a tree, slowly, surely, struggling through. That probably has some similarity, if we just look at the ordinary effort, with Right Effort. It is the example of a tortoise-walk, or the walk of an elephant also seemingly not excitable, just slowly trodding along. But there's also some sense of surveying the area, which makes it different from a worm making a hole through wood, who has no way to take a panoramic view. It just bites whatever comes in front of its mouth and chews through; and however much you chew through -- that your body, your belly gets through -- that is your space. In the case of the walk of an elephant or the walk of a tortoise, it is seemingly serious and slow, but at the same time it has the quality of being cunning or playful -- but still slow.

In the case of the effort we are discussing, of the third mindfulness practice, we're not talking about dancing with the situation, or being completely inspired by sitting practice of meditation so that you don't even have to sit, but sitting just comes to you; such an attitude is not quite mature enough. If we are looking for inspiration which will lead us to forget our pain and keep on bringing us back to our practice naturally, without any effort, then it ceases to become Right Effort but it becomes entertainment, which is the roadrunner's fashion. In the case of Right Effort, the main technique that developed is constantly

bringing oneself back, and bringing back, and bringing back to mindfulness of the breathing. When our mind begins to wander, we begin to realize it, and then bring it back.

The interesting point of bringing back is that you don't have to prepare and hold and drag back, as if you're trying to prevent a naughty child from doing something terrible and dragging it back. The interesting thing about this effort is that some kind of trick is involved as far as the sitting practice of meditation is concerned. When I say trick, it's a technique that is extremely effective and extremely useful, not only at the time of sitting meditation, but that also applies to the day-to-day living situations, post-meditation experiences, or meditation in action. Instead of trying to bring back by deliberate effort, back to the body or back to the consciousness, here-me -- that seems to be going against the general rhythm of the expanding, going out with the breath. It seems to be directly contradictory. It's not a question of bringing back from that point of view, but bringing back in the sense of bringing down from the dreamworld into reality -- you're breathing and you're sitting and that's what you're doing and you should be doing that completely, fully, wholeheartedly. But there's a way to do that which we might call the "abstract watcher." The watcher doesn't have an aim or goal; the watcher is just being aware of itself, a sudden flash of the watcher's being <u>there.</u> Even at that point you don't think in terms of "I must get back to the breath," or "I must try and get away from these thoughts." You don't have to have a concrete and logical mind to repeat to itself the purpose of sitting practice. You don't have to have that. There is a general sense that something's happening here and you're brought back, suddenly, even without a name, without an idea why, how, where; just a quick glimpse of changing the tone. That is the core of Right Effort, the mindfulness practice.

The mindfulness of effort therefore cannot be manufactured. It comes along when there is a general discipline which sets the general pattern of the sitting practice. Once you have that attitude, that idea behind the whole thing, then there's something which reminds you -- <u>that</u>, <u>that</u>, <u>that</u>. "That what?" doesn't apply any more. "What is that?" doesn't apply any more. Just <u>that</u>, which triggers an entirely new realm of thinking, a new state of consciousness, that brings you back automatically to sitting practice of mindfulness of breathing, or general awareness of the well-being. So that kind of effort is instantaneous effort, instant effort.

One of the problems of ordinary effort is that effort becomes so dreary, and stagnant. Any kind of effort we apply to ourselves has to develop subconscious verbalization. "I must go and help somebody because it is half-past one, or I must watch such-and-such in case anything happens." Ordinary effort thinks "it is a good thing for me to do. It is good for me to perform this duty" -- it's always verbalized. Any kind of duty

we might have is always verbalized, though the speed of our mind, the speed of conceptual mind is so fast we don't even see the verbalization. But the feeling of the contents is clearly felt, which is still conditioned effort, and that makes things very boring and extremely unsuccessful in the long run, such as in the practice of meditation, which is life's work. In the case of just a three-month job or waiting for your retirement at 60 years old, in such cases it might be okay; one can apply such verbalized conditioned effort. You might win a gold medal or what-not. But in this case it's a life's work. You cease to sit and meditate in this life at the last breath that runs out of your body on your deathbed. So it's life's work. And if we have to apply such effort constantly, all the time, not even having vacations, then if ordinary effort is involved, the meditation practice becomes so stupid and so confused that one wonders why we are doing such a thing, why on earth we started this in the beginning. All kinds of confusing things begin to pop up. The reason why is that we use the wrong type of effort, which confuses us, and makes us extraordinarily resentful. It's aggravating, uninteresting, and so forth.

But don't misunderstand again. I don't mean to say that this Right Effort will make your meditation interesting or entertaining, particularly, but this kind of effort would keep things completely balanced. One begins to appreciate rather than enjoy in terms of pleasure. This abstract effort takes place in a fraction of a second, without any name or any idea with it, just a jerk, a sudden change of course. The rest of the effort is like a tortoise's walk, step-by-step going slowly, observing the situation around us. So as has been said in the shastras, the hardworking is to develop prajna of virya, is to develop appreciation or joy in the practice. So if there is less effort <u>for</u> the effort, then effort becomes self-existing. Effort stands on its own two feet, so to speak, rather than that effort needs another effort to trigger it off; then the whole thing becomes manufactured.

You could call this effort, this sudden glimpse, this abstract thing, "leap" if you like, or "jerk" or "sudden reminder"; or you can call it "amazement," "sudden, abrupt, amazement." Sometimes it could also be referred to as panic, panic without conditions, unconditioned panic, because of the change of course -- something comes to you and changes the whole course. The idea is not to try to maintain that sudden instant mindfulness and hold onto it, try to cultivate it, but to get back to meditation rather than nursing the reminder; instead of entertaining the messenger you should get into what the messenger has to say.

So that seems to be one of the most important things. That kind of effort goes a long way, from the Hinayana practice up to Tantric practices. That kind of sudden flash, instantaneous reminding trick, so to speak, is universal in all practices of meditation, even up to the Maha Ati level in the Tantrayana. Therefore, the effort becomes

the most important point in the practice. We could say mindfulness of body is the general setting; bringing meditation into the geography of our life. And mindfulness of livelihood is making a personal relationship with the meditation practice, relating with the practice of meditation as something to do with us personally. Mindfulness of effort makes all those -- mindfulness of body and mindfulness of livelihood -- become more valid, more workable, further workable, that you're clearly on the Path. The effort is like the wheel of a chariot, which actually makes the connection between the chariot and the road, the actual connection which makes things move, things proceed. It's like the oar in a boat which has a connection to the boat as well as to the water. So this kind of effort, or reminder, or sudden mindfulness is one of the most important, extremely important, connections definitely to the practice.

Somehow we have a problem here -- we cannot bring about that kind of effort just by hoping a flash will come to us and we'll be reminded, and until then we'll leave it up to that thing to happen to us. We have to set some kind of general alarm system, so to speak, or general atmosphere. Effort is important; effort in the sense of being diligent and not having the faintest notion of looking for any form of entertainment, none whatsoever. One has to give something up. Unless we give up reservations, it would be virtually impossible to develop that kind of instantaneous effort, to have it dawn on us. So it is extremely important to have respect and a sense of appreciation, willing to work hard.

There's another word for working hard (suggestions from listeners ...) Actually the term virya in the paramitas, btshon 'krus (tsön dru), is commonly translated as "energy." But tsön dru is not purely energy alone; it's energetically working hard, actually applying work, hardworking. The sense of effort here is not looking for entertainment; but in some sense one can entertain oneself by the very uninspiring situation that occurs in the practice of sitting meditation. There's a sense of appreciation of actually not having lavish, resourceful entertainment available; therefore one feels completely secure and grounded, including your own boredom and so forth. Particularly it becomes workable if a person has developed a daily, weekly, monthly schedule. Then a person begins to find it easy to relate with that kind of daily involvement in strenuous effort, which is actually subtly entertaining in a way. But it isn't entertaining as far as sowing further karmic seeds of wandering mind, frivolousness, confusion and so forth.

The problem with entertainment seems to be that you are not only entertained, but at the same time you become weakened, softened, unable to handle the situation next time. One entertainment makes you addicted to the next entertainment and unable to face the pain or suffering, whatever comes up, next time. That's what is traditionally known as bad

karmic creation. It is regarded as bad karma because it sows a further seed and it encourages further involvement with the samsaric world, and not being able to cut the root of samsara. So any practice without effort, any lack of effort or impatience, brings us into further creation of karmic imprisonment.

So effort, particularly in the third foundation of mindfulness, is extremely important. If we have a sense of the virtuousness of the effort being important, and of diligence being an extremely powerful thing -- if we are willing to give birth to such inspiration, if we have that kind of conviction already -- then that spontaneous abstract flash of the reminder occurs more easily than in the ordinary case, where we don't want to bother working hard unless it comes to us. That seems to be one of the important points: having a sense of appreciation. It is said to be similar to falling in love. When you appreciate a person you particularly care for, you are in love with that person, somehow or other, because your whole attitude is open toward that person; you get a very sudden flash, not only of the person by name and what this person looks like -- those are afterthoughts -- but you get an abstract flash of your lover as being that which comes into your mind first. Then you might ponder on it, enjoy your daydreams, or entertain yourself by thinking about that person in detail. But that's an afterthought. There is always that kind of a result of the openness. Something flashes, like in the midst of water a bubble comes up; there are sudden flashes of that and me which happen. The analogy's been used a great deal in Buddhist tradition of a person in love. It also talks about a hunter who hunts for animals, who doesn't have to think of a stag or a mountain goat or a bear or anything particularly, but he is looking for that. So when he walks, hears some sound, some subtle possibility of finding an animal to shoot, he doesn't think of which animal he's going to find, but just the feeling of that comes up. Anybody in any kind of complete involvement at the hunter's level, or the lover's level, or the meditator's level or whatever, has that kind of openness which brings about sudden flashes; an almost magical sensation of thatness, without a name, without concept, without idea. That is the most important part of the awareness -- awareness happens afterwards. This is the instant awareness of effort, concentrated effort, and awareness follows after that. Having disowned that sudden experience, then awareness occurs afterwards, very slowly, and brings back to level.

Discussion

Q: I'm confused about coming back to something. From what you say, I get the impression that the flash of mindfulness itself is what is important, rather than what you are snapping back to. But it seems that nevertheless you're going back to your breathing, let's say. But also your breathing, as we said before, you're only putting 25 percent effort

on that; in other words there's a big field of variation. You're following your breathing, but you can be following your breathing in many different states of mind. What I'm uncertain about is what you have to come back from. In other words, what kind of states are taboo. What kinds of things are mere hypnosis and not real mindfulness. What kind of thing is entertainment and what's not entertainment -- I can't tell. Specifically, I mean meditation, at least for me, is not always a pain in the ass. Sometimes it's quite nice, and am I missing the point then?

R: I don't think so. The whole idea is that if one is able to relate with this sudden mindfulness we've been talking about, then you have no problem of where you're coming from. But you came from somewhere. That's what I mean by disowning that experience, not entertaining the messenger; you don't have to find out where you came from and appreciate it. But this thing came and then you are falling down. You know, it's like a snowflake released from the clouds and just about to come down on the ground; you have no choice. In any case you are going to land on the ground. So there is a sense of being very real. The whole point is that meditation doesn't have to be particularly painful or pleasurable; it could be either. People more advanced even in just physical sitting practice, people who have been sitting for a long time, begin to find they can sit longer without moving compared to newcomers, and they find it perfectly natural in some sense. Sitting down is by no means self-conscious or difficult, but it becomes an ordinary thing. Even thoughts don't bother them because they know they could be accepted. So the whole thing is a very good rest for some people. That doesn't mean of course that will happen all the time; there will be emotional eruptions and so forth, and for some people it's very difficult, painful. But we are not talking about the ideal model of what should be painful or comfortable, you know, anything -- that's out of the question. The idea is this jerk.

You don't have to figure out where you came from; this just happens to you. Like the lover relationship, you don't have to figure out "because I love this person, this thought occured to me." You don't have to say that. It is there in your being in the state of love, rather than that you are in love with somebody particularly -- almost you are in love with yourself.

Q: Obviously you can't legislate that in any way except by having a good attitude. But there is something you do legislate. There is some kind of regular routine.

R: That goes along with the rest of it. If you are not related with a regular routine, then you cannot bring about that reminder either, because the whole thing is connected with it. It seems to be part of the whole thing. One has to make a gesture, a physical gesture, in order to

bring about the psychological gesture and actually be able to get the result of your psychological gesture. Then in turn you experience that glimpse of awareness coming to you.

Q: The same question, more or less: Just as the person who is sitting for the first time finds it uncomfortable to sit in that position, I feel -- and maybe this is what Michael is getting at -- the routine of the breathing is still uncomfortable. You haven't fully absorbed it. So I have a sense of that jerk, of that flash, and then after that, having been away somewhere in the clouds and flashing back. But I feel I don't quite know where I'm coming back to, and I have to work a bit on getting the breathing right, getting the right feeling of--

R: Okay -- go ahead and do it. You see, if we wanted to pick up an ideal meditator's breathing and his attitude towards breathing and everything in a balanced state of being, we couldn't do it. Not only couldn't we do it, but everybody does it slightly different. I'm sure there are tens of thousands of meditators in the past and present who have had little different variations in their approach. Also, the point is not to make the breathing as smooth and comfortable as driving a newly purchased car, particularly. Any kind of struggle involved with your breathing, your awareness, your smoothness of body, sitting practices and thoughts, keeping track of thoughts and excluding them, including them -- all these things are part of the whole show and, you know, there's no problem. But if there's a general sense of being -- the well-being that we've been discussing already, the general sense that everything is included in that big scope -- then those are just landmarks of the big scope. You see, although this is Hinayana practice that we are talking about, still it does include larger thinking of some kind, automatically. Even when we talk about absolutely, perfectly being accurate from moment to moment, in order to do that you have to include some sense of the general approach at the same time. Otherwise you can't be accurate on one thing.

Q: So there's still some sense of training yourself.

R: Yeah, definitely, yeah. It is training. It's not transcendental practice, by any means.

Q: In Nyanaponika's book on satipatthana -- the impression I've got from there is that when one's attention isn't on the breathing, then you can be mindful of whatever it is on: you know, where there are gaps between breathing, then something else, and then breathing. The way I experience it is that it seems to objectify whatever's coming up; you know, emotions and so forth. Is that in some way different from this kind of approach or is that -- there seems to be some distinction between the two.

R: I think it's identical in a way, because there's a sense of the personal meditation practice and meditation practice, same thing in a way. If you're eating, that flash is still coming to you -- but you don't meditate on the breathing while you're eating; you just eat. The flash comes and you relate with the food. As I said, that goes a long way, from the Hinayana to the Vajrayana level. That kind of jerk happens constantly.

Q: How can they be used to better the meditation practice?

R: I don't understand you.

Q: I mean if you get a sudden jerk of some sort, how does that improve your meditation?

R: It's not quite a question of improving your meditation, but you are meditating properly. Otherwise, without that help, you could be sitting for five hours a day, and in fact you actually got back to your breathing practice fifteen minutes during the whole period, and you've been reading your own autobiography and doing all kinds of things. It's not a question of improving but of bringing back to the ground -- that you are sitting on a cushion and breathing -- bringing back to the ground.

Q: I'm still not sure whether we're trying to get more or less in the breathing practice. In other words whether we can be more doing it right, so to speak. Specifically in my case, for example, one of the things that always happens is that there's music in my mind. Some tune is going on.

R: You must be a very romantic person.

Q: It does fade off into the distance, if I really concentrate on my breath, almost hear the sound of my breath. It's as if that part of the brain which contains the music could also hear the sound of the breath. If I do that, I find I'm really onto the breath, you know, the music sort of drifts off. So should I do that or just let the music roar away?

R: Well, I think the point is that breathing has no association, no particular categories. It's very simple. That seems to be a more frank way of meditating, obvious way of meditating. And it's not so much that you should regard the breathing as only the anchor for your meditation practice, but breathing is a very integral part of you, which you can't actually get rid of. You are breathing all the time. And if music plays along with the breathing or if you listen to your breath, let it be that way. There will still be a sense of alteration rather than one thing that your mind is fixed on, which makes it quite different from visualizing a pink lotus with diamonds sitting on it. It would be quite different because neither the diamond nor the lotus breathes, and there's no energy,

no relationship happening. Maybe I've missed your--

Q: No. Is it permissible then to use that trick to get the music away a little bit?

R: Sure. It's a discipline. I mean insofar as Hinayana meditation is important, it's because we don't have to be subtle or delicate about it at all. We do it, you know, in a very peasantlike way. We sit and breathe, get onto that, and it doesn't matter if we are doing it subtly or culturally, you know -- gentility does not apply. That's why it's so workable at the beginning, you see; there's no mannerism you have to learn, except breathe and sit.

Q: I'm confused about why we have these in three levels or stages. Does that mean that this kind of effort can't be established until you've gotten through the livelihood stage?

R: Not necessarily. It could be. That's why I said the effort is all-pervasive, through all of it. I think these four foundations of mindfulness indicate the level of importance. In other words, you introduce the person first; then you introduce the family of the person; then you introduce the town the person is living in; then you introduce the country the person is living in. So it's more in terms of creating a total picture in the larger sense. So the mindfulness of body is like introducing the people; actually what happens with your sense of body and sense of breathing. And then the other things become more and more the larger thinking, which is a highly integral part of the survival situation in terms of meditation practice.

Q: As we go along from one to two and three, there's not really, for us, a change in the subject of our meditation, is there? It's just breathing.

R: No, there's no change. There's no change at all, none whatsoever.

Q: I guess the importance of sudden flashing back applies to everyday situations, too. For instance, back to stirring the soup -- kitchen-like activities, not just within the meditation. It is really all pervasive.

R: Yeah, that's right. One has to develop a sense that you are completely possessed and haunted, that you can't get rid of it; rather than that you have to cultivate it. See, that kind of entirely different approach.

We should close I suppose. It's two minutes to five.

FOURTH FOUNDATION: MINDFULNESS OF MIND

Abstract: Continual practice, patience and non-aggression. The superordinary vs. the ordinary watcher. Five temporary sensations. Three temporary experiences.

The idea of effort which we discussed yesterday could be said to be like a process of gardening which brings about the foundation of mindfulness of mind. This fourth foundation of mindfulness of mind is not exactly a discipline as such, but we could say it's the end result of the practice. The fourth foundation of mindfulness brings all kinds of choices, all kinds of directions, because it brings some kind of self-conscious awareness as to what's happening to ourselves as we sit and meditate. And all that is the result of strict discipline -- forbearance and endurance and continual practice, and not quitting because of irritation or physical, psychological discomfort. It is a question of constantly keeping up, whether it is raining or snowing or hot or cold, depressed or excited, frustrated, hungry or full or whatever. The meditator should be like a rock in the mountains -- it is never tired of being one, and lives through the snows and rains and the four seasons. Unless there is that kind of endurance, we cannot actually develop the real ideal state of mindfulness or even put into practice or follow the techniques of mindfulness either, because techniques are not simply developed or taught like trickery. Techniques have to grow out of our original practice, and from there forbearance and patience and sitting constantly would bring about suggestions on how to improvise sitting practice in certain particular directions -- either of the nature of mindfulness of the body, of the livelihood, of the effort, or whatever.

The means that we apply for the practice of meditation are also interdependent with the patience that one has developed. Patience in this case is what is called trowa mepa in Tibetan. It is not so much forbearing pain, being stubborn in that sense; the real meaning of patience from this point of view is non-aggression. That is the definition of patience. Whenever there is any element of aggression which causes us to be resentful of the pain and hardship we are going through, then in order to develop complete patience, one has to develop non-aggression and realize that that resentment is aggression and anti-patience. So one has to develop real patience to realize what is anti-patience. The realization of aggression is real patience. Without that kind of hard-working forbearance, you cannot step forward at all.

That seems to be one of the problems. We could go on describing all the states of meditative experiences that might occur to us, but nevertheless didn't, and we might begin to wonder whether we were cheated or whether we haven't got the complete methods or whatever. But it could be that

we didn't get into it, rather than that we've been cheated. So it is a total commitment of some kind which brings about actual understanding of the real sense of developing the four foundations of mindfulness.

As far as mindfulness of mind is concerned, it is a somewhat glorified watcher or divine watcher, as opposed to an ordinary watcher. A transcendental watcher of some kind. That is mindfulness of mind. By divine in this case, I don't mean to say that a foreign agent is entering to help us, but divine in the sense of super-ordinary. It superscedes the ordinary watcher. The ordinary watcher is simply that particular state of consciousness that watches what's happening within us and takes note of it, and evaluates it, and tries to compare from the point of view of whether it was a good one or a bad one, should this happen or shouldn't this happen. And also it has mixed feelings of fear, and aggression, and impatience and all kinds of things mixed up with it -- ordinary watching, ordinary watcher. But in this case, the watcher is just simple self-consciousness. Not self-conscious in a way that feels clumsy or feels Me-ness, bigheaded-ness, with a faint element of embarrassment. It is just simply being aware of being conscious of what's happening, completely, totally. Being able to see what's happening while the application of awareness of breathing takes place. It's simply knowing intelligently what's happening -- which is still not completely free, not complete freedom from the point of view of Mahayana, or Vajrayana for that matter. But it's nevertheless the only way to develop the potential of prajna, or discriminating-awareness wisdom.

It is the sense of actually knowing what's happening which makes the difference between the conventional idea of meditation -- getting into a state of trance and getting completely high in it and absorbed in such a state that you are uncertain whether you're coming or going or whether you're existing there or somewhere in outer space -- and this very realistic one. That is why the fourth foundation of mindfulness of mind plays an extremely important part. You keep track of you -- that you are sitting on the meditation cushion and you are working on the breathing and upheavals of the emotions, energies. All these things do happen; things pass and things come and things have their own energies evolving. That kind of knowing what's happening is regarded as extremely good and necessary. It is an integral part of the mindfulness practice. So from that point of view, Buddhism allows, this particular technique allows, a certain amount of subconscious gossip. Not gossip at the level of just simply repeating or replaying events of the past or playing expectations of the future back, but simply taking note of what's happening that very moment, keeping track of the nowness. That much gossip seems to be necessary at this point. We cannot expect complete perfection without any thought process, thought movement, at all. If we try to do so, then we are inviting further

confusions of the real subconscious gossip and we are engaging in fist-fights with ourselves while we're sitting.

Mindfulness of mind -- the reason why it is known as mind is because it is that which knows, that which takes note of what's happening, while still being fully mind, mindful, and still steady, ongoing, patient, keeping track of the sitting practice of meditation and the techniques that have developed.

I found in Jamgon Kongtrul's writings a very useful thing. He talks about the experience of the foundation of mindfulness practice, the experience that happens in one's state of mind. There are five types of experiences. They are called experiences rather than achievements, because achievement is something that stays with you -- having practised meditation, a certain result develops and stays with you -- and experiences are temporary. The Tibetan word for experience is nyam, which means temporary flashes of experiences. Real achievement, solid achievement, it has been said, is like a mountain, whereas experience is like a mist over the mountains.

We have five different types of these experiences, and then three of them in different categories. The first five are experiences of temporary sensations, so to speak. Temporary as opposed to permanent. It's more of a physical, psychologically physical sensation than a state of being, state of mind.

Those of the first type: The first is the sense of speed and movement in your mind, like a brook on a very steep hill. The second one is a sense of relationship with one's mind, like a turbulent river in a gorge between two rocky valleys. The third one is a sense of familiarity with your practice; thought processes that go on with your mind become familiar and easy to live with. It is like a slowly flowing river. Big river. It is the sense of familiarity with what's happening with your practice so there are no particular problems. No particular speed either. Just a sense of smoothly running along, like a big river flowing slowly. The fourth one is a sense of stillness, absolute stillness, and a sense of meditative absorption which is like an ocean without waves. And then the fifth one is a somewhat extra thing that happens, a further confirmation to the fourth one actually. It is that the accomplishment is being reconfirmed: what you have experienced as stillness is real stillness, like a burning candle undisturbed by wind. If you look at it from the ordinary point of view, you might think the fourth one is nicer and the third is nicer and the others might be undesirable experiences. But in actual fact those are all temporary experiences, nyam. So all of them are the same. They are just experiences that occur in one's state of mind rather than that one state of mind is higher or more spiritual than another. So there are no

differences, none whatsoever, absolutely not. They are just temporary experiences that occur.

And then there is another set of three experiences. They are more fundamental in some sense; they denote the progress we are making. But the experience itself is by no means a permanent state that you are arriving at, a permanent state of experience that you are achieving; these are still temporary experiences. These temporary experiences are landmarks somewhat of one's growth, of one's spiritual path, of meditation. At the same time it is very tricky that if you are trying to re-create them, then they are temporary, so you can't hang onto them. It would be like seeing a signpost on the highway that says New York City and you think you have gotten to New York City already and you get out of the car and settle down at the bottom of the signpost.

These three are: the first one is bliss or joy, whatever you like to call it. A sense of the refreshing, completely refreshed, like after a long day of skiing you have had a hot bath and good drink, good dinner, good wine, and you are settling down to bed. A sense of absolute well-being. Sometimes there's tingling sensations, pulsations that happen physically in the body. Psychologically there are little twinkling, twinkling flashes of light, of joy, and feelings of being good, extremely cheerful and highly inspired. Not only that, but it could be much less frivolous than that, in fact much more solid in some cases; a sense of well-being and sense of security that one's experiencing philosophy or inspiration to the teachings, or whatever. Work that you are doing, the handicraft that you are doing, all of it is inspired and you feel that you can do anything you want, and do it beautifully, in everyday life situations. Also in sitting practice, there is a sense of tremendously pleasant and radiating love and kindness to everyone. It feels extraordinarily rewarding to sit and practice and there is a sense of being worthy of being here. All those. That kind of extraordinarily good and absolutely splendid feeling. That's the first one.

The second one is called sel-wa in Tibetan, which means luminosity, a sense of light, brilliant light. Not that you particularly see brilliant light or anything like that at all but there is some sense of being able to follow a tremendous amount of energy and work with it, that you would be able to create a link between your body and mind, a link between the psyche and physical existence, as if you were the mechanism to run the universe. You create the link between that and this. And you feel very able, extraordinarily able; you feel powerful in the sense that you could order the universe and you could make a link between the two. It is a temporary notion of Sambhogakaya in the sense that you act as the link between the Dharmakaya and the Nirmanakaya. It is not as abstract and joyful as the first one, but it is more industrious and more pragmatic in the sense that you would be able to handle anything that comes

along without that disjointing experience. You would be able to put it into a workable situation. There is a sense of tremendous confidence and light, a sense of a far-seeing quality and also a sense of panoramic vision as well.

The third one is called mi-thog-pa, which means non-thinking, without thought. This doesn't mean a complete state of being without thoughts, but rather a stillness-like quality, a Buddha-family type thing. There is a sense of solidness, stillness that doesn't want to move. Any actual experience that occurs in your state of mind is very still and solid. Nothing happens but it is difficult to order further energy. That could also bring tremendous depression. Sometimes you feel that you are almost going backward and you're stuck somewhere; nothing's happening and everything is getting very, very monotonous and repetitious. Even a suggestion of moving outward is too tiring to even think about. You want to stay in one spot, so to speak. And that could also bring drowsiness and a sense of slight faint aggression, and depression. Or else it could be a complete state without thoughts. You sit and everything is so smooth and ordinary, one is not excited or depressed. There are no thoughts, no irritating things and when the end of meditation occurs, you find it very easy to stop. You are not getting into any trance-like state of meditative absorption or anything of any kind at all. But there is a sense of being still and solid.

These experiences are also temporary experiences. These three types of experiences can be perceived as temporary experience by mindfulness of mind, that kind of consciousness awareness. And the idea is not trying to dispel these experiences or cultivate them, just acknowledging: this is happening, this is happening, this is happening. One does not have to particularly try to pidgeonhole or categorize, but whenever any extraordinary experience occurs, one could relate with it being a temporary experience. That seems to be the point.

In the story of Gampopa, for instance, when he had these experiences he was running back and forth between his cave and Milarepa's cave, reporting all the experiences and visions that he had. And he was very tricky -- Milarepa said something like, "Now perhaps you should go back to your cave." And he thought about that, and he interpreted: "Milarepa said now you should go. Maybe that means the next time whatever occurs to me might be valuable and real because he said now, which he didn't say before. Each time when I went back he said, 'go back,' but this time he said, 'now you should go back.'"

It seems that the fourth foundation of mindfulness is the intelligence measure that covers all the meditative experiences, keeps track so that we will not be led astray, or trip out into any extraordinary experiences. All the experiences could be regarded as ordinary experience, workable

experience; nothing sensational, nothing exciting, nothing far out anymore. That seems to be the purpose of developing the fourth foundation of mindfulness -- the transcendental watcher, that watcher which purely looks at the present situation and does not speculate past or future, just purely looks at what's happening at that moment. That sort of heedfulness of what's happening at that very moment is the purpose of the fourth foundation of mindfulness.

Discussion:

Q: You were talking at the beginning about the kind of discipline that makes it possible for this kind of thing to happen, and it's always confusing to me as to how to relate to that in terms of my everyday affairs -- like when I'm not sitting, when I'm reading or talking and things like that -- sort of how stilted to be about things like that.

R: You mean the discipline?

Q: Yeah, it could become sort of an artificial thing like constantly reminding myself--

R: Well, I think one of the things unique to our scene is that we have developed a natural self-corrective mechanism of a sophisticated cynical approach to any kind of trips that come along. Which doesn't have to be purely handled by the teacher alone; everybody does it to each other. And I don't think there is any danger from now onward, at least for another three years, that anybody could trip out on anything. So what we present could possibly lead to trippy situations for ordinary people who are not into this particular type of cynical approach, but we have developed already some kind of mechanism to protect ourselves from that. Therefore this is an extremely congenial place to create any form of mindfulness practice. And I think the idea of these temporary experiences we've been discussing is that they also can be experienced not only in sitting practice alone, but during everyday life situations as well. So the purpose of situations like this -- what we're doing right now -- is precisely the situation in which that special environment should act as a reminder that it is a special situation; eating, sleeping, working, reading, whatever. And there should be a sense of bare attention to what's happening. The way to do that is, as we discussed yesterday, you don't have to make yourself stiff, holding onto awareness, mindfulness, while you cook, while you work, but that sudden flash of awareness could be repeated. Whatever happens then, after that, you sort of disown it. So you don't find everything becoming rigid. There's a reminder of now, what's happening now, a flash of awareness of now and then you let flow. And that plays a very important part in everyday life as well, definitely. In fact, the awareness practice is more useful and more workable in everyday life situations than actually sitting practice

of meditation at the time, because then it is already an artificial situation and there's nothing to struggle with. Everything is set up already. Whereas in everyday life situations, there is struggle and there is a light touch of that and this; a dichotomy happens. Which reminds us to recollect again a sense of being, constantly.

Q: Is the experience of bliss a solid experience? Does it have a solid quality to it?

R: I don't think so. It's sort of a flowing quality. But at the same time the only solidity that could be is self-perpetuating it, and you begin to feel that's an on-going thing.

Q: Rinpoche, I'm curious about where sharpening the intellect comes into your meditation practice. I mean that's what we seem to be doing.

R: Well, you see, one cannot develop just by thinking faster and trying to be much cleverer than the others. That would be kind of a kindergarten approach to intellect. But there is a general environment of a sense of spaciousness and a sense that the mind has been trained fundamentally, so that whenever you have to apply it to an object, apply it to knowledge, it has already been sharpened. There is a general sense of growing up with the muscles and energy and strength already. I mean the whole thing is that the meditation practice is to develop any kind of potentiality within you, to bring it out to reality. The intelligence, intellect, is one of those potentials. So automatically, yeah, that comes through.

Q: You said just now that these various things we've been talking about are most important in everyday life. Well, in the past five days the attendance here in the meditation practice hall has dropped to about half, 50 percent. Now, that remark that you made, should we take that to imply that it really doesn't matter if we sit or not? I mean is there any value in coming here regularly? Or are you saying it doesn't matter?

R: Thank you, I didn't realize I'd been tricked. If it was a trick. That question -- was it a trick?

Q: Not exactly a trick but the thing is that there seem to be differing values on sitting practice.

R: Yeah, naturally. It's exactly the same thing as what we were talking about right now -- sharpening the intellect. The slightest sense of self-indulgence or giving in to aggression is a way of preventing the flow. And particularly, the only means that we have is sitting practice and group activities. If people would like to do their thing privately, individually, then we might create a retreat-type situation rather than being

in a group. Not that I'm suggesting that people shouldn't have any privacies at all, none whatsoever -- that could be asking too much. But what I feel is that doing things together is the most important thing at this particular point in what we have created here, our seminary here. Doing things together: taking a day off together, eating together and sitting together. If anybody sneaks out the back and tries to leave the group working situation, then it's something extraordinary in a way -- its like becoming a crocodile and you want to bite your tail in private. You don't want to do it in a group; there is a tremendous urge, but it would be impolite to do it in public.

Sitting practice and eating together are both important -- sitting practice is obviously most important of all; but eating together is also very important. It is not only that everybody gets hungry at some point, therefore we should conveniently cook together and throw everybody together in the room so that they could eat together, like feeding time in a zoo. It also has its own aspect of human dignity. It is not just animal level. And I think anything we do together is regarded as sacred in that sense, including taking days off -- wherever you go, whatever you do, groups of people, or individuals, whatever -- everybody's taking the day off.

And we should talk some about this sitting practice that in the last four days has become -- not a particularly big issue now, but could become a big issue as we go on. I don't want to waste too much energy in purely discussing the possibilities of preparation of study, and those things seem to be preparatory things. If we have to spend so much energy preparing what we are going to discuss, soon the whole thing is over, and we haven't got a chance to discuss what we're going to talk about; we're too busy planning, which seems to be the problem. I think also partly we can afford to discuss things like these four foundations of mindfulness practices -- all these things we can afford to discuss, feel open to discuss, because we all have a sense of sharing everything that we're doing. Therefore this particular thing could be shared and everybody is in a sense worthy of sharing. And that also creates the feast of the Dharma; you feel confident to be present at it, whereas if there are any discrepancies of taking something out, biting its own tail, then one begins to feel that there is not enough confidence to share together. Maybe we have to go back and start all over again and discuss the skandhas and the ego and neuroses and so forth. That is actually true and this is how my psychology effects that way -- this group here is highly selected within our scene and this is the first time we are doing this and there is the sense that you can afford to let go and tell everything to everybody, beyond what we've been discussing already in seminars and so forth. There is that aspect as well. Thank you, Jeremy, for bringing up that subject.

Q: I'd like to ask, if you emphasized the fact that we should eat together

and do meditation together and so forth, could you explain why it is that you don't sit with us, don't eat with us and so forth? Is there some kind of efficacy in your absence? Or is it just a matter of taste? I mean, I hear again and again people saying how wonderful it would be if Rinpoche would come and sit with us and I know people would appreciate seeing you. (laughter)

R: I think the situation is somewhat delicate. In terms of people growing up properly and leading them, I thought the message was already clear. The thing is that I'm not acting as a clergyman in a parish -- the clergyman must lead the prayer every Sunday, must perform the liturgy, and if he's not on time, his congregation will be mad at him and if he has to be away, nobody will stand up on the altar and conduct the ceremony because they feel they're not worthy of it. In this case maybe people are still holding that kind of mentality since everybody has some kind of notion of being in a church or being in a synagogue with their priests or their rabbis, whatever. So from that point of view, this is not a church scene to begin with. A school or retreat center is the closest to it.

I think one of the problems or weaknesses that has developed in the Zen tradition as well, is that they call themselves priests, and try to copy from the Christian establishment, leading the congregations. It's an entirely different approach and the students here are not regarded as a congregation, which means a group of laymen. People here are not regarded as laymen anymore. They are professionals in Buddhism; they are in fact on the level of monks and nuns in terms of their understanding and the practices people have gone through already. So I feel that of course there will be a kind of emotional need to see me around, to chat with you and sit with you. Obviously I would feel it is a very nice and very kind gesture, that everybody cares for me and so forth. Nevertheless, I feel that everybody should become individuals -- like if we have a ceremony and I'm not there, somebody from the audience will stand up and take my chair and conduct the ceremony. Everybody should be self-sufficient, self-centered individuals, without any need for further reinforcement.

And the idea is two-fold: One thing is that I'm lazy to come and sit, and I've been working very hard on seminars and other things and trying to work on my own stuff, like writings and paintings, things like that. Another thing is -- I feel this is valid, what I'm doing -- there is no harm in trying to make people independent. If any problems come up, I am here to take care of them, in whatever fashion may be necessary, in public, or private conversations, whatever things come up.

And I think that's a very fundamental, important thing. We talk about establishing the Church of Buddhism in America, in some ways we are

talking about that; but at the same time we are not franchising the Christian method or Judaism for that matter, in this country. Although, of course, we have to have organizations and we have to have a non-profit status and things like that, those levels are slightly different. But in terms of actually relating with congregations, it's very interesting; I feel that I don't regard people here as congregations, in terms of laymen, groups of laymen. In fact, everybody's an able person. I think that has a lot to do with it. That's the difference between sesshin and nyinthun, which we have developed: in the nyinthun, everybody takes turns in the timing and there's no leader; everybody will take care of themselves. Thank you for bringing up that topic.

Q: It seems to me that part of the questions John and Jeremy asked was, in John's question, our relation to our focus, and in Jeremy's question the origin of the situation here, the discipline -- what we should do, when and how much of it, to what degree. And it seemed to me that both of their questions implied that you were both the focus and the origin of what was going on here; and yet your answers seemed to imply that it was we as individuals and together as a sangha which were the source of the inspiration in a sense. Of course the teachings are the ultimate source of the inspiration. So in that sense if the tendency of the group starts to move in a certain direction such as not keeping the meditation schedule as it was set, does that mean that perhaps there's something within the group that indicates that it should be re-evaluated or changed? Or are there some things more or less given and it is up to us as individuals to fit our discipline into that situation as it originated from you?

R: What do you mean re-evaluated?

Q: Well, I mean if the tendency of the group is not to follow the meditation schedule, does that mean that there is something within the group that -- I mean like when an individual finds himself following a certain pattern, even if it's a negative pattern, then at some time he stops and he looks at himself and he says: is it me or the pattern that I'm breaking that has to be changed? And I wondered to what degree the group itself, the sangha should control the discipline? Or do we look to you for that?

R: Well, I think that individuals should tune in to a general pattern. Otherwise individuals' patterns are so varied that within the gathering here we could develop fifty different types of patterns, which would be very difficult to follow. And in this case it should be regarded as like Mohammed comes to the mountain or the mountain comes to Mohammed. The pattern we have set up already is a definite pattern and individuals should tune in to it. There's a story in my monastery: one of the local chieftains wanted to cut off the peak of a mountain. He found the

winters too long and the sun didn't shine on his mansion. He ordered all the neighborhood people, as a part of taxation payment, to cut off the peak of the mountain. Instead they rebelled and said that it's much easier to cut off the chief's head. And they cut off the chief's head.

Q: When you talked about mindfulness of mind, you talked a lot about patience and persevering through all kinds of conditions. Is there some inherent connection between mind and some kind of primordial intelligence that you talked about that is inherent in mind itself?

R: Yeah, fundamentally it is so, but at the same time we can't make tremendous emphasis on that at this point. It would be much more straightforward and easier to relate to as just uncomplicated consciousness which takes care of what's happening at that very moment. Just simple, ordinary thinking. It has the root of course of the primordial mind, definitely. But in this case it is not interpreted that way from the Hinayana literature. It just simply is that which is able to take notice of what's happening.

Q: It's not exactly a question of not feeling one's own value -- I'm referring back to the previous discussion -- but we are somewhat in the position of an unrequited lover. It's very lonely. I mean, the only reason why it would be nice to have you around, to drop off and talk, is because as you said it is very often a very lonely journey and the fact that you are not with us so much emphasizes that. And once when I was sitting here, I thought: "Supposing the ceiling fell down on top of my head and I got enlightened; you wouldn't even care."

R: That's possible.

Q: Do the three more permanent meditation experiences take place after the five impermanent ones?

R: Not necessarily. They go hapazardly.

Q: And the five temporary ones they also happen haphazardly within the four--

R: Sure, yeah, they all do, therefore there is no point in trying to make categorical evaluations of them.

Q: Then can't the different categorizations that you did make merge together somewhat -- one being a little bit like two or two being a little bit like three?

R: Could, but the difference is that the five sensations are very temperamental, they have the quality of being still involved with speed, all of them.

The three experiences that we discussed are more something actually happening rather than purely pulsation in your state of mind. There are these differences, definitely.

Q: If these experiences are happening in everyday life, what's the difference between the last three that you mentioned and the sense of elation or depression that a person ordinarily would feel occasionally in life?

R: Well the ordinary experiences that people feel are more like those of the first five. The depressions and excitement and everything are more or less in the level of the first five. And the last three are somewhat connected with semi-permanent experiences. They are not permanent experiences, but they are somewhat more solid and it's a mark of some effort involved with the path. A lot of people regard the last three as actually permanent experience and a lot of people are being deceived by it, thinking it was permanent experience. These things could occur to people such as if they go through enlightenment-intensive, or Charles Berner's trip, or even in Theravadin traditions -- in London, they have developed a four-week intensive practice for enlightenment. And if everybody sat and kept their schedule absolutely without missing a minute, at the end everybody gets something. They do. And they all regard it as enlightenment. But that lasts about ten days after they leave. And that's a similar type of thing that could occur, you know; any kind of intensive practices that are introduced to people, any means, any spiritual trips could get to the level of these three, rather than fundamentally getting somewhere.

Q: When you experience these things, do you have a real sense that this is something different, definitely different from what you've been experiencing before?

R: I think so, yeah. I mean it is obviously very outstanding.

Q: But then when you're finished, after a while you essentially return to where you were before.

R: Yeah.

Q: Does where you were before keep changing?

R: As well, yeah.

Q: Number one of those was bliss, which sounds like an absorption--

R: It's not even level of absorption.

Q: Well, what I'm wondering is if that number one is compatible with the number four of the earlier series. That is to say, if the abstract mindfulness of mind is compatible with this bliss. In other words, it seems to me that mindfulness of mind is a doubting condition to some extent, continual little bits of doubt. Whereas it seems to me for the number one bliss condition, number one of three, that would constitute an interruption to that, making it impossible for it to take place.

R: Yeah, definitely, that could be an obstacle. Very much so. That is to say, provided you regard it as permanent experience, because there would be no room for effort involved. If you are on the first one, you feel that everything comes very easily, thoroughly, smoothly. And it begins to make you very impatient and softened, so to speak.

Q: The bliss thing makes you feel very softened?

R: Yeah, everything's so easy. It's like coming from the mountains to an apartment and the whole thing's automatic and easy.

Q: So in order to avoid becoming wishy-washy like that, you should keep with the fourth mindfulness thing.

R: Yeah, that is the point. So we have to come back to the fourth mindfulness practice.

Q: Are these things just natural mental processes of growth?

R: Processes of what?

Q: Processes of growth--

R: These categories? No, they are five types of things and three types of things and they occur simultaneously or one by one. The only thing that denotes it as growth or development is the last three. The last three of those can only occur if the person has worked something out already. And these are just signs that you've been working your way through. Nevertheless those experiences wouldn't stay with you; those experiences are temporary experiences as well.

Q: What is imperturbability?

R: What is what?

Q: Imperturbableness?

R: Where does it say that?

Q: Being imperturbable in meditation, what's that?

R: Don't know. Imperturbable? Did we use that word today?

(Audience: No)

Q: Do the other three foundations of mindfulness go on at the same time as the fourth one? For instance, do you keep flashing back to awareness of breathing?

R: Um-hm. So many things happening there. The things that we have discussed today and in other talks, cover entirely the area of shamatha complex of anything that could occur in your mind that has been noted down in scriptures, and this very much covers the whole thing. And it should be complex, you know, if this is the only thing. In fact, it sounds too simple, actually. There should be something more complicated than this. And this is the complete shamatha practice that was given in the Buddhist tradition, that has all the subtleties, details, and so forth.

Q: Those three last categories of experience occur whenever a person has worked out something?

R: What?

Q: Whenever a person has worked out something or had a significant breakthrough of some kind -- would those three experiences occur? That is to say, would you go through them more than once?

R: Well, you don't go through once and then get over it. That is why it is called temporary -- it could come again and again and again. Maybe in the interval something else occurred to you. So this is not just once and forever; these are constant things. It is described as like the mist on the mountain.

Q: What's the difference between the second mindfulness -- the sense of well-being -- and the first one of those three?

R: It's entirely different. The sense of well-being is not all that dramatic; a sense of just being, having a body and having some kind of ground. And in this case, it is just so romantic and so flimsy; it's more trippy. In other words, nyam or temporary experiences we could call trips. We could call it the five types of trips and three types of trips. Trips are usually regarded as a phase that you go through. So if it's a phase, it would be a trip from that point of view.

Q: The first of the five experiences you described as like a steep hill

and you said something about broken.

(Audience: No, brook, brook, brook).

Q: A what?

(Audience: Stream, stream, stream).

Q: Then how is that different from the second one which is a stream?

R: The first is very busy, rushing down from the hills and no turbulence, nothing whatsoever, just like a pipe running from a gravity feeding, something like that. And the second one is a turbulent river, a lot of rocks and waves, hitting all kinds of big stones.

Q: Then the second one is actually -- there's more neurosis?

R: Not necessarily. They all have some neurosis, but the second one is a sense of appreciation of its existence. The water-ness, the hitting certain kinds of rocks in a turbulent river re-emphasizes the water-ness of it. Whereas the brook is very speedy, very fast, but also quite nonchalant in a way.

Q: From what you just said to Jeremy it sounds like -- are these things, these experiences, kinds of hallucinations?

R: Well, hallucination seems to be another term. Hallucination takes two steps. You see something and you are confused by it; then you try to redefine it; then you get confused, hallucinating. Like somebody hits you on the head and you begin to see stars. And in this case it's more than hallucination or less than hallucination. It's actual experience. It's direct experience; you find yourself speeding or you find yourself somewhat settled down but still there's a lot of stuff going through your mind. And you find yourself very smooth and quietened. Or you find yourself completely solid and still and vast like the ocean. So it's more of a direct experience than hallucination. Because hallucination takes processing through, you see. Hallucination is illusion which needs to have at least three processes of misunderstanding --you saw it, and then you misunderstood, and then you try to redefine that, and then you misunderstood fully, completely, so then you hallucinate about that. Whereas in this case it is just simply at the beginning you saw that way, experienced that way.

Q: What about when somebody hits you over the head, and you just experience an instantaneous flash of light. That's an hallucination but you haven't had time to see it, misunderstand it, re-evaluate it and misunderstand it again.

R: Yeah, well, sure you do. You didn't know what to make of it. And therefore you're trying to make something out of it, and the only thing you see is stars.

Q: So it must be very difficult to tell the difference between an hallucination and--

R: These experiences? No, not at all. Hallucination is somewhat ungrounded. These are somewhat trippy, but also very grounded experiences as well. A person could feel extraordinarily sane and solid and meditative and could experience these. You see the differences?

Q: Wouldn't the extent to which they transfer from the sitting practice over to daily life and their continuity, distinguish between how much of an hallucination it is?

R: Not necessarily -- you could have a real experience happening. Even those circumstances. I mean, a change doesn't make an hallucination more apropos. The misunderstandings make the hallucination more--

Q: Rinpoche? I don't understand.

R: Hallucination is a misunderstanding become wild. And confusion in the ordinary level is just confused. So hallucination is more time to rebound. The ordinary hallucination, like these trips we've been talking about, is very direct, very immediate.

Q: You wouldn't say to indicate the distinction between whether it's something saying it's a hallucination like John says, and you're saying no, it's not, it's much more grounded--

R: Much more grounded, yeah.

Q: But as an indication of its groundedness, you wouldn't take it as a mark of that, its transfer from the sitting practice where you would experience it and the extent to which it transfers over to experiences in everyday life?

R: I don't see any problem with that. The physical thing doesn't make any difference.

Q: Where in the scheme does paranoia come in?

R: I suppose everywhere -- in all of them.

Q: But are there any different qualities of paranoia? I mean, like the brook rushing downstream having a sense of speeding too fast or--

R: All of them -- same thing.

Q: Well, what about the bliss thing?

R: Yeah, there's still a sense of reward.

Q: That you're going to lose it?

R: Sense of relief or sense that you might lose it. You know, there's always either way.

Q: I'm worried about all these things that are supposed to go through one's mind. Things have been happening in my meditation lately. They have been happening to me, but the more they are happening, the less goes through my mind. And my mind seems to be fairly quiescent. I mean, I'm full of breathing and everything else is... It's a different feeling of space. And there's something very real about it but I don't have much mental activity connected with it. I don't know what it is.

R: I think you should keep going.

Q: Well, it seems that if these things occur, bliss or luminosity, you should still keep going. They could be classified along with everything else.

R: Well there's no point, you know. You hate the trip and therefore you should give up the whole thing -- that doesn't work.

Q: Do these experiences then interrupt your practice of the four mindfulnesses?

R: They are either regarded as interruptions or else they could be regarded as adornment.

Q: And you could actually experience these things and still keep going?

R: Yeah, you could, sure.

Q: You don't have to reject them?

R: No. I mean, that's the whole point. If you reject them, you're feeding it. And you make demons out of them.

Q: On that question, does that also apply to paranoia?

R: Hmm?

Q: I mean, at one point you talked of paranoia as being like an entertainment but it is also possible in that sense to look upon it as an adornment?

R: Um-hmm. Why not?

Q: Well, I mean, is it like an integral part of this whole process? It's inescapable?

R: Yes.

Q: Rinpoche, I was wondering how the four foundations as you presented them, body, livelihood, effort, and mental activities, correspond to body, feelings, mind and mental contents. Particularly the middle two: livelihood as feelings, and effort as mind.

R: Feelings as what?

Q: Well, in other words, as they're presented elsewhere. I believe it's the same four categories isn't it? The contemplation of the body, of feelings, of mind, and mental contents?

R: Yeah.

Q: Same set of four?

R: Yeah. The third one, effort, is I suppose mental concentration. I don't know exactly how they're translated, but it's the idea of mental concentration as effort. And the last one is the contents of the mind. The definition of mind is that which can perceive its contents; that's the definition of mind, the Abhidharma definition.

Q: What about the second one: livelihood as feelings, contemplation of feelings?

R: Well, livelihood is still something to do with your life. Maybe, psychologically oriented it is translated as feeling, but somehow when we talk about feelings we're only relating with feelings rather than general life and body and solid things which seem to make more sense in terms of actual practice. I would think those translations that have been made are more of a philosophical orientation.

Q: Well, for example as in Nyanaponika Thera's book, in the Theravadin approach, he really uses them to separate very precisely what you're seeing in your meditation -- if it's body, you label it as body; if it's feeling level, you label it as feeling. You don't confuse the two. So that if you have a pain in your arm you know which part is body and which

part is feeling and which part is mind. He seems to use them in that way, dividing up the different categories of awareness, attention.

R: Well, it has been done somewhat, but not as violent as that. Some sort of reflection of German Jew still comes through. I mean, it is done, but not as violent as that, really.

Q: That's reinforcing duality isn't it?

R: Something like that. It's become so scientific and so aggressive an approach, in fact you have to fight in order to do that. You have to be super-scientific and even a computer can meditate.

Probably we should stop at this point; it's four minutes to six.

VOLUME ONE

THE PROFOUND TREASURY
OF THE OCEAN OF DHARMA

The Path of Individual Liberation

CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA

COMPILED AND EDITED BY

Judith L. Lief

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The Basic Minimum

In sitting meditation, you are dealing with body, speech, and mind simultaneously. You are developing a sense of precision and accuracy. There is no room, none whatsoever, for imagination or improvisation.

IN MEDITATION practice, discipline is not how many hours you sit; it is your total involvement in the practice. In shamatha, body, speech, and mind are completely and totally involved in the sitting practice. In vipashyana, there is also total involvement of body, speech, and mind; in addition, you are also completely aware of the environment around you. When you are involved so much that there is no longer an individual entity left to watch itself, that is the *shunyata*, or "emptiness," level of practice.* I encourage you to have that approach of total involvement in your sitting practice and in meditation in action, or everyday life. Commitment to the practice of meditation is a way of committing yourself to the teachings. Teachers are purely spokespeople for the teachings; the teachings themselves are based on your own involvement.

WORKING WITH THE MIND

In meditation practice, what we are working on, working with, working at, is the mind. Mind is what we use, apply, and manipulate. In Tibetan,

* Shunyata, or emptiness, is a central realization of mahayana Buddhism in particular. It is also sometimes described as complete openness, and is considered to be devoid of any limitations or falsity.

mind is known as *sem*. In Sanskrit, mind is known as *chitta*. *Chitta* means "mind," or "heart"; it is that which thinks, that which perceives thoughts. Mind and thoughts are inseparable, like a king and his retinue, or the hand and its fingers. Chitta, or sem, perpetually thinks, perpetually schemes. Mind perpetuates thoughts around us and in us, such as love or hate. Mind causes us to be fascinated by the world or, for that matter, turned off by the world. We are perpetually being turned off and turned on by this particular thing called mind. It makes us happy or sad, inspired or uninspired. Artists are turned-on by this; musicians are turned on by this; revolutionaries are turned on by this. Culture was created by this; the very room you are in was created by this. It is neither masculine nor feminine. We call it mind, or "it." This mind is what we have to work with. Although it is difficult, we cannot give up. We are stuck with this mind, like having chewing gum stuck on our fingers, and the way we are going to free ourselves, or free "it," is with dharma. It is the dharma that is going to liberate us. Therefore, we are practicing meditation.

Why will meditation free us, and how is it going to work? It works by picking up our end of the stick. Rather than by tackling mind as an enemy or a friend, you work gently, using the system developed by the Buddha, which is to let go and to tighten up. You loosen, or let go, by means of the out-breath; you tighten up, or concentrate, by using the body. Working with posture is the means to release the tension and frustration that exist in the mind. Straightening your posture will satisfy it, just like giving milk to a crying baby, or opening the doors and windows in a stuffy room. By using those two techniques of loosening and tightening, you will be able to free the mind. Within confused mind, or bewilderment, there is the possibility of awakening. Confused mind is like the night: although it is dark, there is still light because you can see the moon and the stars.

The sitting practice of meditation developed into different styles in different countries, and there are many levels of practice. The approach of my lineage, the Kagyü lineage of Buddhism, is surprisingly close to the Theravada school of Buddhism and to the Soto Zen tradition of Japan. The Zen tradition practices hinayana Buddhism in the light of mahayana inspiration; in Tibetan Buddhism, we practice hinayana discipline in the light of vajrayana. Nevertheless, we still have to practice at an ordinary, simple, strict, direct, clear level.

When I began teaching Westerns to meditate, I noticed that some students were able to tune in to openness directly. So I did not give them a

technique, but encouraged direct opening, a sudden flash. However, in intensive meditation programs, that approach became a problem. Those students began to question whether that open experience was genuine or a hallucination. Although they had nothing to do but sit and let that openness happen, all kinds of thoughts began to churn up in the mind. Auditory, visual, and physical sensations began to take them over. So although such instructions are valid on their own merit, during intensive practice I feel that students should practice the more conservative approach of mindfulness of breathing. Also, there are different styles of breathing belonging to different levels of meditation practice, such as shamatha, vipashyana, *mahavipashyana*, or "great vipashyana," and shunyata. However, instead of classifying the different styles of practice, I prefer to present very simply and directly what it is necessary to do to begin sitting.

Going Out with the Breath and Dissolving

In sitting meditation, you are dealing with body, speech, and mind simultaneously. You are developing a sense of precision and accuracy. There is no room, none whatsoever, for imagination or improvisation in sitting practice or in walking practice. In mindfulness of breathing, you have a sense of the breath. You are being with the breath and the subtleties of the breath. You do not have to be too scientific concerning your lungs, your nostrils, hot and cold temperatures, or the impression the breath creates on your lips as you breathe out. Instead you should have a sense of the breathing as the ongoing survival mechanism that governs you. You are becoming mindful of the natural breathing. Mindfulness is not looking at, thinking about, or imagining something better or higher than your natural breathing. You have a sense of breathing out. You experience the breath going out and dissolving, and on the in-breath there is a gap. You do not have to follow the in-breath as you draw it in; you can let it drop. So the in-breath is an insignificant space, a gap; then you breathe out again.

In mindfulness practice, you are simply identifying with the breath. In particular, you are trying to follow the out-breath. The in-breathing is just a gap or space. You wait. Then, when you have breathed out, you dissolve, and—gap. You breathe out, dissolve, and—gap. In that way, openness and expansion take place constantly. By creating a gap area, there is less strain. Once you breathe out, you are sure to breathe in, so there's room for

relief. It is a question of openness. Out-breathing is an expression of stepping out of your system. It has nothing to do with centralizing in your body. Usually everything is bottled up, but here you are sharing, you are giving something out. All that is associated with the out-breath.

The out-breathing is an expression of being. In-breathing is a confirmation of being, because we need oxygen to live. Psychologically, however, it helps to put less emphasis on the thisness, and more on the ongoing process of going out. Also, strangely enough, you find that the attention on physical being, the awareness of body, becomes more precise if you begin to feel that sense of going out. Relating with yourself in terms of going out is automatic confirmation that you are breathing without any difficulties. Your breathing is no problem; you don't need an iron lung. The in-breathing is a sign of struggle. If you are short of breath, you breathe in. Out-breathing has a feeling of relaxation and well-being, a feeling of existing.

Simplifying

The shamatha approach is to simplify everything to the basic minimum. You should not try to improvise or do anything other than follow your breath very simply. You should walk in and sit down properly on your meditation cushion. You should arrange yourself fully; you don't just plop. You should feel your cushion and make yourself as comfortable as you can. Don't rush into the technique; first settle down and adjust yourself. After that, feel your breath, your ordinary breath. If you are alive, you are always breathing; unless you are dead, breathing is constant. Feel your breath, identify completely with the breath, *be* the breath. Become one with the breath. As your breathing goes out, you go out with the breath; and as the breathing dissolves, you dissolve. As you dissolve and the breathing dissolves, there is a momentary gap. Breathing in follows as the natural process of preparing for the next out-breath. You pick up on the breath again when you breathe out. So in the practice of meditation, you go out and dissolve: out-dissolve, out-dissolve. There is a gap; there is openness. It is a process of expanding.

Some traditions feel that you should be cranking up all the time. They think that you should be kept occupied, be a busybody, otherwise you are wasting your money. However, in our approach to shamatha, there is a contrast between doing something and doing nothing. That is the secret,

actually! The gap is just a gap: you do nothing. So there is a slight tinge of vajrayana in our approach to shamatha practice; it is not exclusively hinayana. You should not be afraid of that gap. According to traditional historical accounts, when the Buddha first began to talk about emptiness, several of the arhats, or senior disciples, had heart attacks and died. That sense of gap is precisely where their heart attacks began! You might think, "What am I going to do if I don't have anything to do?" Precisely! That is a very beautiful illustration of this.

Take Your Time

In group practice, when the leader rings the gong to begin, don't mentally start to practice right away. When the gong strikes, prepare yourself and pay attention to your body. Correct your posture. Feel your breath, your lungs, your legs, and your posture. Just feel them. The gong is the signal to feel your body, your head and shoulders, and your cushion. Just feel. Having felt everything, as the sound of the gong fades, you can start working on mindfulness of your breath.

The reason you should take your time is to make everything very genuine and honest. When the gong is rung, you don't just go *bam!* into samadhi. When you sit, you have to work with your mind and body and with everything that happens, so prepare yourself. This might take as much time as counting from one to twenty-five. When you first sit down on your cushion, be kind and gentle to yourself. Be natural. Don't tell yourself, "Now I'm going to give it a go, and I'm going to do it the hard way. I'm going to give myself pain." That doesn't work. When you sit down, first settle nicely on your cushion and treat yourself well. Give yourself a good time.

As the sound of the gong fades, having settled yourself on the cushion, raise your posture. Don't straighten up right at the beginning when you first sit down. You could even hunch down. Then as the sound of the gong fades away, raise yourself up so that you achieve good posture. Having done so, you can exert yourself further. Ideally, you should not have to reshuffle yourself too much as you are sitting. If you made a mistake when you first started to sit, you can correct that, but if possible don't reshuffle at all. If you take this approach, you can have a nice sitting.

When the sound of the gong has faded completely, having taken your posture, you are ready to start working with your breath. It is as if

somebody were leading you on a mountain trail on horseback and finally gave you the reins: "You have to ride your own horse. It's all yours." So first you give yourself a good time, and then you become well disciplined.

To review, first you hear the gong, then you settle, then you go out with the out-breath—*tshoo!*—then you come back to your posture. So you have the mind together with the breath, with the body as an overall reference point.

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Breathing Out

[In meditation practice,] the body becomes insignificant, and space and breathing become more important. In fact, the breath is the most important part of the practice. Thoughts come up with the sense of body, the sense of "me" being here. However, if there is no central authority, if your practice is purely activity in space, thoughts become transparent.

As YOU meditate, your breath is going in and out. You may have ideas about your breath or think there is some problem with the way you are breathing, but you should just try to go along with the breath you have. It is important to breathe normally. Your breath will be affected by your posture, by exercise, or by whether you had a heavy meal or a light meal. Your breathing is also affected by your vision. If your vision is too focused, for instance, your breathing will begin to pick up. Along with that will come sudden discursive thoughts: sexual fantasies, aggressive fantasies, all sorts of fantasies. So it is better not to focus your vision, but to let your vision rest. Even if your breathing is affected by such things, you still should not force yourself to breathe in a certain way, but let your breath flow naturally. And if your breathing happens to be fast, you should give it time to settle.

In meditation practice, you place your attention on the out-breath. As you are breathing, you just go out with the breath and the breath dissolves. As you breathe in, you wait, and then go out again. It is very natural and very slow. When thoughts come up, you label them "thinking," and return to the breath. You have to be very precise about the whole thing;

you can't miss an inch. You should not think twice, thinking that you are thinking "thinking." It has to be right on the dot. When you breathe, you are utterly there, properly there; as you breathe out, you dissolve or diffuse. Then you come back to your posture, and you are ready for another out-breath. Over and over you come back to your posture, breathe out, and come back again. It is quite hard work. As the breath dissolves, it is becoming less important. As your breath goes out and begins to reach beyond you, there is space. You just keep breathing out and dissolving; breathing in just happens. So it is out . . . rest . . . out . . . rest. You don't use any tricks; you just put an emphasis on *out*. And while you are practicing, you should not think about what you're going to get out of meditation. You just do it.

Learning How to Let Go

As you practice, you should keep it very simple. After each breath goes out, there is a gap—not a big drop, just a gap. That gap could be felt. You might feel it as a moment of waiting, or expectation, or being ready for the next out-breath. As you breathe out, ideally about twenty-five percent of your awareness is on the out-breath. Beyond that, you don't need to be aware of anything—there is simply a gap—then you breathe out again. If you do not scheme, but just sit and follow your breath, that makes life very simple.

The sitting practice of meditation is basically: out-breath . . . dissolve . . . gap; out-breath . . . dissolve . . . gap; out-breath . . . dissolve . . . gap. Keep it at that level. If any jolt takes place, it is usually due to your posture, so your posture has to be extremely good. If your out-breath doesn't quite dissolve, it isn't quite out-breath; so each time you breathe, your practice has to be precise—very simple, very direct, and very accurate.

When you breathe out, you do so with some tension or tautness. You look at your breath, but you do not use it as a means of achieving absorption. Sounds, temperature, the feeling of your clothes, the food you might or might not have in your stomach, all sorts of pains in your joints, your back, your neck, and your arms—you could regard all those as thoughts. It is all thinking.

The out-breath is connected with the idea of letting go. You are always breathing out. When you talk, you breathe out; when you eat, you breathe out. Breathing out is not gymnastics, but simply learning how to

let go. You develop mindfulness as you let go. Mindfulness is in jeopardy when you are busy projecting toward something, or when your mind is distracted because you are trying to make sense of something as you are breathing out.

In meditation practice, you are in the process of developing action along with nonaction as you begin to touch the world. When you meditate, you have mindfulness of the breathing going out, then you cut that; then you have another mindfulness of the breathing going out, and you cut that. In other words, you go out with the transport—and suddenly you have no transport! Then you start again. In that way, the gap of the in-breath becomes extremely spacious. By focusing on the out-breath, your practice is not based on the ongoing speed of out-and-in, out-and-in, all the time. Instead, a leap is involved, a miniature leap. It takes a little effort, but you could feel very refreshed.

If you follow both the in-breath and the out-breath, you are being too faithful. The whole thing becomes very linear; you go out and you come in; you go out and you come in. If you go out and come in again and again, in the end that makes you very heady. You have no rest, and everything is extremely hard work. In contrast, when you go out, then nothing happens; then you go out again, and nothing happens—it is very clean-cut. The out-breath is threatening in a sense, but focusing on the out-breath is a much freer approach. If you allow yourself a rest as you breathe in, the out-breathing becomes more of a journey, however short that journey may be. You simply go out with the breath. When you do so, the body becomes insignificant, and space and breathing become more important. In fact, the breath is the most important part of the practice. Thoughts come up with the sense of body, the sense of "me" being here. However, if there is no central authority, if your practice is purely activity in space, thoughts become transparent.

Light Touch

As you breathe, you should not try to reach perfect breathing; you just breathe. Even animals can do that. Breathing obviously comes from your lungs and your nose, but if you are just feeling the breathing coming out of your nostrils, you are not feeling where it actually begins and how it flows. At first, your sense of the breathing may be very general and vague, but as your mindfulness of breathing continues, you experience the whole

process very specifically. There is a pattern as your breathing goes out, a sense of it really happening, so you do not have to focus on your nostrils. It is like hearing a noise: when you hear a noise, a sound traveling through space, you can relate with the sound rather than having to relate with your ears.

The practice of shamatha is environmental as well as technique oriented. In shamatha practice, a twenty-five-percent touch of awareness on the breath seems to be about right. In any case, you can't do more than that. Because you keep your eyes open, you see things; your ears are not clogged, so you hear things. You are aware of the way your clothes feel and of the temperature in the room. You are aware of your stomach being full or empty. If you took a shower before sitting, you feel clean. You feel your hairdo and the spectacles you are wearing. You feel whether your mouth is dry or wet. There are all sorts of little sensations like that, which leaves only about twenty-five percent of your awareness left for working with your breath.

That is a natural situation. You exist as a human being, and your sense perceptions are operating everywhere all the time. The idea of shamatha is to narrow all that down into twenty-five-percent awareness of the breath as a way of training yourself. You are internalizing a little, as opposed to trying to cast off the sights you see, the sounds you hear, the smells you smell, and the tastes you taste, and the physical sensations you experience. During your sitting practice, you reduce all that into the breath, which will be about twenty-five percent of your attention, if you calculate scientifically how much is going on in your body. You might as well come back to the breath. It is more joyful, more wholesome, and you don't have to be startled by anything. In shamatha, you are bringing the rest of the things going on in your existence back to one particular thing: the breath. It is very simple.

Relying on Guesswork

You may find that as you are keeping your heedfulness on the breathing, the thinking process continues to freely function at the same time. That is quite common; it happens with a lot of practitioners. Once you develop a feeling of the rhythm of the breath, you can be aware of the breathing and at the same time entertain yourself with all kinds of thoughts. The problem with that approach—by the way, it is not regarded as a problem

at the beginning—is that it is a sign that you are not properly in contact with the breathing. The monotonousness of the breathing leads you to rely on guesswork. You are just guessing that when you breathe in, you automatically breathe out. You are not in contact with the well-being of the breathing at all.

Counting the Breaths

Counting the breaths is very popular, even in the Kagyü tradition. You count every out-breath up to ten, and then you count back down to one. That seems to be the starting point of learning how to be able to relate with space and the outgoing breath. The counting makes special note that breathing is going out, even if your breathing is shallow or rough. The outgoing breathing has a label, it is named by numbers, but the incoming breath has no label: it is just preparing to count one, two, three, and so forth. So each time you count, one part of the breathing is more emphasized than the other. That is the counting technique.

However, I don't think counting the breaths is necessary, and in fact your concentration may be weakened by using the counting technique. If you are having difficulty meditating, the problem is that you do not sufficiently experience *being there.* Therefore, Jamgön Kongtrül recommended that if you really experience that quality of being, even if you have difficulty handling the awareness of breathing, you have no problem, so it is not necessary to count. I have been trying to follow his direction in emphasizing a sense of being.

Cool Boredom

Mindfulness of breathing is a way of creating obstacles to subconscious dreams and mental activities. The technique of mindfulness of breathing *should* provide obstacles. It is a nuisance that you have to keep hassling back to the breath. However, unless you are able to do that efficiently, you will not get properly bored, and if you do not get properly bored, you will not be in tune with the power of the practice. Everything may be happening very smoothly on the surface level, but you are not in tune with the magic of meditation practice or the spiritual energy of the lineage.

Boredom is important because boredom is anti-credential, anti-entertainment—and as we develop greater psychological sophistication, we

begin to appreciate such boredom. It becomes cool and refreshing, like a mountain river. That very real and genuine boredom, or "cool boredom," plays an extremely important role. In fact, we could quite simply say that the barometer of our accomplishment in meditation practice is how much boredom we create for ourselves. Cool boredom is rather light boredom: it has its uneasy quality, but at the same time it is not a big deal. Cool boredom is simply another expression of the experience of well-being. Cool boredom is like what mountains experience. With cool boredom, thought processes become less entertaining—they become transparent. Cool boredom is hopelessness at its most absolute level.

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Labeling Thoughts

Don't regard yourself as good or bad. You are just you, thinking and coming back to the breath. You are not trying to push thoughts away, nor are you trying to cultivate them. You are just labeling them "thinking." No matter what thought comes up, don't panic; just label it "thinking"—stop—and come back to your breath.

THE THINKING process takes place all the time. That is everybody's problem. In order to solve that particular problem, you have to discover what goes on in your mind. It is very direct and personal. In sitting practice, you spend at least eighty percent of your practice dealing with thoughts, but that does not mean you are being extraordinarily naughty or terrible. Even if you are so completely occupied with your thoughts that you do not have much time left to work with the technique, don't think you are being bad. You should feel grateful that your sitting practice is not one-hundred-percent thoughts! Eighty-percent thoughts is pretty good, so don't punish yourself. You are not doing anything wrong and you are not committing any sin.

In meditation practice, you regard everything that takes place in your mind—every little detail, every little explosion—as thinking. You are not trying to separate thoughts from emotions. If you feel angry at somebody; if you have a sudden burst of passion, your own private porn show; if you are going through cookbooks and visualizing beautiful food or drink; if you are on the coast swimming in the ocean or walking barefoot along the seashore—all those little outbursts of anger or passion are regarded as just thinking. Metaphysical dialogues or debates, evaluations of art and

music, questions of reality and enlightenment, ideas of mathematics and science, ideas of love and friendship—all those philosophical questions that come into your head are regarded as just thinking. Even if you have very dedicated thoughts or dharmic thoughts, they are still regarded as just thinking.

Regarding emotions as thoughts may seem dry, but when you have a strong thought it involves your whole being. For example, if you are in a battlefield, you can be shot to death by an enemy sniper at any time. That is a thought, but a very real thought. You think that to your right and to your left, your friends are turning into corpses instantaneously, and since you are standing in the middle you too could be a corpse pretty soon. Those are really strong thoughts. However, although such thoughts have some reference point of reality, they are still thoughts. Even when you take action, it is your thoughts that drive you into action. For instance, driving manuals talk about having a thinking distance, a braking distance, and a stopping distance. When a car in front of you stops, first you think about stopping, then you step on the brake, and finally you actually stop. It always works like that.

You might think you are making a breakthrough this very moment and that you are just about to dissolve into space. You might think you are going to kill your mother or father on the spot because you are so upset with them. You might think you are going to make love to somebody who is extraordinarily lovable. You might think you are about to have such a fantastic affair that it could exhaust the whole universe. You might have a thought of assassinating your guru, or you might want to make lemon juice and eat cookies. A large range of thinking goes on, but in terms of sitting practice, it does not matter whether you have monstrous thoughts or benevolent thoughts, sinful or virtuous thoughts—any thought is just thinking. So please don't be shocked by your thoughts, and don't think that any thought deserves a gold medal.

You do not need pigeonholes for all the concepts that arise. It doesn't make any difference whether you have good thoughts or bad thoughts, whether you think that you are the Buddha himself or you think you are in the realm of hell. It is all just thinking. Thoughts arise all the time. If you have a hierarchical bureaucracy in which every thought pattern that occurs in the mind is labeled as good or bad, all kinds of problems develop. When you feel hurt, you think about that; when you feel good, you think about that.

In the Buddhist approach, doubt is just a thought. Doubt could be said to be a powerful thought, but it is still a thought. You may have doubt as to whether doubt is a thought or not, but that doubt itself is a thought. Guilt is also just a thought. You do not try to get rid of guilt, and you do not try to feel that you are doing something worthwhile. If you have a guilty thought, so what? It is a thought. It is your mind.

In shamatha, you have to look at such thoughts, but not because they have a case history. It is like seeing rain, snow, a hailstorm, or a cloudy day—it's all just weather. This might seem too easy, but it is very useful to look at things in this way. We usually do not do so, however. If you are extremely angry with somebody and your wife comes along and tells you, "Darling, this is just your thought," then you get angry with her as well! You scream, "It's *not* just my thought! He did something wrong to me, and I am extremely angry. I want to kill him!" But we have to give up that idea. It seems to be a big thing to give up, but your wife is right—it is a thought.

We have to accept that all experiences are just thought patterns. Buddha said that when a musician plays a stringed instrument, both the strings and his fingers are his mind. According to Buddhist psychology, there are fifty-two different types of thought processes. Some are pious, some are political, some are domestic, some are sensible. But all of them are just thoughts. As far as meditators are concerned, that is the key. With that key, you begin to find that you can handle life as it happens around you. With so many pigeonholes, you cannot handle the whole thing. But once you begin to realize that everything is thought process, you can handle your life because nothing is complicated. Everything is thought.

The traditional technique for dealing with all those mental activities is mentally to note them and label them "thinking." Inevitably, once you are settled into your practice—*bing!*—there will be a thought. At that point you say "thinking," not out loud but mentally. Labeling thoughts in that way will give you tremendous leverage to come back to your breath. When a thought takes you over completely, so that you are not even on the cushion but somewhere else—in San Francisco or New York City—as soon as you notice, you say "thinking" and bring yourself back to the breath. You don't regard yourself as good or bad. You are just you, thinking and coming back to the breath. You are not trying to push thoughts away, nor are you trying to cultivate them. You are just labeling them

"thinking." No matter what thought comes up, don't panic; just label it "thinking"—stop—and go back to your breath.

By labeling thoughts "thinking," you are simply seeing them and acknowledging them as they are. You acknowledge everything as thoughts, as the thinking process, and come back to the technique. Labeling practice has to become instinctual. You can talk to yourself, but that is a second-rate experience, arising out of extreme boredom. It is not necessary to verbalize. Rather than saying, "Now I should get back to the breath," just come back! There has to be some abruptness. Introductory remarks as to what you are going to do are a waste of time.

Coming back to your breath is not regarded as suppression; it is returning to where you began. Your work has been interrupted, so you are coming back to it. It is as if you were chopping wood, then your friend came along and you got involved in a conversation. You tell your friend, "I must get back to work," rather than "I must suppress our conversation." You don't come back to the breath because things are becoming unpleasant, or use coming back to the breath as a protection or shield. At the shamatha level, whether a thought is unpleasant or pleasant doesn't really matter. You just label it "thinking," and come back to the breath.

If you seem to be working with the breathing and having thoughts at the same time, that means you are unable to identify completely with your breath. There is some deception in thinking that you can work with the thoughts and the breath at the same time. If a thought occurs along with the breathing, you are thinking; if a sense perception such as hearing occurs, you are thinking. You cannot hear without thinking. If you hear a sound, you know which kind of sound it is, whether it is music or a gunshot. You cannot hear without categorizing, so you are still thinking. Everything is thinking. It goes on everywhere continually. We have not yet come to any conclusion as to whose fault that is. Instead, we just label everything "thinking," as in "I think I have a mosquito on my face."

Meditation practice is very simple and straightforward. Don't try to make a big game out of it. If you keep it simple, there is no confusion. While you are practicing, you should not think about what you are going to get out of it. You just do it. Also, unless it is practically necessary, it is very important not to think about what you are going to do after meditating. You should just settle down into the practice.

Everything that comes up in your mind is just thought process. It is thinking. Thinking might bring something else—nonthinking—but we

are a long way from experiencing that. As far as the hinayana is concerned, no mahayana exists. Everything is hinayana, the narrow path. In shamatha practice, you regard everything as thought. When you sit, you should think, "There are no nonthoughts." Even techniques are thoughts. That is straight shamatha, without soda and ice.

34
Cutting Thoughts and Short-Circuiting the Kleshas

A sense of knowing, or seeing, always happens. If you are willing to acknowledge its existence, there is the potential of being wakeful, open, and precisely there constantly. This is not based on being a sharp person, a smart person, or a very careful person. Rather, it is about being a person who can actually be—by yourself, very simply.

Pagyö: A Residue of Mindfulness

The result of shamatha practice is pagyö, a residue of mindfulness. *Pag* means "residue," and *yö* means "possessing"; so *pagyö* means "possessing residue." Pagyö is also translated as "conscientiousness" or "being heedful." *Pag* refers to deposits of little fungi found on rocks. In Tibet, we used these fungi, which are sometimes orange or red, and sometimes yellow or jade green, to color our *tormas,* or ritual cakes.

Residues are produced when what you experience on the spot is confirmed by your previous experience. Residues are partly a matter of memory, and partly a matter of what you are presently experiencing. Having such residues gives you something to connect with. Based on your experience of this world, you always have a residue of something or other. When you look at red, you have a residue of red, and when you look at white, you have a residue of white. Such residues enter into your system,

and those inputs should be acknowledged. Then you can begin to see things as they are. It's very basic.

The point of mindfulness is not to be aware of possible dangers, or to watch out in case something might go wrong. Mindfulness means being there on the spot, along with your residue. If somebody attracts your attention by saying, "Look out!" or "Look at this!" you do not have to be cautious; you could just look. You could raise your eyebrows and say, "What's going on?" You could be mildly attentive and inquisitive.

Sometimes pagyö is described as the gaze of an elephant. An elephant is not usually easy to startle. If you make a loud noise or if you throw a firecracker in front of an elephant, it just looks around. It has that "So what?" kind of approach. An elephant doesn't get excited. Likewise, pagyö is tentative but highly keen. You cannot be startled and you do not panic—you just have a residue of mindfulness. Pagyö is also referred to as decorum. Since you have developed perspective, sophistication, and subtlety, you are aware of what is going on. Pagyö is a very positive idea.

Tren-she: Recollection and Knowing

From mindfulness also stems *trenpa,* or "recollection," and *sheshin,* or "knowing." *Trenpa* can also mean "wakefulness." With trenpa, you are fully there, but you are not particularly overwhelmed by anything. Trenpa is a process of discovery in which you are touched precisely, rather than being overwhelmed by emotions or excitement. In the process of trenpa, you make very precise discoveries about yourself constantly.

With trenpa you have some kind of memory or recollection, and sheshin is a check on those recollections. *She* means "knowing," and *shin* means "as it is"; so *sheshin* means "knowing as it is." Sheshin is the kind of knowledge that makes you feel at home in the world, rather than regarding the world as a strange place and not knowing how to handle it. Sheshin functions within the environment of trenpa. Once you have a memory, you check it with what is happening in the present. It's like renting a car: if you rent a new car, you automatically refresh your memory of how to drive; you check out the gearshift, the brakes, the lights, and the steering wheel. Trenpa is the possibility of working with what is happening, and sheshin is actually dealing with what is happening.

The main point of trenpa and sheshin is that a sense of knowing, or seeing, always happens. If you are willing to acknowledge its existence, there is the potential of being wakeful, open, and precisely there constantly. This is not based on being a sharp person, a smart person, or a very careful person. Rather, it is about being a person who can actually *be*—by yourself, very simply. In our lineage, one example of such a person was His Holiness the sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa. It may be rare, but it is possible that one could *be,* and at the same time act.

The combination of trenpa and sheshin, of recollection and knowing, is called *tren-she.* Tren-she is the kind of recollection that connects the past and the present together. For instance, you may remember that if you step in a puddle with your shoes on, it is likely that the water will run into your shoes, and your socks will get wet and dirty. It is something you have done before; therefore, you know what's going to happen if you do it again. The traditional analogy for tren-she is that of a warning, but I would like to correct that analogy. Tren-she does not simply mean being warned about something bad—it is realizing that you should be on the dot.

Tren-she is not concentrated awareness; it is a more general sense of awareness. For instance, if you are wearing a bright red coat, you are aware of the redness and brightness around you, and whether your coat is made of wool or cotton. Likewise, you are aware of your posture, your head and shoulders, and whether you are wearing your glasses or not, a watch or not, stockings or no stockings. That intrinsic awareness we always generate is like antennae. We know that "I have a beard" or "I have earrings on" or "I have a safety pin in my trousers to hold them up." We are aware of things of that nature, beyond simply being aware of the in-breath and out-breath.

With tren-she, you know what you know and what you have without being told. It is almost at the level of clairvoyance. For example, you may get a sudden flash that your father is in trouble, and it turns out to be true. That sense of tren-she is the very early stage of the development of superconsciousness or clairvoyance. However, you should be very careful about such things. You might have an image of your father falling down and find out that he is perfectly well and happy in Miami Beach! So things could be other than you think. Nonetheless, when tren-she takes place on the spot in your existence, you simply know. Tren-she allows you to be very sensitive and very precise.

Overcoming the Six Root Kleshas

The result of pagyö and tren-she is that you are able to use your awareness to overcome the six root kleshas: ignorance, aggression, passion, pride, jealousy, and avarice.* Kleshas intensify your claustrophobia and pain. They are the density of your mind, which brings further denseness, like a sponge soaked in oil. They are blockage. You are so thoroughly absorbed in the kleshas that there is no room to breathe. It is quite detrimental. Kleshas are connected with the naive desire to get what's best, without knowing how to get hold of it.

Ignorance

The klesha process begins with ignorance. The klesha of ignorance is not original ignorance, or avidya, but just naiveté, or delusion. It is basic, ordinary simpleton-mentality. In Tibetan, ignorance is *timuk. Ti* means "just so," and *muk* means "falling asleep" or "covered up"; so *timuk* means "just so, you are covered up." It is like being cross-eyed and becoming even more cross-eyed. *Muk* also means "dust." It is the thick fog that surrounds you while you are sitting there being cross-eyed.

Aggression

The second klesha is aggression, or *shedang* in Tibetan. You want to feel good, and if you can't, you get angry. In the English language, the word *aggression* can mean speediness, or a fast-moving and heavy-handed quality; but *shedang* very specifically means "hatred." In this case, *she* means "intention," and *dang* means "to expel," or "to pierce out"; so *shedang* means "wholeheartedly wanting to pierce out," which amounts to wanting to hurt somebody. You want to puncture somebody with your weapon. Once you are in an aggressive communication with somebody, you are in cahoots with him. You have a connection, otherwise you couldn't become

* The six root kleshas are an expansion of the three poisons as depicted in the wheel of life in the form of a rooster, a snake, and a pig, symbolizing passion, aggression, and ignorance. In different contexts, Trungpa Rinpoche uses variant forms of the primary six kleshas, most commonly: (1) passion, aggression, ignorance, greed, envy, and pride, and (2) desire, anger, pride, ignorance, doubt, and opinion.

angry with him. And when you hate someone, you want to tear him from the inside out.

Passion

Wanting comfort, wanting to feel good, brings passion, or *döchak* in Tibetan, the third root klesha. Because you hate yourself, because you are bored with yourself, you want something to occupy you, something to make you feel better. You want to entertain yourself. *Dö* means "wanting," or "longing," and *chak* means "glued to"; so *döchak* is "wanting to be glued to somebody or something." It's sort of like the end product of chewing gum. The word *chakpa* also means "lust."

Pride

Out of passion comes arrogance, or pride. You not only want to be entertained; you feel that you really *deserve* something good. You don't want to be scolded by your environment or your world. Arrogance, or pride, is *nga-gyal* in Tibetan. *Nga is* the word for "I," or "myself," and *gyal* means victory"; so *nga-gyal* is "my victory," or "I-victory." With arrogance, you want to be on top, to have the upper hand. It is one-upmanship—me-upmanship.

Jealousy

The fifth klesha is jealousy, or *tragdok* in Tibetan. You become very hungry, and you begin to think that other people are getting better treatment than you. It may be purely your imagination, but other people seem to be doing better than you, so you become jealous. *Trag* means "shoulders," and *dok* means "claustrophobia," "not enough space," or "tight," so *tragdok* means "tight shoulders." The idea is that you do not have enough room to be macho. You feel so claustrophobic that you can't even extend your shoulders.

Avarice

Last, but not least, is avarice, or *serna* in Tibetan. You don't want to give anything away, you don't want to share anything. You don't want to spend your money, but you would like to hold on to whatever you have. You

become filled with avarice. *Serna* literally means "yellow nose": *ser* means "yellow," and *na* means "nose." Each time you have to spend money, each time you have to extend your hospitality, you touch your nose, thinking, "Should I do this or not?" As a result, your nose becomes yellow, at least from the Tibetan point of view—maybe we should say "pink nose" for Westerners.

This list of six root kleshas is several thousand years old, if not even older. Our beloved teacher, the Lord Buddha, pointed out to us that we have these six problems. In fact, our whole samsaric existence—all our misery and all our problems—can be summed up by these six defilements. They govern our life. However, the kleshas can be overcome.

As you become more involved in the dharma, you develop greater certainty. You begin to realize that your own neurosis is no longer unreachable or incurable. By means of the sitting practice of shamatha and the awareness training of vipashyana, you have the possibility of actually getting in touch with your fundamental neurosis.

When you have committed yourself to the path and received directions for journeying on the path, you automatically experience a sense of reality. When the kleshas arise, you join your kleshas with the practice of mindfulness and awareness. You rub your awareness and your kleshas together, like rubbing two sticks together to start a fire. When you rub hard enough, you produce fire, and that flame burns both sticks at once—the awareness as well as the kleshas. So awareness is a temporary tool. Since one part does not give an inch, the other part does not receive an inch, so it is a mutual suicide. That is the basic idea of liberation, or nirvana, which comes from sitting practice. Sitting practice gives you no feedback of any kind; therefore, your kleshas don't get any nourishment.

Even at the level of profound hinayana-wisdom, both the technique and what the technique is applied to could be used up. Because of that, you can attain shinjang. When you attain shinjang, you are not supposed to have your technique hanging out, or the result of your technique hanging out. That would be like having cotton batting with a thorn inside it. Complete shinjang is like an eiderdown quilt: everything is thorough, comfortable, and straight. Shinjang is not a fairy tale, but a real possibility.

Ideally, we actually can cut our thoughts and short-circuit our kleshas. We can begin to go beyond the kleshas and realize the possibility of egolessness. At that point, the tool and what that tool is applied to destroy

each other simultaneously, leaving us with nothing to hang on to. We realize that we do not need a savior or a "savee" or salvation. We can actually do without that extra baggage altogether. We see that individual salvation is like eating *momos,* or Tibetan dumplings: there is dough wrapped around meat, a container and what is contained, and we are supposed to eat the whole thing.

Such an inspiration can only come from the relaxation of having taken the refuge vow. As many teachers have said, if you do not take refuge, there is still the possibility of becoming sidetracked. When you take the refuge vow, you begin to find freedom. It makes you feel healthy and good. You realize that from now onward, there is only one journey. The journeyer and the journey become one single situation. You finally understand that individual salvation is indeed individual—and at the same time, it is universal.

38
Mixing Mind with Space

One of the problems meditators experience is that there is a slight, almost subconscious, guilty feeling that they ought to be doing something rather than just experiencing what goes on. When you begin to feel that you ought to be doing something, you automatically present millions of obstacles to yourself. Meditation is not a project; it is a way of being. You could experience that you are what you are. Fundamentally, sitting there and breathing is a very valid thing to do.

IN THE Kagyü tradition, we employ a special practice technique, which is the experiencing of *chung ne dro sum. Chung* is where the thoughts arise, *ne* is where they dwell, and *dro* is where they go, so *chung ne dro sum* is where the thoughts arise, dwell, and go. Those three are accompanied by the practice of *ying rik sewa. Ying* means "space," *rik* means "conscious mind," and *sewa* means "mixing"; so *ying rik sewa* means "mixing the conscious mind with space." Sometimes it is called *lung sem sewa*: "mixing the mind and breathing." *Lung* means "wind" or "air," *sem* is "mind," and *sewa* again means "mixing." In either case, the idea is to experience space. You do not need to deliberately try to mix the mind with the breathing with a solemn effort. Instead, you are simply in contact with the breathing. It is similar to the way that you feel the well-being of your body.

In being mindful of where the thoughts come from, where the thoughts dwell, and where the thoughts vanish, it is not that you are supposed to manufacture a thought and then let it come, let it dwell, and let it go. You have thoughts in any case, and you can be with them. As one

thought vanishes, the next thought begins to arise; and by the time the next thought has arisen, the previous thought has already disappeared. You cannot usually experience the vanishing of a thought purely by itself, because to be aware of that thought you sustain it, so you do not really see the vanishing. The vanishing of a thought is seen in terms of the contrast of another idea coming up, at which point the previous thought has already subsided. The arising and dissolving of a thought is not exactly simultaneous, but the beginning, middle, and end happen very fast. When you acknowledge thoughts, they arise; in the process of acknowledging them, they dwell; after you acknowledge them, they drop. Acknowledging the dwelling of a thought does not mean staying with it for a long time, but just experiencing it as your thought. It is very simple.

Thoughts are generally connected with one or another of the eight types of consciousness, which are the working base for the practice of meditation. In meditation practice, you do not exaggerate the different levels of consciousness or disrespect them, but you have balance and respect. Generally, you begin with your physical well-being. You begin with your posture and your sense of discomfort or comfort. Your sense perceptions—the visions, sounds, sensations, tastes, smells, and thoughts that you experience—act as the fuse for your practice. Then, when those sense consciousnesses begin to wear themselves out a little bit, you become slightly bored with them and turn to the subconscious mind. Conversations are replayed, or particular events in your life are projected back to you in the form of a cinema show. Then there is a gap—a little gap where things don't happen and nothing occurs in the mind.

Physically, you may be comfortable and at rest with the sounds you hear and the visions that you see around you. You may be somewhat settled down. But then you dig up further excitement by looking into your personal relationships and emotional involvements with people. Are people being nice or nasty to you? Maybe you remember a particular scene, and experience the jealousy and passion you felt in that context, or maybe you plan your future. All kinds of thoughts begin to come up—and all of them should be experienced. If I say that you should be aware of the thoughts, then you will get into the area of being watchful, which is a project, and you will find that you are becoming a slave of your own awareness. That approach to practice does not work—it is too self-conscious—so I prefer the word *experience* to *awareness*.

The meditation technique universally used in all Buddhist traditions is mindfulness of the breathing, because breathing is an expression of being. For instance, you check whether a person is dead or just completely passed out by feeling whether the person is breathing or not. There is nothing particularly mystical about breathing. For instance, I do not think the early Buddhists thought about breathing in terms of prana, or life force; they were just breathing.

Traditionally, just being there is the outcome of the breathing technique. However, in the Tibetan tradition of formless meditation, you can also meditate without focusing on the breathing. The *shikantaza* practice of "just sitting," from the Japanese Zen tradition, is similar. Some people find it easy to do formless meditation without focusing on the breathing. If they are provided with a short session of sitting practice, it is easy for them to just be there because they do not have to hassle with any technique. However, for long-term sitting practice, it would be advisable to start with the mindfulness of breathing. Later, the awareness of breathing falls away, and at that point you just go along without it. That seems to be the best, most systematic approach.

In terms of both breathing and formless meditation, one of the problems meditators experience is that there is a slight, almost subconscious, guilty feeling that they ought to be doing something rather than just experiencing what goes on. When you begin to feel that you ought to be doing something, you automatically present millions of obstacles to yourself. Meditation is not a project; it is a way of being. You could experience that you are what you are. Fundamentally, sitting there and breathing is a very valid thing to do.

46
Glimpses of Emptiness

Vipashyana experience and practice is absolutely necessary for a person who follows the Buddhist path and really wants to understand the dharma. Both intellectually and intuitively, vipashyana practice is necessary. You have to make an acquaintance with yourself. You have to meet yourself, to know who you are and what you are. Without vipashyana experience, you do not have any idea of who you are, what you are, how you are, or why you are, at all!

To understand buddhadharma, a person must meditate under the guidance of a teacher and be properly trained in vipashyana. Without an understanding of vipashyana, such discoveries as the four noble truths or egolessness cannot be completely comprehended or experienced.

Vipashyana practice is divided into various categories. In one system, vipashyana is divided into lower vipashyana and higher vipashyana. Lower vipashyana is a shamatha-type of vipashyana, based purely on concentration; higher vipashyana is more inspirational, based on such insights as discovering the four noble truths.

In another system, vipashyana is divided into two aspects: discriminating awareness and immovability. Discriminating awareness is the ability to see clearly, and through that clarity to develop definite mindfulness practice. Immovability is a kind of absorption in which awareness is constantly present and stable, and cannot move or shift. Different degrees of immovability happen in the various stages of vipashyana. Immovability is a pow-

erful experience, based on the confidence that you have found the correct path, and therefore you cannot forget it. You finally realize that there is no other practice than this. You have been converted to vipashyana, and you have faith and trust in it.

Three Stages of Vipashyana

Traditional texts describe three stages that are very important to understand in connection with vipashyana: *chipa nyerchö,* or "acting like an infant"; *ro-nyam* or "equal taste"; and *teshin mikpa,* or "seeing things as they are."

Acting like an Infant

The first stage is called chipa nyerchö. *Chipa* means "infant," *chö* means "acting," and *nyer* means "being closer to it"; so *chipa nyerchö* means the "acting like an infant" level of meditation experience. Chipa nyerchö is the first glimpse of vipashyana. It is like teaching an infant to walk. Chipa nyerchö develops from very intense shamatha practice, which brings up what are called "visions of emptiness."

When you suddenly stop speeding and you become absolutely still, you get a kind of backfire of speed within the stillness. Because you are so confused between stillness and speed, you create visions, or hallucinations, which do not have any substance. The Japanese Zen people call such hallucinations *makyo.* Such nonexistent hallucinations have no root or background. Things shift in front of your eyes, or you begin to see smoke passing by. You might begin to have a sense that your toes are gigantic and your body is tiny, or you have a gigantic head and a small body. You might think the ceiling is sinking above your head, or your zafu is shifting around. Your vision changes and all kinds of sounds are heard. Some people hear a complete orchestra, with singing and chanting. Different tingling sensations occur in the body. Sometimes there is terror that you don't exist.* Such experiences may seem profound, but as long as there is humor or play, I don't think they are a problem.

* When a student asked at this point what that experience of terror was like, Trungpa Rinpoche replied, "I suppose more or less like this," and continued to sit normally.

Equal Taste

The second stage is called ro-nyam. *Ro* is "taste," and *nyam* means "equal"; so *ro-nyam* means "equal taste." Ro-nyam is a slightly higher stage, a little bit more on the adult level. You begin to experience the four noble truths and you also begin to experience the simplicity of awareness, so although the sensorial hallucinations might continue, they don't mean anything to you. There is a quality of one flavor, or one taste. Your shamatha practice continues in a very solid way. You have developed mental stability and you are able to stay with the practice. Because you are already completely involved with shamatha, you also begin to see the simplicity and straightforwardness of vipashyana. So at the second stage, or ro-nyam, shamatha and vipashyana are combined. That combination is the goal of the Burmese meditation schools in particular. They highly recommend the second category of vipashyana as a most important experience.

Seeing Things as They Are

The third stage is called teshin mikpa. *Te* means "that," *shin* means "like"; so *teshin* means "like that." *Mikpa* is "perception," "understanding," or "knowledge"; so *teshin mikpa* means "seeing things as they are," which is known as the mahavipashyana experience. The mahavipashyana experience creates a link between hinayana and mahayana practice, in that you begin to experience emptiness, or shunyata. *Shunya* means "empty," and *ta* makes it a noun; so *shunyata* means "emptiness." You sense that you are basically shunya, or empty. Your psychological makeup, the embellishments you indulge in, and your thought process are all nonexistent. Because awareness is very direct, precise, and simple, it brings spaciousness and a glimpse of shunyata. You begin to see not only simplicity, but emptiness, or intangibility. In mahavipashyana, a quality of conviction begins to take place, a primitive shunyata experience. So mahavipashyana is a step further than ro-nyam, because with mahavipashyana you have a glimpse that you are inherently nothing—not as a meditation experience alone, but as a kind of fundamental devastation.

In mahavipashyana, there's an enormous feeling of being helped "out" rather than helped "in." You are pulled out of whatever realm you are in, into a realm, or psychological state, that is completely empty. You begin to realize that you do not have an origin, and you don't belong anywhere.

You are treading on a path that is a path in terms of experience but is no longer a concrete path, so there is a lot of fear. It is as if you are riding and you lose your grip on the reins, or as if your car begins to go by itself and the steering wheel doesn't work. Something slowly begins to take over so that the path comes to you; you don't go to the path. Practice becomes constantly apparent. It is in your mind all the time, so there is a lot of fear and a lot of concern.

But mahavipashyana experience can also lead to celebration. It depends on your attitude. If your attitude is that the world is playing a trick on you, you will complain to everybody, or at least try to find a source of complaint, so that your ground will be solid and your ideas will be appreciated. However, if you don't have that attitude of competitiveness, then realizing that there is no ground becomes a source of celebration and joy.

At this stage, the experience that you have nothing to hold on to is continual. And that experience will go on, until at a certain level of vajrayana it takes a different form, with further sophistication. However, in this case it is just the simple experience that you exist, but at the same time you do not have any ground. You have no ground because awareness is constant, and the characteristic of awareness is emptiness. Awareness does not have a portrait, a reflection, or identification. So a positive feeling of nothingness becomes very real at the stage of teshin mikpa, or mahavipashyana experience.

In mahavipashyana, it is as though you have been released. It is like catching a fly and throwing it out the window so that the fly flies away rather than being squashed on the table. The idea of release or liberation in mahavipashyana discipline is to have a glimpse of groundlessness. The basic idea is that the closer you are to enlightened mind, the more your development takes you in that direction, the more groundless you are.

In terms of the idea of egolessness, the closer you are to enlightenment, the less ego there is. Egolessness is the root of vipashyana. Since the ego provides an ongoing ground and reference point, you are losing your foundation; therefore, you are helped "out." You lose your reference point and you become thinner and thinner, so to speak. Vipashyana experience cannot be given birth to, developed, or taught unless there is some understanding of egolessness. At the mahavipashyana level, you have been introduced to the egolessness of self, and you are just about to be introduced to the egolessness of phenomena. But you haven't actually been completely introduced yet—you just have a "flu" of it.

In ordinary language, shamatha is simply the experience of concentration. It has been said in the texts that even hunters develop shamatha. By one-pointedness with the target, hunters develop their mindfulness or concentration. So you could develop a form of shamatha independent of vipashyana, but to shift from that to a Buddhist-type of concentration, or shamatha, you have to have some experience of, or feeling for, egolessness. You have a sense that there is that possibility, that it is just about to present itself to you, and you practice in that way.

Mahavipashyana is influenced by the mahayana. When you become highly trained in the hinayana and thoroughly absorbed in shamatha practice, your outlook and your experience naturally become mahayana-like. No matter which hinayana school you may be in, the various doctrinal or philosophical labels and distinctions are irrelevant as far as you are concerned.

Unless you develop vipashyana and realize the importance of wakefulness, you will have only a very distant view of vajrayana or even the higher levels of mahayana. It is necessary to have that kind of basic training and growth. So vipashyana experience and practice is absolutely necessary for a person who follows the Buddhist path and really wants to understand the dharma. Both intellectually and intuitively, vipashyana practice is necessary. You have to make an acquaintance with yourself. You have to meet yourself, to know who you are and what you are. Without vipashyana experience, you don't have any idea of who you are, what you are, how you are, or why you are, at all! So it is very important and absolutely necessary to respect the need for vipashyana experience and practice.

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Investigating the Subtleties of Experience

Our teachers have taught us that it is necessary to conquer both undisciplined mind and individualistic mind. Undisciplined mind is conquered by shamatha practice; individualistic mind is conquered by vipashyana.

A REALIZATION AND understanding of shamatha will help you to hear the teachings properly. When you receive instructions for practice, if you do not hear the whole thing, it is going to be very difficult for you. It is like asking somebody for directions: if you only hear part of the answer, you will never get anywhere. Therefore, shamatha discipline is important in studying the experiences and practices of the nine-yana tradition.

Vipashyana is the insight that brings you to realize things very clearly and fully. The greater reference point of vipashyana includes both the meditation and the postmeditation experience. With vipashyana, there is no gap of any kind between sitting and nonsitting. Your entire life, twenty-four hours a day, is pure awareness.

When you are completely captivated, captured on your cushion by intensive shamatha discipline, you wonder, "What's going to happen next? How am I going to study the dharma? How am I going to make this work for me?" That kind of inquisitive mind and awareness is the beginning of becoming not only a good sitter, but also a good student of dharma. That is why prajna is important. It is the ability to separate dharmas and to comprehend the teachings. Prajna is connected with awareness, and awareness is a result of being perked up by shamatha.

With shamatha you develop delight and joy, as if you have just had a very good appetizer; and with vipashyana, you wonder what the actual meal will be. However, I would like to make it clear that in this case the appetizer is not regarded as a subsidiary of the main course—the appetizer is a meal in itself. So you have to pay close attention and eat your appetizer properly. In fact, the appetizer continues throughout the whole meal, in the same way that shamatha practice continues throughout the whole of Buddhist practice.

Four Categories of Vipashyana

There are four categories of vipashyana: discriminating dharmas, fully discriminating dharmas, completely comprehending dharmas, and completely investigating dharmas.

Discriminating Dharmas

The first category is being able to discriminate dharmas, which in Tibetan is *chö nampar jepa. Chö* means *dharma,* but in this case *dharma* does not mean teachings; it means any "entity," any "knowledge," any "knowable situation." *Nampar* means "varieties," and *jepa* means "separating"; so *chö nampar jepa* means "separating dharmas." There is so much to learn, so much to know, but you are not overwhelmed by that. You are willing to jump into the giant ocean of dharmas, the ocean of information and experiences. When you develop awareness, you are aware of all the things that are happening in your life and in your world, but you are not overwhelmed. You can handle each situation according to its own particular merit, style, or virtue. Some kind of intelligence is working in you, both during your sitting practice and when you walk out of the shrine room. You see everything clearly.

When you first begin to experience vipashyana awareness, you might be completely shocked. It is like putting on your first pair of glasses: you realize how many things you have missed. However, when you begin to see clearly, you also realize how many things are irritating, so you might prefer to take your glasses off or throw them in the wastepaper basket. You may not really want to perceive that much phenomenal reality; you feel so naked. You don't want to go all the way; you prefer to walk away from that nakedness rather than face reality. That turning away is

due to a lack of awareness and a lack of mindfulness, the "ignorance is bliss" approach. In contrast, vipashyana is a natural process of brightening yourself up and seeing things clearly. And you are able to do so because you have already developed mindfulness, so mindfulness and awareness work together. Vipashyana and shamatha are fundamentally inseparable.

Fully Discriminating Dharmas

The second category of vipashyana is *raptu jepa,* which means "fully able to separate." *Raptu* means "very much," and *jepa,* again, means "separating," so *raptu jepa* means "fully separating." At this stage, having caught a glimpse of phenomenal objects, not only are you not startled by how detailed they are, but you actually want to investigate them. You become more daring in relating with your world. For instance, if you are having some fantastic private pornographic subconscious gossip in your mind, at first you are completely shocked, but then you want to find out where that visualization is coming from. So you don't just close the door; once you have seen what's in your mind, you investigate. You feel out what's happening; you experience it. You do this, not in order to fulfill your lust, but purely in order to find out where in the name of heaven and earth it is coming from. You want to find out how things occur and what they are like. You want to know what texture they have, whether solid or transitory or flighty or flickering or mushy or flowing.

Whatever occurs, the idea of this second category is that you investigate that particular phenomenon. If somebody in the street says, "Fuck you!" you investigate. What does that mean? What kind of reaction do you have? Who said it? Why did it happen? Why you? What is the environment? Is it a rainy day or a snowy day or a sunny day? You happen to hear those particular words from that particular person, and you begin to react to them, to have afterthoughts—and you look with awareness into how such situations happen. But be careful—this does not mean analyzing everything from the point of view of Freudian psychology, or trying to find out whether your fantasies represent this or that. For example, if you have an itch on your cheek, you may not know whether it's a bedbug bite or a mosquito bite or whether you haven't washed your face, but it doesn't really matter—you have an itch. With vipashyana, you are looking at dharmas directly and finding out how they arise, dwell, and disappear

in your life and in your mind. That is why vipashyana is referred to simply as insight, or clear thinking. It is very clear thinking.

Completely Comprehending Dharmas

The third category is *yongsu tokpa,* which means "completely comprehending." *Yongsu* means "completely," "thoroughly," and *tokpa* means "comprehending," so *yongsu tokpa* means "completely comprehending." With yongsu tokpa, you are experiencing thoughts of a very crude nature. You experience the big ups and downs, which are very aggressive, very passionate, or very ignorant. Whether such thoughts occur during sitting practice or during the postmeditation experience, you could study them and look at them. You could exert your awareness on them.

This is not the same as being mindful of thoughts. In mindfulness practice, you are just seeing thoughts and labeling them "thinking." Here, there is a more general awareness of the presence of crude thoughts. With an awareness of the atmosphere created by your crude thought process—your passion, aggression, or ignorance—you are able to see such thoughts one by one, rather than suddenly being hit by some big thought and being completely overwhelmed. When you are surprised in that way, you may want to call for help or take an aspirin, but when you practice insight, you are not overwhelmed because you are able to dissect your emotions, to separate one from another.

For instance, when a thought of tremendous aggression suddenly occurs, you may feel overwhelmed and start to sweat, but then you apply your awareness. You look at your thoughts and you dissect them. You notice how they arise, how they dwell, and how they disappear. Even if they do not disappear, the first flash disappears, and you have the chance to see the second flash coming into your state of mind. So even if a gigantic pterodactyl runs into you, you don't just scream. First you look at it and see whether you are in a prehistoric situation or not. Realizing that you are still in the twentieth century, you say, "This couldn't happen. Where did this pterodactyl come from? How did it land in front of me? How did this happen?" You don't panic; you just examine what has happened to you.

There is a sense of decency about this. When crude emotions land on your lap and they are glaring at you, you don't just say, "Aagh!" Instead, you see them and dissect them with your vipashyana. This is possible

because you have practiced enough shamatha to begin with; therefore, your mind is able to handle anything that happens. Once you have worked with shamatha thoroughly, your mind is like Play-Doh, so you have no problem working with anything that comes up—you cannot be shocked.

Completely Investigating Dharmas

The fourth category is *yongsu chöpa,* which means "completely investigating." *Yongsu* means "completely," and *chöpa* means "investigating," or sometimes "theorizing," or "studying," so *yongsu chöpa* means "completely investigating." Yongsu chöpa is a much more refined investigating than number three, yongsu tokpa, because the thoughts being seen are so minute. Completely investigating does not refer to obvious thoughts that are very easy to comprehend, but to the small, meaningless, and insignificant flickers of thought that occur. With yongsu chöpa, you also apply vipashyana to those types of thoughts.

Sometimes you will find that small thoughts are being investigated by small awareness, so it looks as if one subconscious gossip is chasing another subconscious gossip. When you find a little idea in your life being looked at by a little effort, you may think you are perpetuating the whole thing, but that's not the case. In this fourth category of vipashyana, the chaser, so to speak, has awareness. What's being chased—that little thought, or that little, little thought—could be insignificant, meaningless, and almost harmless, but we are trying to make sure that nothing gets away. We have to cover the whole ground completely, as much as we can. We have to investigate whatever goes on in our ego-mind.

The idea of looking into that level of thought process may seem small, but the practice of vipashyana is very tidy and precise. You investigate where those small thoughts come from. You might simply have a memory of your grandfather eating his sandwich twenty years ago, and you might remember how he used to slur his words while he ate his sandwich. You might remember seeing a tree on your way to somewhere or other. Meaningless thoughts like that also have to be conquered, otherwise you cannot develop discriminating-awareness wisdom. You have to apply a blanket approach to awareness.

When you practice shamatha, you are still involved with effort, hard work. Vipashyana is somewhat effortless, but it is more watchful, so in a sense you could say that it takes *more* effort. You are not allowing any gaps

in your awareness—none whatsoever! When you practice mindfulness, you concentrate on one particular area, and when you stop concentrating on that one area, you relax. However, that relaxation is looked at by awareness, so the pinpoint as well as the sense of general radiation is covered completely.

Our teachers have taught us that it is necessary to conquer both undisciplined mind and individualistic mind. Undisciplined mind is conquered by shamatha practice; individualistic mind is conquered by vipashyana. Vipashyana is based on dealing with the ego—with the distant territory of ego as well as its more immediate territory. We are trying to attack our ego, mock it, conquer it, invade it, subjugate it. Individualism, or ego, means that which is not seen as a working basis for the general atmosphere of awareness. Wandering mind, confusion, and the inability to discipline oneself—all of those factors derive from the fundamental principle of ego.

What is the root of all this? Why do we practice vipashyana at all? We understand that it will be helpful to us, but why is that so? If we approach practice in the style of mental gymnastics, it is like expecting that if we do lots of exercises, our body will get in shape. But what are we getting in shape for? Why are we doing this at all, in the name of heaven and earth? It has to do with ego! So as you continue sitting and working with your basic shamatha discipline, you could add in a little bit of vipashyana, or awareness. In fact, you could practice vipashyana during all your waking hours. While you're taking a shower, while you're brushing your hair, while you're pressing your clothes, or while you're preparing your cup of tea, it would be helpful to practice vipashyana.

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Sharpening One's Perception

Vipashyana is the heart of the buddhadharma. It sets the general tone of the psychology of Buddhism. A Buddhist has clear thinking and an objective view of the world. He or she is able to recognize and use relative logic. There is no chance that such a person will be swayed by fascinations or extremes. With vipashyana, everything becomes very precise and very direct.

WHATEVER IS knowable in the world, of either relative or transcendent nature, can be understood and experienced by means of vipashyana meditation. Vipashyana leads to a complete understanding of the knowable. This does not mean that you will become a great scholar by practicing vipashyana, but that the attitude and approach of vipashyana opens your way of thinking, so that obstacles to learning are no longer prominent.

THE SIX DISCOVERIES

There are several attributes of vipashyana experience, based largely on the intellectual sharpness developed, rather than simply on the meditative experience. These attributes develop out of the four categories of vipashyana: discriminating dharmas, fully discriminating dharmas, completely comprehending dharmas, and completely investigating dharmas. The Tibetan term for attribute, *tsölwa,* means "searching," but in this context, I thought "discovery" would be a better translation. The point is

that through vipashyana, by means of hearing and seeing the dharma, you make six discoveries, or six types of tsölwa.

Meaning: Discovering the Meaning of Words

The first discovery is discovering the meaning of words, or *tön tsölwa*. *Tön* is "meaning," and *tsölwa* is "discovery," so *tön tsölwa* is the "discovery of meaning." In this discovery, you are relying more on the sense of the teachings than on the words. You develop trust in yourself as you begin to realize that you have the potential of knowledge and wisdom within you. You realize that dharma is a question of waking up, rather than painfully cultivating knowledge.

Tön tsölwa means that you have an understanding of how language works, how expressions work, and what happens when you talk dharmically. The basic point in regard to language is to have tremendous precision. You know the meanings of words; you understand the subtleties. You understand how an idea is first initiated, then described, and then understood. Interestingly, English grammar is slightly lopsided in terms of our perceptions. Suppose, for instance, you see a white horse. As far as the thought process goes, when you see a white horse, first you see the horse and then you realize the horse is white. You actually see horse-white. Likewise, you see man-good or man-bad. That is how the thought process works. However, you don't have to strain yourself to speak pidgin English. The idea is to articulate and synchronize language with your state of mind.

Tön tsölwa is connected with an interest in language and the expressions of language. It is an understanding of the grammar used to express dharmic language. Fundamentally, this means that you have an understanding of threefold logic. For instance, when you say "individual salvation," you don't just jumble the sounds together; you understand the meaning of the word *individual,* and the meaning of the word *salvation.* In this example, the ground is the individual; the path is salvation; and the fruition is that the individual is freed—therefore it is "individual salvation." If you are trying to describe the dharma, you could say "good dharma" or "The dharma is good." If you say "good dharma," that can be taken as ground or as fruition. If you say "The dharma is good," that is path. Dharma is being *qualified* by good. First we reflect on dharma, and then we realize that dharma is— What? Good or bad? Good! Vipashyana

discipline allows us to ponder our thinking process and how we relate with words.

Form: Discovering the Objects of Inside and Outside

The next discovery is *ngöpo tsölwa*. *Ngöpo* means "object," or "gross thing." It is "thingness," "tangibleness." *Tsölwa* is "discovery," so *ngöpo tsölwa* is the "discovery of objects." In this discovery we learn to discriminate between our individual world and the world around us. We are discovering the objects of outside and inside. "Inside" means personal situations and emotions; "outside" means the external setup. Outside includes such things as good weather or bad weather, or the favorable or unfavorable rate of exchange from Canadian to American dollars.

This discovery is also called the "search for reality." All experiences in life, every word and every situation, involve subtleties, and those subtleties are clearly seen. Such discernment has nothing to do with paranoia; it is very relaxed. Once you have had an experience of vipashyana, of going out or expanding yourself, neurotic discrimination or paranoia no longer applies. It becomes irrelevant or useless.

Discovering the objects of inside and outside means discriminating between this situation and that situation, between introversion and extroversion. In terms of relationship and communication, you see the greater importance of going out and giving, rather than holding back. You might think this is quite a bizarre way of categorizing things, but when you work with the subtleties of the awareness process, you are able to see whether here and there are working together, whether they are synchronized or not. Then the discovery of this and that, inside and outside, becomes very powerful and important.

Characteristic: Discovering the Nature of Perception

The third discovery is the "discovery of the nature of perception," or *tsen-nyi tsölwa*. *Tsen* means "mark," "sign," or "characteristic"; it is analogous to the mark of being female or male. *Nyi* means "itself"; so *tsen-nyi* refers to how things are categorized according to their own individual existence. *Tsölwa,* again, means "discovery," so *tsen-nyi tsölwa* is the "discovery of individual characteristics." It refers to how things could be shared or not shared between yourself and others, or how things could be the

first thought or second thought. For example, when you give birth to a thought—"Ha! Cup of coffee"—that is first thought. The second thought is, "How and where can a cup of coffee be purchased or manifested?" There is the thought process of journeying from here to there.

This discovery refers to the nature of your perception, how you operate your prajna. For instance, when you want to turn on a light, you first think of the switch, then you can turn the light on or off. So it goes "switch," then "light." It is the same with listening and hearing, or looking and seeing. You discover how you first perceive your world by first thought, and how that is then translated into second thought.

Traditionally, this category has to do with both private and public, almost like the previous category of inside and outside. You are not confused about basic logic, and you can figure out the origin of thought patterns in communication. As a practitioner of vipashyana, you are not completely insulted, because although at face value someone is rude or aggressive to you, you are able to look beyond that to the causal characteristics of that person's reactions.

Direction: Discovering Sides

The fourth discovery is discovering sides. The Tibetan term *chok* means "direction," or "side"; *tsölwa* means "discovery," so *chok tsölwa* is "discovering sides." Discriminating the good side from the bad side is quite ordinary: you see whether you are on the side of the dark or the light. Being on the side of the dark means that you are causing harm to yourself or others; being on the side of the light means that you are being a positive influence on yourself and others. This category is about knowing what to do and what not to do. It is about discrimination and common sense. You are able to detect that which is not suitable or a hindrance to the path, whether it is a negative or a positive experience.

Discovering sides is not based on picking and choosing, or on making yourself comfortable. It has broad vision and an unyielding quality. You are able to seek wisdom, to seek good attributes. That is, you have an allegiance, or natural instinct, as to what is right for you and what is not. You are able to tune yourself instinctively in to the appropriate situations. It is very simple. In this discovery, you are relating with the common norms of good and bad, but with tremendous wisdom and clarity.

Time: Discovering Past, Present, and Future

The fifth discovery is discovering time. *Tü* means "time"; *tsölwa* means "discovery," so *tü tsölwa* means the "discovery of time," or "not being confused by time." This is not as simple as realizing whether it is daytime or nighttime. Tu tsölwa means that time should be considered, so that what you have experienced in the past, what you are experiencing now, and what you might experience in the future are not confused. Past is past, present is present, and future is future.

You need to develop clear thinking, both intellectually and intuitively, so you are not confused by time or the duration of things. People have tremendous paranoia due to their confusion about time. For instance, you might regard what you think you will experience in the future as a present threat or problem, or because you have experienced something in the past, you might think that in the future it will happen again. There are all kinds of analogies for such paranoia. For instance, you might think that because the Second World War happened, another Hitler is waiting to do the same thing in the future. However, you could develop a clear sense of time so that what you have experienced is what you have experienced; what you are experiencing is what you are experiencing; and what you might experience is what you might experience. You could develop clarity in your experience of past, present, and future.

The instruction in a nutshell is that you could take advantage of your present situation. You have power over the present. Your future situation can be attained and achieved because you have the information and resources of the past: the past has gotten you this far, to the present; and at present, you have what you have. You understand that your future is somewhat predetermined by the present situation, and you realize what you are doing. You have inherited information, credentials, and knowledge from the past; therefore, you know how to act now, in the present, and you can attain what you might attain in the future. So the future is entirely dependent on you, whether or not you would like to put it into effect.

Because of this realization, you do not feel trapped in any way. You have confidence and dignity. You are no longer subject to the whirlpool. You no longer fear that once you jump into the rushing river, you are bound to be swept down Niagara Falls. By practicing vipashyana discipline, you are trying to get out of karmic encirclement. You are trying to

cut through karmic cause and effect, so that you can realize your dignity and elegance. You can be arrogant in the positive sense because you can cut through the vicious circle of karma by applying the techniques that have been presented to you. That is the realization or discovery of time.

Insight: Discovering Knowledge

The sixth discovery is discovering knowledge, or insight. In Tibetan it is *rikpa tsölwa*. *Rikpa* is "insight," and *tsölwa* is "discovery," so *rikpa tsölwa* is the "discovery of insight." In this context, *insight* refers to scientific insight, insight into cause and effect. It refers to relative reference, the ultimate logical mind. The Tibetan term for insight is *rikpa,* and the Sanskrit term is *vidya*, which means "knowledge," and in particular "scientific knowledge." That is what we are discovering: knowledge. We are beginning to know the nature of cause and effect. In other words, we have an understanding of karma. In the simple example of planting a seed, we know that when we care for the plant, it is going to grow and develop to fruition. Insight involves faith and the appreciation of scientific discoveries. Albert Einstein could be an example of this kind of discovery. I heard that Einstein was more interested in knowledge than in cash, so he used to use his checks as bookmarks.

Vidya, like science, is based on understanding and trusting the norm of truth that exists in the phenomenal world. It is said in the texts that the knowledge that comes from vipashyana is based on understanding that fire is hot, water is liquid, and so forth. Understanding the elements of earth, water, fire, and air—that earth is solid, water is wet, fire burns, and so on—is basic science. Anything that scientists have discovered is included in the teachings, even simple things, like if you bang your head on the wall, it hurts. You might think this is the kind of lesson you get in sixth grade, and that you are above it. Nonetheless, you have to consider how much you have taken for granted, how much you have ignored, how little trust you have had in the cause and effect of circumstances.

The workings of the elements are very important. If you realize the workings of the elements, you begin to realize the workings of the cause and effect of karma as well, because they are basically the same. According to Buddhism, if you kill, you get killed. You might not have to go through the courts and receive capital punishment, but if you kill somebody, sometime in the future it will happen to you. Through insight,

or vidya, we discover the truth about karma. This allows the kleshas, or confused emotions, to dry up by themselves.

Applying the Six Discoveries

You could apply these six discoveries to anything in your life. As an example, in dealing with pain, the first discovery, meaning, is connected with one's psychological attitude toward the experience of pain or pleasure. Form has to do with not being deluded by your imagination, but beginning to make a connection with the reality of the pain. That is, pain is pain; the meaning of pain is pain; and the feeling of pain is pain. The characteristic, or nature, of pain is that it is threatening to one's existence. Pain may involve the fear of death, or the fear of continuing to live. All kinds of fears are involved, which provide various reference points toward the pain. With direction, you are discovering how much space pain occupies and how much space pleasure occupies. And within that space, you discover how important your body and this particular existence is to you. As for time, in relating with pain you apply time, whether it is the duration of a situation that you created yourself, or an experience that is presenting its case to you. With insight, you have an overview. You are viewing all of life, or in this example all your pain, in terms of its meaning, form, characteristic, direction, time, and insight.

The six discoveries are the result of the clear thinking of vipashyana, the result of the process of seeing very precisely. They are not something to look for; instead, they are behaviors or patterns that develop. Vipashyana is the heart of the buddhadharma. It sets the general tone of the psychology of Buddhism. A Buddhist has clear thinking and an objective view of the world. He or she is able to recognize and use relative logic. There is no chance that such a person will be swayed by fascinations or extremes. With vipashyana, everything becomes very precise and very direct.

Throughout the teachings, and in all the practices you are given, nothing is held back. All the aspects and the attributes of the practices, all the definitions of terms and their contexts, are given to you right at the beginning. Nothing is a mystery. You know everything back to front, which exhausts your expectation of anything extraordinary. There is no reason to be excited about vipashyana. If you are in the state of vipashyana, so what?

On the whole, we are studying dharma so that we know how to handle our life properly. We do not just naively go along with everything, nor for that matter do we become overly paranoid. Instead, as Buddhists we have an understanding of balance. We know how to handle life, and we understand cause and effect. We do not regard our life as though we are constantly being cheated. Whether we are being cheated or not, if we extend ourselves too far or indulge ourselves, we will be cut short. If we are overly sensitive, some accommodation will be provided. That is how the world works according to the vipashyana vision of discriminating-awareness wisdom, which comes from relaxing your mind. So in Buddhism, we are doing more than purely relating to our meditation practice in the shrine hall—we are training in how to live our life.

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The Greater Path of Accumulation

We need both devotional virya and ongoing virya. Those two viryas seem to be important. They are the basic core of the shamatha-vipashyana marriage—and shamatha-vipashyana is recommended as the vanguard of the mahayana practice of shunyata.

At the level of the greater path of accumulation, a person begins to develop not only isolated awareness or mindfulness practice, but the practice of being aware and mindful at the same time, or shamatha-vipashyana. Having started with shamatha, you may have begun to place more emphasis on vipashyana—but you then begin to realize the limitation of dwelling on vipashyana alone, so you go a step further, and you happen to rediscover shamatha.

Two Types of Effort

In joining together shamatha and vipashyana, the scriptures talk about two types of effort: the practice of surrendering and the practice of continuity. The Sanskrit word *virya* (Tib.: tsöndrü) means "effort," "diligence," or "working hard." The practice of surrendering, or devotional virya, is called *küjor*—*kü* meaning "respect," or "devotion," and *jorwa* meaning "application" or "practice," so *küjor* means the "practice of devotion." The practice of continuity, or ongoing virya, is *tagjor*. *Tag* means "continuity," and *jorwa* again means "practice," so *tagjor* means "the practice of continuity." With tagjor, your practice is ongoing. You have engaged with

the practice, and your practice is diligent and devoted—and you are willing to go along with that for the rest of your life.

The two viryas balance one another. Devotional virya could become impulsive, and ongoing virya could be without devotion or inspiration, just dragging along. So we need both devotional virya and ongoing virya. The two viryas seem to be important. They are the basic core of the shamatha-vipashyana marriage—and shamatha-vipashyana is recommended as the vanguard of the mahayana practice of shunyata. Shamatha-vipashyana is the way you step out of the path of accumulation onto the path of unification, the second of the five paths. The combination of shamatha with vipashyana is the leverage.

In shamatha-vipashyana practice, when you sit you have an awareness of your surroundings. Your sense perceptions have been taken into account in developing vipashyana awareness, and you also have the shamatha practice of deliberateness, of getting into things directly. Bringing together those two types of practice is said by the Kagyü lineage father Gampopa to be one of the most enlightening and promising techniques ever developed in the dharma.

In the Burmese Theravada tradition, the late Burmese meditation master Mahasi Sayadaw was a great revolutionary in the meditation field. He reintroduced meditation practice into the Theravada world with a particular emphasis on the combination of shamatha-vipashyana. It is an important point that having already accomplished shamatha and vipashyana independent of each other, we can combine them together by application of the two types of virya. This approach is highly recommended by all kinds of great teachers.

When we combine shamatha and vipashyana, we feel the verge of the breath, or the touch of the breath going out, rather than being heavy-handedly involved in it. At the same time, there is a feeling of completeness around us everywhere, in all directions, an environmental feeling. We sense that when the breathing dissolves, it is an expanding process—dissolving at this point, dissolving at that point, and further points, and further, further points. That dissolving is taking place in the whole universe, and you are, in a sense, nowhere. Finally, you lose the reference point as to who is breathing and where the breathing is dissolving. But that sense of complete desolation cannot take place unless the precision and accuracy of the breathing is happening at the same time. The accuracy of shamatha happens to be independent of the particular department that perpetuates

the sense of reference point. But even if there is no point of reference with shamatha, as the breathing goes out, it is real and complete breathing going out.

The sense of reference point is connected to the psychosomatic body, which is the source of security. If you lose that reference point, you may feel that you have at last freed yourself from the world of desire, and your psychosomatic sickness has no control over you anymore. But you still have a long way to go. You have not yet touched shunyata. Although it may be subtle, there is still a sense of self. Although the heaviest part of the neurosis has been removed, there is still a feeling of duality. For the practitioner, the sense of self abides in the teachings and the practice itself. That is the only security there is: trusting in the truth of the teachings. With practice, there is definitely a change, because you experience the desolation of things being not all that solid and definite. Your belief in physical existence is being pulled apart, but you still believe in the discontinuity. There is the abstract belief that what pulls you apart is a form of security. There is still some kind of trust that you are going to continue, and you have a practice to work with. So although you lose your body, you can still practice.

In shamatha-vipashyana, mind and space mix together. That mixing of mind and space comes from the two types of virya. The virya of devotion, küjor, leans toward the practice of precision, of bending one's fantasies to the simple breath. It is the shamatha aspect. The virya of continuity, or tagjor, is related with vipashyana. In shamatha-vipashyana, you need küjor and tagjor happening together simultaneously.

The Four Legs of Miracle

On the third or greater level of the path of accumulation, we approach shamatha-vipashyana in terms of what are called the "four legs of miracle": strong interest, effort, recollection, and investigation.

Strong Interest

The first leg is called *dünpa,* or "strong interest." It is the attitude that you are going to apply yourself to shamatha-vipashyana practice. There is a quality of conviction connected with the fact that developing shamatha-vipashyana is the way to cut not only the three lowest realms, but the

world of passion altogether. Before, at the lesser and middle levels of the path of accumulation, you were just cutting the animal, hungry ghost, and hell realms; but at the greater level of the path of accumulation, the root of the world of desire is cut.

It is important to know which particular world we are conquering in the various stages of meditative development. There are three world-realms: the formless realm, the world of form, and the world of passion or desire. The world of desire includes the jealous god realm, the human realm, the animal realm, the hungry ghost realm, and the hell realm, plus a portion of the god realm. So a portion of the god realm is considered to be within the realm of desire, and the remainder of the god realm is considered to be within the form and formless world realms—heavenly realms of progressively more subtle states of meditative absorption. In the realm of desire, you have not only the existence of form, but you experience a heavy demand on your body, speech, and mind. Mind is related with the formless world, speech with the world of form, and body with the world of desire. Very refined desire is related with the formless god realm, subtle desire with the world of form, and crude desire with the world of desire. From the world of desire to the world of form to the formless world, the quality of desire is progressively more refined and subtle.

Meditative development is one of first conquering crude desire, then subtle desire, and finally very refined desire. Shamatha-vipashyana practice is extraordinarily important because it is the only way you can cut the realm of desire. Of the three world-realms, the desire realm is the heaviest realm, and at this point the root of this realm has been cut.

Effort

The second leg of miracle is effort, or tsöndrü. It is strenuousness. Much stronger obstacles occur when you involve yourself in shamatha-vipashyana practice. Quite possibly you are putting many eggs in one basket, because you are trying to collect your span of attention into one-pointedness, and at the same time you are increasing your span of awareness. Putting those two into one basket at the same time is highly demanding. You cannot practice shamatha-vipashyana unless you have gone through shamatha first and vipashyana afterward. You need to have training in both practices separately before coming to shamatha-vipashyana practice, because combining the two takes a lot of effort.

Recollection

The third leg is *trenpa**, or recollection (Skt.: *smriti*). Recollection is used greatly by the contemplative traditions of the West, particularly by the Catholic tradition of monasticism and the mystical schools. The *satipatthana* practice of the Theravadins and the *smrityupasthana* practice of Sarvastivadins are also practices of recollection. Recollection doesn't mean capturing experiences, but being awake in a different way. You are totally awake and free from any unnecessary commitments. Recollection has nothing to do with memory—it is entirely different. Trenpa could refer to "recalling the past," but *tren* also means "to think."

Trenpa does not mean recalling past details, like digging up old things from the attic; but it is based on habitual mind, which automatically has reference points. The indoctrination of reference points is implanted in your mind. For instance, you could not suddenly say, "There is a car" without any reference to the past. You could not say, "There is a car" if you had not remembered that it was a car before you experienced it. So trenpa ceases to be a reference point, in that we do not have to dig up all our memories and love and hate from the past; and at the same time, it *is* a reference point. Even a simple statement such as "There is a car" is not quite free from the past.

Even our awareness practice is a product of the past. You have been told that it is good to develop awareness, to sit and do it, so you do it because you have been told to. However, when you are doing it, you do not have to go back and check on it. You just flash it. If someone is going to hit you, you cover your head with your hand. In part, that is the result of indoctrination—but it is a spontaneous act, nevertheless. So immediate experience, or seemingly immediate experience, has its root in the habitual thinking of the past. Nevertheless, such habitual patterns also have subconscious, clear, resourceful, and present intelligence.

Reacting to confusion and hassles takes place in the present. You have no time to go back. With the five skandhas, for example, you have no chance to go back step-by-step. You may be on the brink of the fifth skandha, but you have all five of them simultaneously. All hands on deck at one moment! There is a taste of looseness, stillness, and desolation. You have no chance to relate with your case history anymore—you are right there.

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* Most sources associate the third leg with "mind" (Tib.: sem; Skt.: chitta).

Animals instinctively react to any attack. They decide to make a move, whether it is logical or illogical. When a cat sees cars coming, it might decide to cross the road or try to go back. There is no logic, particularly; it is an expression of freedom.

Trenpa is the sense of perspective. You are aware of your meditative practice being an entirely different approach than your ordinary way of relating with your life. You are aware that you are just about to give up your lovable world, the world of desire. You begin to have all kinds of panic and fear, feeling that the good old days were beautiful but now there is a threat. You realize that practice is very threatening.

Investigation

The last leg of miracle is called *chöpa,* or "investigation." When you are in a state of shamatha-vipashyana practice, you have to examine yourself constantly. A lot of investigation needs to be done. Unless there is a continual reexamining of yourself, quite likely the hassles involved with the practice would put you off. Because it is so strenuous, you would not want to get into it. Unless you are able to get inspired by strenuous investigation, you will no longer be able to identify yourself with the teachings.

This third stage of the path of accumulation is extremely important. It is the last possibility for an ordinary person to be able to transform himself or herself into a higher person, a noble person. That is why it is called the *greater* path of accumulation. It is the only way that you—as an ordinary layperson, who is neither an arhat nor a bodhisattva nor a buddha—could become one of the noble ones.

The beginning of the hinayana path, the shravakayana, is the level of an ordinary student. The specialities of shravakayana are following monastic rules, listening, and talking. It is the level of the four foundations of mindfulness and the four noble truths. In the third stage of the path of accumulation, you are approaching the pratyekabuddhayana. You have a sense of freedom, liberation, and emancipation. You discover that you are about to cut the realm of desire and enter the desireless realms. Shamatha-vipashyana practice is the only one that could bring you to that supernormal, superhuman level—there is no other way.

VOLUME TWO

THE PROFOUND TREASURY
OF THE OCEAN OF DHARMA

The Bodhisattva Path of Wisdom and Compassion

CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA

COMPILED AND EDITED BY
Judith L. Lief

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Two Aspects of Love

The soft heart of mahayana can only develop by paying attention to your existence and your state of being by means of shamatha and vipashyana. Mahayana experience evolves from being in a state of tranquillity as well as by gentleness to yourself and others, and the only way to develop that is by being fully aware and mindful. So the state of compassion and love grows out of awareness. In the Buddhist tradition, we do not usually use the term *love*. Instead, we use the two terms *maitri* and *karuna*.

Maitri / Loving-Kindness

The primary glimpse of experience that is closest to love is maitri, or loving-kindness. In Tibetan it is *champa*. *Cham* means "tender," or "gentle" and *pa* makes it a noun; so *champa* is "tenderness" or "loving-kindness"; it is being kind and gentle to oneself. Maitri arises as the result of shamatha discipline. When we begin to be very precise with ourselves, we experience wakefulness and gentleness.

At the hinayana level, your attitude toward discipline is very acute and precise, but at the bodhisattva level, you begin to relax. That relaxation is a form of maitri, or loving-kindness. When you are free from ego fixation altogether, you gain some kind of relief. You realize that you don't have to be all that intense and tight. When you let go of ego fixation, you develop freedom and relaxation, and as an automatic response to that freedom and relaxation, you develop gentleness and compassion.

With maitri you are actually trying to confront the ego directly, to insult the ego. That may seem aggressive, but it is always good for you to insult your ego. Maitri is known as the source of all dharmas, because maitri is the basis of losing the ego. By losing the ego, you automatically give birth to kindness toward yourself and gentleness toward others. It is important to understand that by losing the ego you are becoming benevolent. You realize that caring for others is intrinsic. Once you have removed the fixation on "me" and "my-ness," behind that fixation you discover a general and natural kindness toward others. It is like removing the skin and flesh from the body and discovering the bones and the marrow. With maitri, it is possible for even ordinary people to appreciate enlightenment.

Because of maitri, you can begin to awaken your buddha nature. You can awaken your ability to be in love. Everybody is capable of falling in love; everybody is capable of being kind to others. Everybody who has an ego can reverse their ego fixation and rediscover their buddha nature. You may not achieve complete liberation right away, but you can begin the occasional back-and-forth journey from confusion to freedom. Anybody can make that journey; anybody can have a taste of freedom. That is always possible. If you want it, it can be done. It doesn't mean that you are going to become a living buddha on the spot, but you could still experience a taste of enlightenment. That taste of enlightenment makes you nostalgic; it makes you want to go further and to practice more. The Black Crown Ceremony is an example of such a taste of enlightenment.* It gives you a taste of how to be open and to experience oneness. In this ceremony, you are in a gigantic hall with the Karmapa, the head of the Kagyü lineage, and you just dissolve. When you identify with that experience, enlightenment ceases to be a fairy tale, and begins to become real.

Maitri is based on being gentle with yourself, and at the same time respecting yourself. Often people suffer from depression and other psychosomatic problems because they are unable to respect themselves. They kill themselves because they hate themselves. The idea of maitri is to have sympathy and a gentle attitude toward yourself, to feel that your own existence is worthwhile. You are a would-be buddha, and you have the inheritance of buddha nature already, so you don't need to feel poverty-stricken.

With maitri you begin to experience a quality of delight. You feel that you are worthwhile and delightful in spite of your little thingies. You begin to feel that you can stick your neck out. Your attitude toward yourself begins to lift like a cloud, and you feel as if you have been freed

* In the *Black Crown Ceremony,* the Karmapa, as the official head of the Kagyü lineage, holds a black crown on his head. This ceremonial crown is a replica of the one given by the Chinese emperor Yung-lo (1360–1424) to the fifth Karmapa (1384–1415). The original crown was said to have been made from the hairs of *dakinis* (female deities who protect the teachings) after Yung-lo had a vision of the crown on the fifth Karmapa's head. As the Karmapa holds the crown on his head, he slowly recites the mantra of Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of compassion. It is said that during those few minutes, he brings to earth the transcendent form of Avalokiteshvara and radiates the bodhisattva's pure egoless compassion.

from twofold ego completely.* You begin to have fewer hang-ups and less aggression. This experience is not earthshaking, it is just a little shift whereby you begin to feel that you are capable and that you have no reason to hide in your depression. At that point, you are ripe and ready to take the bodhisattva vow and formally enter the mahayana path.

Karuna / Compassion

The second aspect of love is karuna, or compassion. In Tibetan it is *nying-je. Nying* means "heart," and *je* means "noble"; so *nying-je* means "noble heart." Nying-je is connected with dealing with others. Because we feel gentleness to ourselves, we are able to feel compassionate to others. We begin to experience vipashyana, to be aware of our environment. We see that our friends, relatives, and the people around us are suffering, and they need help. We see that our building is beginning to have cracks in its walls and leaks in its plumbing, and we have to fix it. So we first learn how to love ourselves with the help of shamatha discipline, and from that we begin to develop vipashyana, so that our attention is not stolen by distractions or surprises. Therefore, we begin to develop good compassion.

Traditionally, maitri is connected with the desire to join the path of the bodhisattva, and karuna is connected with actually going along the path. Maitri is the way to overcome aggression; it is the mentality of egolessness. Karuna liberates us from ignorance so that we know how to conduct our affairs, and know how to relate with the world at large. So first we tame ourselves, and after that we develop bodhichitta. But we have a long way to go. Until we have maitri and karuna, loving-kindness and compassion, it is not possible to experience bodhichitta. Therefore, we need to work with shamatha and vipashyana. So hinayana discipline is the preparation for realizing mahayana vision. Without that preparation, we cannot experience what mahayana is all about.

The Utterly Visionary Quality of Love

According to the mahayana, love is entirely without aggression. Love includes accepting others and being noble, reasonable, openhearted,

* Twofold ego includes both the fixation on self and the fixation on phenomena as solid, independent, and real.

tion practice, we uncover both garbage and inspiration, but the level of garbage is greater than the inspiration. We see that we carry gigantic loads of garbage on our backs constantly. But step-by-step, we learn how to wash ourselves and clean up.

Hinayanists would say that you could become good. They say that you are neither good nor bad, but you have possibilities of both. Mahayanists would say that you are intrinsically good already, and any obstacles and problems are temporary. The hinayana approach is the good-student approach, and the mahayana approach is that of the good warrior. According to hinayanists, Buddha was an ordinary man, and he achieved ordinary enlightenment. They think that because the Buddha got a splinter in his foot, this showed he was still an ordinary human being who had to die as an ordinary human being as well. They saw the Buddha as a fellow elder, as a good person rather than heroic. But according to the mahayana, the Buddha is the Victorious One. He actually conquered confusion and became a king.

The hinayana is based on repetitive practice. But each time you practice, you connect in a new way to what you are doing. For instance, even though you have spent ten years with the person you love, each time you kiss it is slightly different, and at the same time it is very ordinary. In hinayana monasticism, in particular, there is practice taking place all the time, so the everyday situation is great. That constant repetitive practice makes hinayana monasticism fantastic.

Delightful Doubt

The precision of shamatha and the greater awareness of vipashyana provide the practitioner with a sense of positive ground. The development of both peace and greater awareness produces the possibility of something else, a delightful doubt that you may have the buddha seed in you. You may have been approaching practice impersonally, but something personal may be involved after all. There is a hint of buddha nature, which can only be brought about by accomplishing shamatha-vipashyana practice.

Seeing such a possibility within you is a pleasant surprise. This discovery is not only possible at advanced levels of the path, but it could develop early on, at the beginning of the path. Mahayana practitioners have advance warnings of such pleasant surprises and the possibility of having buddha nature. Not only could arhats, bodhisattvas, and higher

beings have that kind of hint, but ordinary laypeople could as well. The discovery of buddha nature is the result of constant meditation practice, extreme diligence, faith, energy, and so forth.

When you begin to sit and discipline yourself a great deal, there is a gradual awakening in spite of any neurosis that comes up. In other words, we could quite safely say that out of hopelessness, greater hope begins to arise. That is the promise of the mahayana path. The discovery of buddha nature is not regarded as a myth and it is not based purely on blind faith, but it could become very real. Discovering this and working with it means you are relating with nonduality. The possibility of a split reality no longer exists, and the factory of karma-making is no longer useful. The past still means a great deal to you. You cannot forget your past with its emotional hang-ups and memories, but you are approaching things in an entirely different way.

When you have completely accomplished the shamatha-vipashyana practice, you have a sense of reward. You experience joy in the possibility of buddha nature, but you may still feel skeptical. Although you begin to feel that buddha nature is a possibility, you think the whole thing may be a hoax. You begin to doubt the teachings. The idea that you already have a built-in buddha in you is something that you cannot quite imagine. It seems to be too good to be true, and you begin to feel that maybe it is not true. You think that the whole thing may be a big put-on, a big joke, a lie.

The birth of mahayana spirit begins with a combination of distrust and the possibility of good news. It is a very powerful emotional experience, a sweet-sour feeling. That quality of joy and delight is wisdom, or *jnana*,* and the doubt or distrust is compassion. Doubt and compassion are both very direct. Compassion is somewhat more spacious, but the pain of doubt and compassion is the same. There is a sense of something touching your heart, and it is painful.

* Chögyam Trungpa usually referred to prajna as "knowledge," or "transcendent knowledge," and to the related term *jnana* as "wisdom." Prajna, the sixth paramita or transcendent action of the mahayana, is *sherap* in Tibetan. *She* is "knowing," or "knowledge," *rap* is "superior," or the "best"; so *sherap* means "superior knowledge." In Tibetan, *jnana* is translated as *yeshe*, or "primordial knowing." However, at times Trungpa Rinpoche used the term *wisdom* to refer to prajna, particularly in the context of indivisible *upaya* and prajna, or skillful means and wisdom, a key teaching of the mahayana path.

6
Cultivating Wholesomeness

If you have awareness in whatever you do, you always have a sense of basic decency. You do not cheat. You do not do things just because they are traditional, and you don't just do something this year simply because you did it last year. You always try to practice your discipline as genuinely and honestly as possible—to the point where the honesty and genuineness begin to hurt.

In the mahayana there is a quality of wholesomeness, which comes from shamatha, vipashyana, and the union of the two. Shamatha leads to freedom from aggression; it brings gentleness, maitri, and kindness to yourself. Vipashyana leads to freedom from ignorance; it brings clarity and intelligence. The combination of the two produces wholesomeness. That is how to develop an enlightened person.

Shamatha-vipashyana practice is utterly important in all three yanas, so you should not drop it. Otherwise, you might find yourself behaving calmly in the hinayana, kindly in the mahayana, and then freaking out in the vajrayana. With mindfulness practice, you do not behave differently in each yana. It is not that you graduate from the first grade and then get into the second grade and the third grade. It is more like making butter out of milk. In the hinayana, when you make butter from milk, you find that you have something called buttermilk left to drink; in the mahayana, you drink the milk; and in the vajrayana, you enjoy the butter itself.

Joining shamatha precision and calmness with vipashyana awareness brings the realization that the world is not attacking you. The world is no longer an obstacle; in fact, the world is actually helpful to you. This is the

beginning of entering into the mahayana, which brings the possibility of egolessness. Instead of hanging on to yourself, trying to grasp "me" and "my-ness," you could let go by means of shamatha and vipashyana. You could begin to loosen up a little bit more.

Mindfulness: Freedom from Aggression

When you practice mindfulness at the mahayana level, instead of simply trying to be mindful, you also have to tame your aggression. The more you tame your aggression, the more mindfulness you develop. If you are so energized that you are unable to concentrate or have difficulty paying attention to details, those problems are a result of underlying aggression. Generally speaking, aggression tends to come up in the form of boredom. Because you are bored, you want to find some way of occupying yourself other than what you are doing on the spot, whether it is watching your breath, eating your food, or whatever you are doing.

Aggression is an obstacle to mindfulness. If you are pushed to follow your breath or to watch your thoughts, you are bound to get angry. Such aggression is completely inevitable. Aggression affects your span of attention; it is the reason you cannot sit still for more than a few minutes, why you fidget, why you are irritated, why you have to bring up the pain in your back or your knees. Triggered by aggression, the intelligence of boredom is manifesting itself. Your subconscious gossip tells you, "Don't obey any of those rules. You should be an individual. Do anything you want." That is the voice of aggression, manifesting through impatience and boredom. But with mindfulness practice, you can develop gentleness and nonaggression.

Awareness: Freedom from Ignorance

Vipashyana is trickier than shamatha because in order to pay greater attention to more details, you need to expand yourself further. To be aware of what is around you, you have to become less self-centered. The conventional approach to awareness is based on the idea that if you do your best, you can win a gold medal. But in the mahayana, we don't think of awareness in terms of having a particular purpose. You are simply trying to pay more attention to the environment around you. For example, in oryoki practice, you learn to be fascinated by your napkin, your bowls,

your spoon, and your chopsticks. Paying more attention to them is better than paying attention to yourself, to good old Joe Schmidt. You do not have to handle two things at once. Hopefully, while you are cleaning your bowl, Joe Schmidt is completely forgotten. While you are eating in that way, there is no ego of self. At least on a simple level, that is one way of realizing egolessness.

If you have awareness in whatever you do, you always have a sense of basic decency. You do not cheat. You do not do things just because they are traditional, and you don't just do something this year simply because you did it last year. You always try to practice your discipline as genuinely and honestly as possible—to the point where the honesty and genuineness begin to hurt. In fact, such hurting is regarded as good. If you begin to get hurt by being genuine, it is the beginning of warriorship. It is the level at which you are capable of exchanging yourself for others.

At the mahayana level, there is greater vision. Dedication becomes not just dedication to yourself and your own liberation, but an expansion of openness, love, and compassion. There is a quality of dignity, which is not especially localized, and the path begins to expand beyond one's own individuality. The mahayanist attitude or outlook is based on immense prajna, or knowledge, and immense compassion. Due to immense prajna, you are able to see through twofold ego completely, and due to immense compassion, you want to work with other sentient beings, and you do not get tired of doing so.

In the mahayana, your compassion is not based on desire. You do not want to save somebody because you will get a gold star or win The World's Kindest Person Award. Instead, compassion is a natural instinct without concern for the end product. When you do not work for personal achievement and are not solely dedicated to yourself, you begin to develop a more expansive vision and more natural communication. You realize that working on yourself is not the biggest project of all. You see that relating with others is more important and real.

Basic Training

To work for others, you first have to develop composure. If you have no basic stability, when you try to help others, they will not benefit from your help. If you are trying to prevent someone from falling out of a window, you will both go out the window together. To prevent that, you have to stay inside so you can pull them back. In order to do this, training in shamatha and vipashyana is absolutely necessary. With that basic training, you are able to maintain yourself properly. This is why it is so important to develop hinayana self-discipline first, before going on to mahayana vision. You can then learn how the whole thing works, and watch yourself progressing.

Shamatha and vipashyana, or mindfulness and awareness, allow you to be stable and precise. Mindfulness allows you to become stable, to develop tranquillity and peace; awareness allows you to be precise, to be able to pay attention to details. Out of that stability and precision, there naturally arises a quality of gentleness and kindness, an attitude that you will never cause harm to others or create the basis of such harm. When you carry that attitude slightly further, you begin to develop the

mahayana view that not only will you refrain from creating harm for others, but you will actually try to benefit them. You try to create a helpful attitude in yourself, and at the same time perform helpful actions for others. So the ground of mahayana comes from training in shamatha and vipashyana.

Through shamatha and vipashyana, you become like a young thoroughbred horse, somewhat responsive and well trained. You have an understanding of egolessness and the four noble truths,* and you have achieved a relatively good state of control over mental distraction. But it is possible that you lack real conviction, so you are unable to fulfill the practice completely. You do need to have mental discipline and control over your mind, but in the mahayana, it is necessary to develop a greater level of commitment. No matter how contemplative the practices of shamatha and vipashyana may be, there is still an element of mechanicalness. Therefore, it is absolutely important to be awakened and to be encouraged to join the mahayana path. Shamatha-vipashyana experience and treading on the mahayana path are complementary to one another and equally important.

As a result of shamatha and vipashyana, you are shinjang-ed, or flexible. You can climb rocks, you can swim—you are capable of doing anything. When you are no longer rigid and tough, when you stop trying to hold on to things, when you stop trying to make everything meaningful to you, when you no longer want to do everything in your own original samsaric style—when all that has fallen apart—you become very soft, gentle, and pliable. In fact, you are so soft that you become almost wormlike. Once you are soft, there are many ways to connect with sentient beings, and there are all kinds of sentient beings you could work with. You could work with very tough ones or very mushy ones.

Hinayana discipline, the inspiration of taming the mind, never dries up. It has been around quite a long time, twenty-six hundred years, and it is still going on. You have to work with your own training first. If you want to become a professor, you must first learn to read and write. Even someone like Mozart had to go to school to learn about music in order to wake up his talent. Likewise, although *tülkus,* or "incarnate lamas," may be very highly developed, they still have to go through an extremely

* For a discussion of the *four noble truths,* see volume 1 of the *Profound Treasury,* part 4, "The Four Noble Truths."

excruciating, painful training—even more so than other people. That was my personal experience as well.

Sitting practice is important, but attachment to sitting practice can become a danger. There can be too much emphasis on the heroism of sitting practice and on the idea that there is nothing to do but meditate. Basing your life on sitting practice alone may be a true approach, straight from the books and the experience of your teachers. Nevertheless, you cannot just look at practice in that way. There is a greater world than your little meditation world, your little meditation hall, and your little meditation cushion. There are other seats—there are saddles and chairs and green grass you can sit on. Everywhere you sit does not have to be a meditation cushion.

In the hinayana practice of taming the mind, you are working with the various forms of unmindfulness. In the mahayana, since your mind has already been tamed, you can work on training the mind. Having domesticated your mind, you can make further use of it. It is like capturing a wild cow and domesticating it to the point that the cow becomes completely willing to relate with its tamer. In fact, the cow likes being domesticated; it becomes a part of your household. So first you tame the mind by means of shamatha discipline, and then you train the mind by means of mahayana contemplative practices such as *tonglen,* or exchanging oneself for others, as well as by the actual fieldwork of helping others.

Putting Your Training into Action

When you have been thoroughly tamed by the practice of shamatha and when you have developed vipashyana insight, you know how to hear the teachings. You have begun to develop a complete understanding of the dharma. You also have begun to develop an understanding of how, in your particular state of being tamed, you can relate with others. You have a sense of sacred outlook and are willing to work honestly, without being egocentric. Therefore, genuine practice is taking place. You may also have encountered teachers who show you by their example that you do not

* *Tonglen,* or sending and taking practice, is the practice of breathing in the suffering of others (taking), and breathing out to them your own healthiness (sending). It is also referred to as exchanging yourself for others. Tonglen practice is described in detail in chapter 37, "Point Two: Training in Relative Bodhichitta."

your self-respect. But we still continue to teach about egolessness, which is more respectable than self-respect, if I may say so.

Twofold Egolessness

When you enter the mahayana, you are expected to have already developed an understanding of what is called one-and-a-half-fold egolessness. The first fold is the egolessness of self. Having understood that, you go on to the second fold, the egolessness of external phenomena, or dharmas. But at this point your understanding is only partial, so it is referred to as one-and-a-half-fold egolessness. You have realized the egolessness of external phenomena, but not the egolessness of the perceiving itself. So you have not completely cut your belief in the world's crude manifestation. At the mahayana level, you need to be willing to open up and work with other sentient beings much more vividly than is prescribed in the hinayana. You need to be willing to take a step further into twofold egolessness.*

At this point, we are talking simply in terms of inspiration, which plants a seed. There may not be a one-hundred-percent experience of egolessness. Perhaps just tokens of such a possibility are happening. But talking alone does not help, even though you might have theories about it, and sitting practice does not help all that much either. You need to have the experience of dealing with day-to-day life situations in the world. The point is that in entering the mahayana, a good understanding of twofold egolessness goes a long way, because then you could teach yourself and hear the teachings at the same time.

Functioning without Ego

In the hinayana, you are provided with the idea of shamatha and the merits of mindfulness. Once you have developed mindfulness, then you are able to go further, to the development of vipashyana, or awareness. The combination of shamatha and vipashyana brings you greater intelligence, or prajna. With that intelligence, you begin to realize the hideousness of

* The realization of *twofold egolessness* is divided into three stages. First is the egolessness of self, the first fold. Second is the egolessness of phenomena, described as a partial understanding of the second fold. Third is the egolessness of the perceiving itself, which completes the second fold.

believing in your self. You see how your habitual patterns make you thick and stupid, and you realize the problem of ego.

The problem of ego even shows up in our language. In the English language, you may be about to say something intelligent, but your first word has to be *I*, as in "I am about to say something intelligent." In order to be grammatical, you have to use this word *I*, so at the grammatical, verbal level, your intelligence is already obscured. If you say, "I have a good idea," where did that good idea come from? Should there be "I" in it at all? Why can't you just say, "There is a good idea"? So the problem of ego seems to be inherent in our English language and our grammar.

In the early stages of human linguistic life, we are also taught to say "me" and "mine." That may be all right in terms of learning to speak the language, but beyond that there are continual problems with the notion of possession. The point of mahayana is to overcome that notion of possession and the ongoing impulse that things should belong to you first, and only afterward to others. According to the mahayana, things do not have to belong to you in order for you to enjoy them.

When you realize the obstacles that arise from the belief or habit of ego, you also begin to realize the opposite possibility of overcoming those obstacles and working with them. You realize that you actually possess a state of being that is not centralized in "me," in "my" beliefs, in "my" profession, in "me" as an ego-person. You see that there is another side to you, that you have the potential to experience gentleness and peace. You begin to discover your soft spot. That discovery comes from the experience of vipashyana, or awareness.

We could quite safely say that everybody possesses a soft spot, and everybody can function without ego. We all possess a basic soft spot, which is not ego. Some people might think it strange if you tell them that you are practicing a discipline known as egolessness. They probably think you are on your way to becoming a vegetable. But according to enlightened vision, it is possible to live fully without ego. Ego is, in fact, stupidity. It is fundamental thickness. It sets up obstacles or veils that prevent you from developing any form of intelligence at all.

By understanding the implications of egolessness, you develop a quality of genuine sympathy and softness. You begin to feel relaxed and easy. That combination of sympathy and egolessness makes you a perfect candidate to enter the bodhisattva path. Why? Because at each and every step you are losing your ego, and as you shed more layers of ego, you

pot of yogurt with his shawl, and the yogurt began to splatter all over the cave. The whole cave became filled with eyes, and the more he hit the pot, the more eyes he produced.

Three Types of Emptiness

The shunyata state of meditation is described as externally empty, internally empty, and absolutely empty.* Externally empty means that the phenomenal world and the sensory perceptions are seen as equally empty, although they may be vivid and colorful. Internally empty means that the internal world of emotions is also seen as empty, vivid maybe, but still empty. Absolutely empty means that there is nothing particularly to do. There is nothing to work on, no one to make a reference point, nothing whatsoever.

* Traditionally, eighteen types of shunyata experience have been described based on external, internal, and absolute emptiness. Chandrakirti's *Madhyamakavatara* lists sixteen kinds of emptiness. The first set of four includes inner emptiness, outer emptiness, emptiness of both outer and inner, and emptiness of emptiness. The second group includes emptiness of immensity, emptiness of the ultimate, emptiness of the compounded, and emptiness of the uncompounded. The third set includes emptiness of what is beyond extremes, emptiness of what is endless and beginningless, emptiness of what should not be spurned, and emptiness of essential nature. The fourth group includes emptiness of all phenomena, emptiness of defining characteristics, emptiness of the unobservable, and emptiness of nonthings. To that list can be added the emptiness of the nature itself and the emptiness of transcendent quality, to make eighteen in all. See Padmakara Translation Group, trans., *Introduction to the Middle Way: Chandrakirti's Madhyamakavatara with Commentary by Ju Mipham* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2005).

to see kündzop, you know that if the kettle is whistling, you have to turn down the heat. If you are going to the supermarket, you know how to buy proper things at proper times and get a good bargain. You may not be working toward enlightenment, but you are keeping track of reality. You are relating with reality step-by-step. And if you go further with prajna, you can see how you are coloring reality. You can begin to see through kündzop.

Kündzop and Emptiness

The shunyata experience of the bodhisattva path comes from shamatha, vipashyana, and egolessness. The shamatha possibility of shunyata comes from kündzop experiences presenting themselves colorfully, but without any personal, emotional attachment being made. There is no clinging to the phenomenal world, although the phenomenal world continues to be colorful and vivid. That lack of fixation brings in the element of absolute truth as well. It brings about harmony and gentleness, because we do not have to fight for anything. That is the first point, the shamatha experience of shunyata.

With vipashyana, you begin to understand how to see things as they are in a very simple, nonaggressive way. You begin to see things as an illusion. This does not mean that you are being fooled or seeing a mirage, but that you are seeing things as a self-existing game that does not apply individually or personally to you or others. You are beginning to realize the mirage-ness of the situation in a very simple way; you see that things are not all that good, not all that bad, not all that entertaining, and not all that nonentertaining. Things are being seen as they are on a very basic and fundamental level.

On the whole, there is no substance, although there is seeming substance. If somebody is not helping you to pay your phone bills, or if somebody doesn't give you your dinner, or the dinner is badly cooked, such things may be touchy situations for you. But at the same time, it is because you are so touchy and intensely emotional that new possibilities begin to occur to you. When you have powerful emotional threats and extreme messages of all kinds being presented to you, as extreme as such events become, that is how much shunyata could be experienced. Because things are so extraordinarily intense; therefore, they are so ordinarily a mirage because of the intensity. In other words, human beings are unable

kshanti, which means "having equilibrium." It is a kind of indifference in the sense of not giving in to the discursiveness or chaos of whatever has arisen in you. With kshanti, you are able to practice your shamatha-vipashyana discipline in the middle of Grand Central Station. You are willing to wait for the harmoniousness of a situation to arise by not correcting the disharmony. It is like waiting for good weather to happen.

Overcoming Aggression

The Buddhist meaning of patience is freedom from aggression, and the main obstacle to patience is anger. According to the sutras, there is no greater evil than aggression, and there is no greater practice than patience. You may have attained a level of generosity and discipline, but if you cannot be without aggression, you have not achieved the paramita of patience. Aggression is the most dangerous emotion, because it does not allow any form of gentleness. One instant of aggression can destroy your connection with the world, including your dedication to the relative and absolute bodhichitta principles. If you want to kill your dharmic connection, a moment's aggression is your best weapon. It has been said in the scriptures that one moment of aggression will destroy aeons and aeons of virtue.

Aggression is absolutely terrible; it is anti-mahayana. Passion, lust, and desire may have qualities of neurosis, and they may destroy your mindfulness and awareness, but at the same time they have the nature of acceptance. However, aggression is based on total rejection, whether it is aggression toward yourself or aggression toward other sentient beings.

When you recognize your ego-orientation or your indulgence in aggression, there is a tendency to punish yourself. However, patience is not based on punishing yourself. Patience means that you wait a minute; you wait and see what happens. It means not coming to conclusions too quickly. Just because you have indulged, you should not panic. Just wait. Be patient.

The paramita of patience continues the pattern of alternating shamatha and vipashyana through the paramitas. That is, the first paramita, generosity, is connected with shamatha; the second paramita, discipline, is connected with vipashyana; and with the third paramita, we are back to shamatha. Patience is the way to quell the heat of aggression by following the way of shamatha tranquillity and peacefulness—but it is a highly

advanced level of shamatha discipline. As we go on to higher and higher levels of paramitas, the standard of shamatha and vipashyana escalates, so the paramita of patience involves a higher level of shamatha than the paramita of generosity.

The sequence of the paramitas is significant. Generosity is the stripping-off process, and discipline is remaining in the loneliness. Having gone through those two processes, we find our situation unbearable, as if we were being beaten by hundreds of people. All kinds of pain come up in our life, not as the result of punishment but as the result of being generous and disciplined. We actually invite pain by being alone and keeping our discipline. We are like an owl in the daylight, physically and psychically attacked from all directions by visible and invisible forces. The paramita of patience means not getting resentful about that.

When you have anger and resentment, however disciplined or generous you might be, you are not actually that enlightened. When you have a burst of aggression, it makes everything dry and terribly unproductive. You may have cultivated the soil, sowed the seeds, and watered the ground beautifully, but aggression destroys the whole thing. When you are angry, you reject both other people and yourself. At that point, you have no connection with the dharma at all. When you lose your temper, you are so furious that you couldn't care less about the sacredness of anything. You couldn't care less about yourself, or the other person, or your teacher, or your path. But if you reverse the logic, when somebody is angry with you and you are patient with that person, you are creating a thousand *kalpas** of merit on the spot. When somebody is angry, that is your chance to be patient. You could breathe in the anger, and not only that, you could project goodness. But if you get angry in turn, you lose it.

One of the best things about patience is that it is very sharp and clear. It speaks for itself. Anger is anger, and patience is patience. They are very sharply divided, and that distinction should be properly understood. However, patience is not based on suppressing anger. At times aggression may be legitimate, such as when others are doing something wrong and you lose your temper in order to stop them. At other times aggression is not legitimate, such as when you are simply unable to cope with a situation and become impatient. But basically, it is not appropriate to apply anger unless you are in the role of teacher. When you are teaching somebody

* A *kalpa* (Skt.) is an endlessly long period or time, a world cycle.

attitude of delight toward the path. When you feel delighted with what you are doing, working hard evolves effortlessly. At the same time, you still have to encourage yourself further. It is like falling in love: when you fall in love, you have to maintain your love affair, no matter what obstacles come to you. Likewise, when the first splash of delight comes along, you don't just sit and gaze at it and hope for the best, but you maintain it and develop it.

Although you might have generosity, discipline, and patience, without exertion you do not achieve anything. Without exertion, you lapse into laziness, stupor, and slothfulness. Exertion helps you to destroy the whole range of egohood, of viewing solidity as a big deal. It helps you to transcend, or go beyond, all of that. Exertion is joyful and enthusiastic. It is large-scale enthusiasm rather than small splashes, such as when good ideas come up and you get excited about them.

Exertion is continuing what has happened already in the previous three paramitas and taking delight in continuing. If you put together generosity, discipline, and patience, they amount to exertion. As you go along, you are constantly building on previous paramitas, and collecting new ones in the process. The paramitas begin to pile up in that way. The idea is to remember to practice one of the paramitas, or all of them at once, during your daily life. As long as you remember to handle yourself in that way, then you are practicing properly, and you are completely steeped in Buddhism. If you begin to make a separation between dharmic practice and regular, ordinary life, there is a problem.

One way to look at the paramitas is in terms of what each of them overcomes. Discipline overcomes passion, and exertion overcomes laziness. That is the difference between discipline and exertion. With generosity, you are trying to overcome stinginess and selfishness, and with patience, you are trying to overcome aggression. That is how it works. So each of the paramitas has its counterpart.

Another way to look at the paramitas is in terms of how a paramita is paired up with either shamatha or vipashyana. In the development of the paramitas, shamatha and vipashyana alternate six times. So it is shamatha (generosity), vipashyana (discipline), shamatha (patience), vipashyana (exertion), shamatha (meditation), and vipashyana (prajna). In this process, the residues of shamatha and vipashyana from the previous paramitas are not rejected, but the underlying, heightened point of each

of the previous paramitas continues. At the level of exertion, we have a lot of residues piled up already, but at the same time we are working on a particular, very powerful point.

The paramitas are mostly postmeditation practices. You cannot practice generosity in the meditation hall; you have to go out and be generous to somebody. You cannot just visualize being generous; that does not really fulfill anything. So paramita practice is postmeditation experience. With paramita practice, the actual sitting-meditation technique does not really change very much. It is more a question of how you deal with the feedback coming to you from the world outside. Your growing sophistication might take the form of shamatha or vipashyana. With shamatha meditation, you have a level of steadiness, and in postmeditation, it is a question of how much you can maintain that steadiness. Shamatha is first thought, and vipashyana is second thought. Shamatha is usually the instigator; it is how well you have been trained, and it is your education. With shamatha, you come across as a good, educated person.

Smiling at Obstacles

The ultimate meaning of tsöndrü is joy in practice. Exertion means appreciating virtue, rather than just working hard. Holding on to seriousness can be a form of self-protection. You do not want to face facts, whatever the situation may be. But when you accept the pain, or obstacle, it is like tonglen: there is the possibility of joy. With exertion, you appreciate virtue because you begin to feel that what you are doing is right and best, and it feels good to do it. For instance, you never get tired of taking showers, seeing the sunlight, or eating breakfast, lunch, and dinner. You feel that those things are an integral part of your life; therefore, you accept them.

In a lot of situations, there seem to be obstacles trying to push us backward. Nonetheless, with exertion, we do not give up, and we do not expect others to support us as an automatic response. It is quite the contrary. We try to keep going and to become completely fearless, so that our fear becomes fearlessness. We never lose heart and never look for alternatives unless our situation is really, absolutely, fundamentally, totally, utterly unworkable. Otherwise we do not give in or give up.

You cannot expect an easy journey, an easy situation, or easy circumstances. For instance, Milarepa had a lot of problems and difficulties in

but actually the word *compassion* does not say as much as *love*. Love is very heavy, whereas compassion is a kind of passion, which is easy to work with. Compassion is like a slit in our skin; it is like a wound.

Ultimate Bodhichitta

2

Regard all dharmas as dreams.

Regarding all dharmas as dreams is an expression of compassion and openness. The reason you can regard all dharmas as dreams is because of your training in shamatha and vipashyana. You can do this because you have experienced that your basic existence is questionable as an ego entity. According to this slogan, love and hate, pain and pleasure, aggression and passion—whatever comes and goes in your life—could be regarded as dreams. Nothing ever happens. But because nothing happens, everything happens. When you want to be entertained, nothing seems to happen. But in this case, although everything is just a thought in your mind, a lot of underlying percolation takes place. That "nothing happening" is the experience of openness, and that percolation is the experience of compassion.

Basically, everything we experience is a dream. We have been sleepwalking; we have been sleeping and dreaming for a long time, and are doing so right now. According to the abhidharma, nothing going on in the mind is registered properly and fully. Our mind has been working haphazardly, so we are really not good thinkers. According to this slogan, everything should simply be regarded as not real. We realize that thoughts of love and hate are just profiles of the things we see, and do not in themselves provide any benefit or harm.

The practice of this ultimate bodhichitta slogan seems to be primarily oriented toward the mind-only philosophical school of yogachara. According to yogachara, the phenomenal world is not to be regarded as solid, but as a dream. You can experience that dreamlike quality in sitting practice. When you are focusing on your breath, suddenly discursive thoughts begin to arise. You begin to see things, to hear things, and to feel things. But all those perceptions are none other than your own mental creation. In the same way, you can see that your hate for your enemy, your love for your friends, and your attitudes to money, food, and wealth, are

all discursive thoughts. If you did not have a mind, you would not be able to perceive anything, but since you do have a mind, you perceive things. Therefore, what you perceive is a product of your mind, which uses your sense organs as channels for the sense perceptions.

Regarding dharmas as dreams does not mean that you become fuzzy and woolly, or that everything has an edge of sleepiness about it. You might actually have a good dream, vivid and graphic. Regarding dharmas as dreams means that, although you might think that things are very solid, the way you perceive them is soft and dreamlike. You realize that whatever you experience in your life—pain, pleasure, happiness, sadness, grossness, refinement, sophistication, crudeness, hot, cold, or whatever—is just memories. Your memories may be very vivid, but they are not regarded as invincible. Everything is shifty. So things have a dreamlike quality, but at the same time the productions of your mind are quite vivid.

3

Examine the nature of unborn awareness.

Because you could get caught up in the fascination of regarding all dharmas as dreams and perpetuate unnecessary visions and fantasies, it is important to contemplate the nature of unborn insight. The reason insight is known as "unborn" is because we have no idea of its history. We have no idea where this mind, our crazy mind, began. It has no shape, no color, no particular portrait or characteristics. It flickers on and off, off and on, all the time. Sometimes it is hibernating, sometimes it is active and all over the place.

When you look at your own mind beyond the perceptual level alone—which you can't actually do, but you pretend to do—you find that there is nothing there, and you realize that there is nothing to hold on to. So your mind is unborn. At the same time, your mind is insightful because you still perceive things. You should contemplate these things by looking into who is actually perceiving dharmas as dreams.

In mindfulness practice, you are mindful of something: you are mindful of yourself, you are mindful of your atmosphere, and you are mindful of your breath. But if you look at *why* you are mindful—beyond *what* you are mindful of—you begin to find that there is no root. If you look further, you will find that your mind has no color and no shape. Your mind is, basically speaking, somewhat blank. There is nothing to it. When you try to

find out why you see things, why you hear sounds, why you feel, and why you smell, you find a kind of blankness, and everything begins to dissolve. By looking in this way, you are cultivating the possibility of shunyata.

In examining the nature of unborn insight, you look at your own mind, just basic simple mind, the thinking process that exists in you. Just look at that! See that! Contemplating does not mean analyzing or dividing things into sections; it is just viewing things as they are in the ordinary sense. Looking at your mind in this way goes along quite well with hinayana mindfulness training. When you sit, your mind fluctuates constantly. Look at that. Just look at that!

Insight is unborn because you have not manufactured it, which is a relief. And you are further relieved, because you can contemplate it. Insight is crystal clear; nobody has made it up, nobody has manufactured it. It is not the product of any philosopher's thinking—it is right here. First thought is best thought, precisely on the spot. Unborn insight is pure consciousness with no defilements and no anger. It has an element of buddha nature because it is so pure, so basic, and so ordinary.

Realizing the nature of unborn insight is the first discovery of *künshi ngangluk kyi gewa,* the "natural virtue of alaya." Sometimes it is timid; therefore, it is good. With such timidity, you might begin to meet your own mind. That quality of timidity is fine; it makes you very sweet and gentle. Then you rise up a little bit. You begin to get into *künshi ngangluk kyi gewa*, which is slightly less timid, and finally you get to bodhichitta. You are still timid and meek, but you are also slightly perky. You are meek and perky put together, which is excellent. It is so pure, genuine, and real.

4

Self-liberate even the antidote.

The antidote referred to in this slogan is the realization of emptiness. By examining the nature of unborn insight, you see that your mind is colored by phenomenal experiences, that it has no root. Realizing that your discursive thoughts have no origin is an antidote or helpful suggestion. But you may begin to develop a twist of logic, thinking that if nothing has any root, why bother? What is the point? So you need to go beyond that antidote. You should not hang on to that so-whatness or naiveté of it.

Because of the nature of shunyata experience, and the occasional glimpse in your mind of nothing being existent, you may think nothing great or small really matters very much. It is all a kind of backslapping joke: ha-ha, yuk, yuk, yuk. Nothing matters, so let it go. All is shunyata, so who cares? Since everything is empty, you may think you can murder, you can meditate, you can perform your art, you can do all kinds of things.

You may think that you can do whatever you want, that as long as you are meditative, everything is going to be fine. But there is something very tricky about that approach. In meditation, we are not particularly seeking enlightenment or tranquillity—we are trying to get over our deception.

Some people view meditation as the simple experience of tranquillity. They may regard going to the movies every evening as their meditation, or watching television, grooming their horse, feeding their dog, or taking a long walk in the woods. They may even regard hunting as their meditation. Other people claim that they do not have to sit because they have always "understood." I do not trust such people.

Dwelling on emptiness in that way is a misinterpretation called the poison of shunyata. You have to work with that antidote, but not dwell on it. However, thinking that the point is *not* to dwell on it could also be problematic. In fact, the idea of this slogan is that antidotes of any kind are not regarded as appropriate.

5

Rest in the nature of alaya, the essence.

According to Buddhist psychology, there are eight types of consciousness. This slogan is about transcending the first seven consciousnesses and resting in the eighth, or alaya consciousness. The first six consciousnesses are connected with sensory perception, or the meeting of a sense organ, a sense object, and a corresponding sense consciousness. The six sense consciousnesses are sight, smell, hearing, touch, taste, and mind consciousness, which is the basic coordinating factor governing the other five. The mind consciousness uses those particular instruments to perceive mental objects, or thoughts. Beyond all that is the intention of doing so, which is the seventh consciousness, or nuisance mind. The seventh consciousness puts energy into all those perceptions and brings the whole thing together. It has a quality of fascination or inquisitiveness. Going further, beyond

all that, you find a level of experience known as the alaya consciousness. There is a resting place, which could be called primitive shamatha.

Resting in alaya means that you do not follow your discursive thoughts, but you try to treat yourself well. Basically, you do not follow fixed logic, discursive thoughts, or conceptual ideas of any kind. Generally when you look out at someone or something, you tend to check back on yourself, but you could look further, beyond yourself. When you do so, you are brought back to that resting place, where the orders and information are coming from.

Starting from basic alaya, you develop alaya consciousness, which makes distinctions. You begin to create a separation between this and that, who and whom, what and what. That is the notion of consciousness, or self-consciousness. You begin to distinguish who is on your side and who is on their side, so to speak. But basic alaya does not have any bias. That is why it is called natural virtue. It is neutral, neither male nor female; therefore, it is not on either side, and there is no question of courting.

Basic wakefulness, or sugatagarbha, is beyond alaya. It is pre-alaya, but at the same time encompasses alaya. Alaya has basic goodness, but sugatagarbha has greater goodness—it is wakefulness itself. From that point of view, even basic alaya could be said to be a consciousness of some kind. Although it is not an official category of consciousness, it is a kind of awareness, and maybe even a form of samsaric mind. Sugatagarbha is beyond that. It is indestructible; it is the ancestor or parent of alaya.

We could describe the process of perception with the analogy of a film projector. First you have the screen, the phenomenal world. Then you project yourself onto that phenomenal world. You have the film—the fickleness of mind, which constantly changes frames—so you have a moving object projected onto the screen by the machinery of the projector. There are lots of teeth to catch the film, and mechanisms to make sure that the projection is continuous. This is precisely the same situation as the sense organs: you look and you listen, and as you listen, you look. You connect things together, although they are shifting completely every moment by means of time.

Behind the whole setup is a bulb, which projects everything onto the screen. That bulb is the cause of the whole thing. Resting in the nature of alaya is like resting in the nature of that bulb. Alaya is brilliant and shining; it does not give in to the fickleness of the rest of the machine.

That bulb has no concern with the screen or how the image is coming through. Resting in alaya is the actual practice of ultimate bodhichitta. It is what happens during sitting practice. Ultimate bodhichitta is the realization that phenomena cannot be regarded as solid, but at the same time, phenomena have a self-luminous quality. So alaya refers to experience, not simply to the structural, mechanical process of projection.

In the analogy of the film projector, the bulb can be taken out and put into a flashlight. If you have a flashlight with a beam of light coming out of it, you have to hold it properly in order to use the light. The flashlight is like relative bodhichitta; holding it properly and making it work for you is absolute bodhichitta. You need absolute bodhichitta so that the light will shine everywhere, wherever you need it. Resting your mind in alaya produces absolute bodhichitta constantly.

By resting your mind in the alaya consciousness, in clear and nondiscriminating mind, you are trying to free yourself from sevenfold mind, or the first seven consciousnesses. But before you can transcend sevenfold mind, you have to work with the bulb. Instead of monkeying with the projector, you could just take the bulb out of your projector, screw it into your regular old-fashioned lamp, and look at it. So there is just the bare minimum of you and your mind, very simply. That is the self-liberating alaya. That good old bulb is the real thing. You have your light or you don't—you switch off or you switch on.

Even in ordinary situations, if you actually trace back to find out where everything comes from, you will find a primitive resting level. You could rest in that quality of basic existence, or alaya. However, you should not cultivate alaya as an end in itself, which would be dangerous, but you should use it as a stepping-stone. In this case, we are talking about alaya as a clear mind—as simplicity, clarity, and nondiscursive thought—as alaya consciousness. We have to be very clear on this. We are not trying to grasp the buddha nature immediately, but we are trying to work on our basic premises. For the first time, we are learning to slow down.

Alaya is described in the text as naturally good, as basic goodness. That quality of basic goodness applies to personal wholesomeness as well as to dedication to others. It is like saying you are a good person who can take care of your family and friends. Basic goodness is related to both alaya and bodhichitta. However, bodhichitta is more active and illuminating, while alaya is a resting quality with no grudge against anything, just satisfaction.

With the third slogan, "Examine the nature of unborn awareness," you look at your mind and trace back where your perceptions are coming from. With the fifth slogan, "Rest in the nature of alaya, the essence," instead of getting caught up in your visual and auditory perceptions, you come back home. You return to "home sweet home," which is your alaya. The alaya is where everything began, so you are returning to central headquarters. You see that all your activities—sight, smell, sound, and everything else that happens—are a production of that home ground. Having recognized that, you come back to where they began to manifest, and you rest in the needlessness of those productions. Alaya is a starting point and a returning point. It is internalizing. Resting in the nature of alaya takes for granted that you trust yourself already. It assumes that you don't have to run away from yourself all the time in order to get something from outside. You can just come home and relax.

6

In postmeditation, be a child of illusion.

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Becoming a child of illusion means that you continue in postmeditation what you have experienced in your sitting practice. During postmeditation, you take the bulb out of your projector. You might not have the screen or the film at this point, but you still carry a flashlight. You transfer the bulb into your flashlight, and you carry it with you all the time.

Illusion does not mean haziness, confusion, or mirage. You realize that after you finish sitting practice, you do not have to solidify phenomena, but you can continue your practice. If things become heavy and solid, you can flash mindfulness and awareness into them. In that way, you begin to see that everything is workable. Your attitude is that the phenomenal world is not evil—that "they" are not going to attack you, or destroy you, or kill you. Everything is workable and soothing. You swim along in your phenomenal world. You can't just float; you have to use your limbs and swim with the basic stroke of mindfulness-awareness. So you are swimming constantly in postmeditation—and during meditation, you just sit and realize the nature of your alaya very simply.

In the postmeditation experience, you sense that everything you perceive is a creation of your own preconceptions. If you cut through that and interject awareness, you begin to see that the games going on are not big games, but simply illusory games. It requires a lot of mindfulness and awareness working together to realize that—a lot of meditation in action.

Being a child of illusion means that you look at the phenomenal world and see its padded-wall quality. That's the illusion: padded walls everywhere. You think you are just about to strike against something very sharp, and you find that things bounce back on you. There is not much sharp contrast, but everything is part of your mindfulness and awareness. Everything bounces back, like a ball in a video game. When that ball returns, you might hit it back again, but it comes back again with a beep. So once again, you become a child of illusion. When you look at things, you find that they are soft, that they bounce back at you all the time. It's not particularly intellectual. It is first thought, best thought. You can actually experience that things are workable, that there is room. The basic idea of a child of illusion is that you do not feel claustrophobic. There is lots of space.

After your sitting practice, you might think, "Oh no, now I have to do postmeditation practice." But you don't have to feel so closed in. Instead, you can feel that as a child of illusion, you are dancing and clicking with those little beeps all the time. It is fresh and simple and very effective. The point, once again, is to treat yourself better. If you want to take a vacation from your practice, you can do so and still remain a child of illusion. Things just keep beeping at you all the time. It is very lucid, almost whimsical. Being a child of illusion is being willing to realize the simplicity of the phenomenal play, and to use that simplicity as part of your awareness and mindfulness practice.

VOLUME THREE

THE PROFOUND TREASURY
OF THE OCEAN OF DHARMA

The Tantric Path of Indestructible Wakefulness

CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA

COMPILED AND EDITED BY

Judith L. Lief

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Dropping the Watcher

At the beginning, on the primitive shamatha level, you have to develop your watchfulness. But as you begin to master shamatha, you require less watchfulness. Your mindfulness becomes a natural pattern. And when you develop shinjang, watchfulness is no longer necessary. You do not need feedback; you just know what is happening.

As you evolve into vipashyana, you develop more of an awareness of the situation, rather than constantly having to check back and forth with headquarters. So you need less watching, and more just being on the spot. In fact, the more you keep checking back, the more you lose your vipashyana; therefore, in vipashyana you should be on the spot all the time, each time.

From there you go further, and you begin to experience shunyata. You practice tonglen and become much more intense about developing compassion, gentleness, and kindness to others. Since you are concentrating on the pain of others and on developing generosity for them, you do not have to be so watchful of yourself all the time. You do not have to congratulate yourself about what a good person you are. As you put more exertion into your practice, you need less congratulation. Instead, you need more of a one-to-one relationship with your actual experience of the meditation technique, and you need to simplify yourself. Since you are dealing with the techniques very simply, you need less commentator, which is the voice of watchfulness, and more just seeing things very clearly. You are doing that properly and fully, on the spot.

As your confidence, discipline, exertion, and patience grow further, you finally get to the level of yeshe. It seems to be quite a long way, actually. At this point, you begin to feel that there is no need for a watcher. There is not even a question of being watched. If you had a watcher, it would actually be more of an obstacle. So finally, you do not need a commentator. That is the last thing you want! You just do it. That is called *nowness*. You do not need the past or the future to mind your business, but you are right here—and the fourth moment is even more so.

This whole process of dropping the watcher is like martial arts training. You need help at the beginning to make sure that you do not hurt yourself with your sword, and to make sure that you do a good job. But at some point, your assistants begin to become obstacles because they cut down your confidence in yourself, so they need to go away.

point. You have cleaned up the whole thing. Everything is in here, so once you begin to clean that up, there is no problem at all. Making decisions on the spot has no karma. You cannot make a wrong decision.

Interestingly, during sitting meditation in the vajrayana, you practice the hinayana style of shamatha-vipashyana, which reinforces the state of healthiness of your mind. Then in the postmeditation experience, when you have finished your sitting practice and are going about your regular business, you can zap into that state of mind. You can always do that; it is what has traditionally been improvised. That is the only way to combine hinayana, mahayana, and vajrayana together. This means you have to be awake and aware all twenty-four hours of every day.

Particularly with beginning vajrayana practitioners, there is no relaxation at all, none whatsoever, and you cannot have a good time. But you are being fed by the energy that exists around you, which could be the equivalent of relaxation. That energy is your personal passion, aggression, and ignorance; it is the five-buddha-family principle of energy.* So you are not exactly relaxed, but you are being fed constantly by this energy. Because of that, you begin to realize that you can give up and let go very easily.

Vajrayana Sayings

In the vajrayana, there are several sayings related to the discovery of transcending habitual patterns, which might be helpful at this point.

Rikpa Free from Sem

The first saying is "Rikpa free from sem." In Tibetan it is *sem tang tral-we rikpa*. *Sem* means "mind," *tang tral-we* means "free from," and *rikpa*, again, means "insight"; so *sem tang tral-we rikpa* means "insight that has departed or separated from the mind." It means rikpa that is free from the mind. This is one of the definitions of vajrayana insight: it is insight that is free

* The *five buddha-families* refer to five styles of energy, which can manifest in either confused or enlightened ways. This grouping of five, arranged in the center and four cardinal directions of a circle, or mandala, is found throughout tantric teachings and iconography. For more on the five buddha-families, see chapter 26, "The Mandala of the Five Buddha-Families."

of becoming the central figure of the mandala. The iconography of the mandala is so full-blown and seemingly solid, compared to that original gap, that little glimpse. In some sense, however, the full-blown-ness of the mandala principle is already present, and it is in relationship to this full-blown-ness that you experience a glimpse or gap. You need to have something to have a gap from. Otherwise, you would not have any place to breathe. So mandala possibilities exist already.

When you sit, you should be thankful that you have a front, a right side, a back, and a left side. When you sit on your meditation cushion, you are already sitting in the middle of the mandala. So with the first gap of shamatha, the sense of being in the middle of the mandala is already there. Front, back, left, and right are everywhere. So you are your own mandala. That is precisely where shamatha and vipashyana come together.

From the point of view of sacred outlook, the whole world could be seen as mandala. Let's say you see a samsaric situation that is full of suffering; this could be seen as the mandala of the first noble truth. When the Buddha sits in the middle, and the arhats sit around him, this is also a mandala of its own. So you could have a hinayana mandala with the four gates and everything, and all sorts of bodhisattva-like mandalas could happen, too.

In the vajrayana, when suffering happens, the experience of the sufferer and the suffering become one at some point. You do not separate them into two. You are right in the middle; you are already the central deity. So in the vajrayana, we see the world as sacred, as a sacred mandala. And as long as we are humble and understanding to others, then even people who have not heard about the dharma can tune in to this experience as part of the mandala principle.

Shamatha-Vipashyana as Indivisible Emptiness and Luminosity

The experience of the mandala principle is based on having received abhisheka. It is based on realizing the nonduality of shamatha and vipashyana as the body, speech, and mind of the guru, and recognizing that as indivisible vajra nature. So in discussing the mandala principle, it is most important to realize that the discovery of ultimate wisdom derives from the indivisibility of shamatha and vipashyana.

Shamatha-vipashyana is sometimes referred to in vajrayana terms as the indivisibility of emptiness and luminosity. Emptiness is connected with shamatha, for slowly but surely, by means of shamatha practice, we try to eliminate the things that are not necessary to us. Discursive thoughts are not necessary, so we try to avoid them; therefore, we attain emptiness, or vacancy of some kind. Luminosity is connected with vipashyana. It means seeing brightly and clearly. By means of vipashyana, awareness begins to pick up what needs to be done.

Shamatha-vipashyana is also known as the combination of emptiness and skillful means. Emptiness, again, is the shamatha process of eliminating mind's occupations and preconceptions, slowly removing them altogether. "Skillful means" refers to vipashyana awareness, which sees all the possibilities of the environment around oneself. So as you can see, shamatha-vipashyana is a very powerful discipline and a very definite experience.

In the vajrayana, shamatha and vipashyana are indivisible. We are not practicing just one or the other alone, but we are trying to join together emptiness and its brightness, emptiness and its skillfulness. So the vajrayana practitioner begins to feel that situations are being handled, but without being regarded as a dualistic feast, pleasurable to mind's duplicity and fickleness. Therefore, indivisible shamatha-vipashyana is known as ultimate. It is ultimate because we have practiced it and we have achieved the result: we have achieved freedom from the fickleness and duplicity of mental activities.

In the nondual experience of shamatha-vipashyana, we have achieved the ultimate shunyata or the emptiness possibilities of shamatha, free from all preoccupations; and with the vipashyana aspect, we have achieved brightness and luminosity as well. Because such an achievement has taken place already, on the spot, it is real and definite. Because it is real and definite, it is known as the ultimate wisdom, or *töngyi yeshe.* And because of the achievement of ultimate wisdom, we can experience the results of abhisheka.

these four preliminary practices, as further preparation for the vajrayana the practitioner engages in the practice of devotion, or guru yoga.*

Prostrations and Refuge

In the first preliminary practice, you offer prostrations 100,000 times, and as you do so, you repeat the refuge formula 100,000 times. In the vajrayana, in addition to taking refuge in the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha, you also take refuge in the gurus of the lineage, the yidams, and the protectors of the dharma.

In Tibet, offering prostrations is a traditional practice. When you meet a teacher, the first physical gesture you make to express your dedication, devotion, respect, and commitment is to offer a prostration. It is also a way of introducing and presenting yourself. In the case of ngöndro, when you meet both the vajrayana teachings and the teacher, you offer 100,000 prostrations.

At the point that you begin ngöndro practice, you should already have a thorough understanding of hinayana and mahayana, and a preliminary idea of what visualization practice is all about. You should have some idea of the visualized deity or *samayasattva* and the blessing deity or jnanasattva principles, and you should have the basic aspiration to connect with a yidam. You should also know something about the lineage you are joining and about the principle of abhisheka.

Prostrations are connected with shamatha practice. Like shamatha, offering prostrations is a repetitious exercise, and you always come back to the same spot. At the same time, you are dealing with any irritations that arise. You have a body and you have to relate with your body, the same as you relate with the breath. In prostration practice, you are trying to burn up the fuel of restlessness. Although prostrations do not exactly develop calmness, they are working toward calmness. So they are correlated with the shamatha discipline of making sure that there is a sense

* In describing the ngöndro, Trungpa Rinpoche here lists the four practices as prostrations, refuge formula recitation, Vajrasattva-mantra recitation, and mandala offering. He refers to guru yoga as an additional preliminary practice, as well as a continuing practice. At other times, he lists the four practices as prostrations (with refuge formula recitation), Vajrasattva-mantra recitation, mandala offering, and guru yoga.

of peace, harmony, and gentleness in us, because there is no arrogance and pride.

The reason we do prostrations at the beginning of ngöndro, as the first thing, is to make sure that our pot is not upside down. In order to receive something inside, we have to turn our pot right-side up. If our pot is upside down, it is because we are arrogant and full of ego reservations. We are trying to maintain ourselves, so we do not want to put anything of anybody else's inside. We are quite content with our emptiness, which is the wrong type of emptiness. So at this point, prostrations turn our pot right-side up 100,000 times.

We make sure we have the pot right-side up by reversing our arrogance and pride and by surrendering. We might feel we have worked hard to become good at something. We may have come up with all sorts of credentials to present to the teacher and the teachings. Nonetheless, we have to let those credentials go in order to receive the vajrayana teachings. So we prostrate 100,000 times to make sure we have our pot right-side up.

In prostration practice, you visualize the teachers of a particular lineage. It could be the lineage of the Gelukpas, the Sakyapas, the Kagyüpas, or the Nyingmapas. Some traditions have the lineage sitting on a tree, called a refuge tree; some traditions have the lineage sitting on big lotus petals; some traditions have the lineage sitting on clouds; and some traditions just have them sitting on each other's heads, one on top of the other. But whatever the visualization may be, the idea is to develop a sense of the guru and the lineage. You can witness your lineage, and you can surrender yourself to the lineage and its wisdom. Prostrations and the refuge formula, which take place together, make up 200,000 of the 400,000 things that you count when you do ngöndro.

In my tradition, you visualize the lineage in a refuge tree. The Kagyü lineage traditionally starts with Vajradhara at the top of the tree, representing the dharmakaya aspect of the guru. Below Vajradhara, you visualize all the teachers in the Kagyü lineage. You visualize yourself sitting in front of the refuge tree and prostrating to the lineage and to your teacher. When you visualize yourself sitting in front of the tree and prostrating to it, you are not visualizing in the sense of imagining, but you actually feel the presence of the gurus. They are right there, receiving

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Guru Yoga

Prostrations allow you to disembody or disarm your arrogance or your ego. Mantra practice allows you to experience your neuroses and to connect with a quality of purity. Having purified yourself, in the mandala offering you learn how to give further, to give everything. Finally you can actually mix your mind with the teacher's mind.

HAVING COMPLETED the four preliminary practices, the next practice is guru yoga, or *la-me naljor. Lama* means "guru," *la-me* makes it "of guru," and *naljor* means "yoga"; so *la-me naljor* means "guru yoga."

Guru yoga is not exactly part of the ngöndro, as such. However, it is sometimes referred to as the fourth ngöndro discipline. Since reciting the refuge formula goes along with the prostration practice, it could be said that prostrations and the refuge formula recitation, the Vajrasattva mantra recitation, and the mandala offering are the first three preliminaries, and guru yoga is the fourth. Guru yoga discipline is more of an intermediary step to the actual practice of vajrayana discipline, but since it is referred to as a preliminary practice, it can be put in the category of ngöndro, which means "prelude."

Guru yoga definitely goes along with *lhakthong,* or vipashyana, discipline. It comes after mandala practice, because when we begin to offer everything fully and completely without expecting anything in return, not even thanks, we begin to experience faith, trust, and longing. We experience the validity of the teacher and the teachings, and we automatically begin to appreciate them.

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Stability, Luminosity, and Joy

When you receive abhisheka, it is not so much that you are relaxing, but that your mind is relaxing with the mind of the vajra master and the mind of the lineage altogether. . . . There is a sense that the ordinary hang-ups of the phenomenal world, which are heavy and painful, begin to dissolve. They are no longer dragging you down, and because there is no fixation or feeling of being imprisoned, you are uplifted. You are not completely blissed-out, but you feel somewhat lighter. Your dirt and your obscurations have been removed.

Joining Shamatha and Vipashyana

Throughout the path, shamatha discipline produces one kind of experience, and the vipashyana experience furthers that particular situation. For instance, the shamatha aspect of mandala offering brings about the vipashyana aspect of guru yoga. So all along the way, you alternate shamatha and vipashyana, the development of steadiness and awareness.

Steadiness is the way to be on the spot thoroughly and fully, as much as possible. It is developed by means of vajrayana techniques, such as mandala-offering practice. So shamatha is the skillful means, the discipline; and that type of discipline tends to bring about the vipashyana aspect of vajrayana practice. It brings greater awareness, devotion, and longing for the teacher. Through vipashyana, you unify your emotions with your appreciation of the teacher.

That union, or bringing together of the teacher and yourself, makes it possible for you to work together. It is the experience of tokpa gak, the ces-

sation or stopping of thoughts. By stopping thoughts, we are not talking about becoming zombies. You have to be quite careful about that. We cut conceptualization, but the natural, functioning mind and general awareness still goes on continuously. In fact, it is cultivated further by the vipashyana experience. Later on, it becomes the upaya of the vajrayana disciplines as well. So that particular aspect of mind could be sharpened. There is never a need for conceptual thinking. Nobody needs it. It is absolutely unnecessary because it produces pain and the unnecessary fortification of ego. That is what conceptual mind is for: to build your ego fortification. It is for "me," for "I." It is about how to be "I," how to build "myself" up—and that is not necessary. There could be a world without "I."

Stability and Luminosity

The abhisheka experience is a combination of shamatha and vipashyana put together completely. At the point when you receive abhisheka, you do not have any separation of those two at all. When you begin to share your reality with the vajra master, when you begin to enter into the vajra master's world, your experience becomes very dynamic, direct, and basic. You have the solidness and stability of shamatha, and at the same time you are not completely solidified in hanging on to your ego. Therefore, an expansion of vision takes place on the level of *prabhasvara,* or luminosity. That luminous quality goes along with your vipashyana practice. So things become bright and luminous, and at the same time they are very steady, direct, and simple.

These abhisheka principles are very much connected with transforming your ordinary mind and your ordinary concepts into another form of ordinary concept. When you see, hear, or think about things, your first glimpse might be extraordinary; you might hear something extraordinary or you might think something extraordinary. But when you go beyond that, when you do a double take, you begin to realize that things are not so extraordinary after all. That comes as a kind of relief. It is not a relief because there have been any misunderstandings or problems, but rather because a fundamental relaxation or fundamental freedom takes place. Finally, you can relax.

However, when you receive abhisheka, it is not so much that you are relaxing, but that your mind is relaxing with the mind of the vajra master and the mind of the lineage altogether. Your mind is relaxed with the

minds of Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa, Milarepa, and all the rest of the lineage teachers, including the Buddha and Vajradhara as well. There is a sense that the ordinary hang-ups of the phenomenal world, which are heavy and painful, begin to dissolve. They are no longer dragging you down, and because there is no fixation or feeling of being imprisoned, you are uplifted. You are not completely blissed-out, but you feel somewhat lighter. Your dirt and your obscurations have been removed.

At this point, you begin to realize that the inanimate and animate worlds could be seen as the living mandala principle on the spot. In other words, that situation is no longer mythical; it has become very real and very direct. Abhisheka is the first entrance into the world of the yidams and the world of the guru's mind altogether. It is the point at which we have finally joined the shamatha and vipashyana principles together. That is the way we are able to receive abhisheka fully and thoroughly.

Luminosity is vipashyana, and steadiness is shamatha. This combination of shamatha and vipashyana shows up in Tibetan terms such as *nang-tong,* or "appearance-emptiness," in which the *tong,* or emptiness part, is shamatha, and the *nang,* or appearance part, is vipashyana. It shows up in the term *traktong,* or "sound-emptiness," in which the *trak,* or sound part, is vipashyana, and the *tong* part is shamatha. Shamatha is an expression of emptiness, and vipashyana is an expression of luminosity. Shamatha is overcoming complications, which is a kind of cessation or negation, while vipashyana is something positive and vast. Vipashyana is the absence of fixation; it is that which sees egolessness. It is postmeditative awareness.

In the vajrayana, it is said that skillful means come out of luminosity, which is considered to be synonymous with compassion. So prajna and shunyata develop into compassion and skillful means; that is the combination of shamatha and vipashyana on the highest level. Shamatha and vipashyana produce each other automatically. If you have a feeling of tremendous space, that automatically bring a sense of detail, and the unity of the two is the abhisheka itself. You cannot have Vajradhara without shamatha and vipashyana.

Working with the Trikaya Principle

The combination of shamatha and vipashyana is also connected with the trikaya principle. The practice of shamatha brings the dharmakaya, and the practice of vipashyana brings sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya.

Broken down that way, the three kayas are sometimes known as the two kayas: the formless kaya and the form kayas.

It is interesting that at the beginning of the path, we think we are working on a very crude level when we do shamatha practice: we just learn how to breathe, how to stop our thoughts, and things like that. It seems to be quite a primitive level, but in fact we are actually working with the dharmakaya, or with potential dharmakaya, which is very advanced. The dharmakaya is a very high level, particularly from the vajrayana point of view. It is jnana-dharmakaya, the wisdom aspect altogether.

So first we have to manifest dharmakaya, and after that there are the postmeditation experiences or awareness practices, the sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya principles. We have to rescue the pure strictness of shamatha by relating with our day-to-day living situation through vipashyana experiences, which are luminous and bright.

Relative Truth as the Dancing Ground of Great Joy

Receiving abhisheka depends largely on the students and their motivation, as well as on the vajra master's willingness and friendship with the students. Between the two, they provide the abhisheka situation by inviting the wisdom deity, or *jnanasattva,* to confirm the deity as visualized by the student, or *samayasattva.* The jnanasattva and vajra master are somewhat linked; they are in league together. For the student, on the other hand, there is the potential for the jnanasattva, as well as the actual experience of samayasattva, as far as the tantric logic of kündzop is concerned.*

In the vajrayana, kündzop brings a further experience of great bliss. The ordinary kündzop of the hinayana level or the mahayana level simply refers to the factual phenomenal world. That is *yang-dak-pe kündzop,* or pure kündzop. But in the vajrayana, kündzop is seen as the potential dancing ground of great joy, or mahasukha. The Tibetan word for great joy is *dewa chenpo yi yeshe. Dewa* means "joy," *chenpo* means "great," "grand,"

* The references to jnanasattva and samayasattva have to do with the practice of visualization, and the relationship of the vajra master and student to the sambhogakaya deities, or yidams. For a discussion of visualization practice, see chapter 38, "Visualization and Sadhana Practice."

So cleanliness alone is not the way, but you have to regain the energy of the purity that comes from such cleanliness. That energy has to be re-created. For example, if you give a bath to a corpse, it gets clean, but it does not shine with liveliness or cleanliness. However, if you give a bath to a living person, their healthiness shows. The principle of bathing and then being massaged with oil also represents the magnetizing quality of the consort. So the consort of the deity represents both the magnetizing and enriching qualities at this point.

The peaceful and enriching central kriyayoga deities are accompanied by several wrathful deities or protectors. The wrathful principle in kriyayoga is not quite the same as in the other tantric yanas. Here the idea of wrathfulness is just extra coloring, which creates a definite boundary or territory. It is as if, having bathed and properly massaged your body with oil, you put your bright clothes on. The wrathful principle is protection against dirt; the wrathful deities are saying that this is an area of purity that no one can touch.

Visualization Practice

Visualization practice is a way of actualizing or experiencing certain realities by following the specific instructions given to you. In kriyayoga visualization practice, proper preparation and trust are essential.

Proper Preparation

Kriyayoga includes the practice of visualization, but there is a danger if you try to jump into this form of the creative use of imagination before you have developed shamatha and vipashyana practice, which makes you more peaceful and aware. Without shamatha-vipashyana, visualization practice could be a very big ego trip. Unless you have some understanding of mind control or ego control and the experience of relating with neurosis and boredom and so forth, none of these tantric practices will actually be workable at all.

You would go completely haywire if you just started with visualization. You might be floating in the air, doing offerings and uttering your mantras, but so what? What does that visualization mean to you? Visualization practice is supposed to be good for you, but where does the goodness come from? Unless there is an understanding of basic goodness and basic sanity, unless you can actually relate with your sanity properly, there will be no goodness coming out of anywhere. The whole thing will be chaos and aggression.

It is necessary for you to acknowledge your journey as a solid journey. It is necessary that you know your breath, that you know your body, and that you know your thoughts. This is an enormous relief. It is a relief to know that your breath makes sense, and that your thoughts make sense or do not make sense; when you know this, then the whole thing becomes less of a dream. That is very important, otherwise you cannot take the true kriyayoga approach to reality. You cannot take part in the water abhisheka, let alone the crown abhisheka. You cannot take part in any of those abhishekas unless you have an actual understanding of things directly and thoroughly as they are.

We had a lot of problems in Tibet with people collecting abhishekas and initiations. They would just extend their hands, get the blessed water, drink it, and then leave. If you asked them, "What was that abhisheka all about?" they would reply, "I don't know. It doesn't really matter. It was given by a great teacher, and I managed to drink the water, so I don't have to be particularly careful about what commitment I'm making."

Externalizing Trust

A particular characteristic of visualization practice in kriyayoga tantra is that you do not visualize yourself as one of the deities. Instead, you worship the yidams as external helpers. This is similar to what you find in Hinduism, where you visualize external deities as objects of worship. So although Buddhist kriyayoga is a nontheistic approach, there is a still quality of reverence. A Buddhist practitioner of kriyayoga still carries with them a quality of externalized trust from the day that person took the refuge vow. They maintain the idea of taking refuge in the Buddha as an example. So in kriyayoga visualization practice, it is felt that you personally cannot identify yourself with a particular yidam.

Because of this, it is said that in kriyayoga there is appreciation, rather than the vajra pride that comes from complete identification with the deities. Therefore, kriyayoga has sometimes been described as having no joy. Although there have been various disagreements about the approach to

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Path Mahamudra: The Experience of Meditation

In the final mahamudra experience, any phenomenal experience you involve yourself with is seen as a working basis. Sights, smells, touchable objects, and mental contents are all seen as expressions of your particular deity or yidam. There is complete, total involvement, total openness beyond any limitations or hesitations. Therefore, you do not have to meditate. . . . Because everything is so vivid already, it is self-existing meditation.

Insight and Relief

The second stage of the mahamudra experience is path mahamudra. According to Jamgön Kongtrül the Great, "Path mahamudra is the experience of meditation." Path mahamudra is connected with greater awareness or the *mahavipashyana* experience. We are not abandoning the shamatha-vipashyana principle here, but we are bringing it along, maturing it further. With mahavipashyana awareness, you witness that the physical environment is the creation of the guru, or vajra master. Because of your awareness, you also realize that speech and sounds are the utterance of the vajra master. And finally, you realize that any thought patterns that occur are expressions of the guru mandala. This kind of awareness, which is connected with the body, speech, and mind principles, means that the world is pliable.

making formulas for people in nirvana who are looking at samsara. So we are regressing, we are misreading it. Instead of saying "Dracula," we say "Alucard."

That is why the relative world is so important in this tantra. The other day I was working with the *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (although it doesn't belong to this tantric level), and the term *khor-de rulok*. *Khorwa* is "samsara," *de* is "nirvana," and *rulok* means "turn upside down"; so *khor-de rulok* means "samsara and nirvana turned upside down." Usually the idea is that nirvana is above and samsara is on the bottom, so the idea is to turn it around. In order to develop a complete and proper understanding of nirvana and samsara, you tip it over.

The Importance of Shamatha Practice for All Four Yogas

Going back to the original practice of shamatha is important for these four yogas of mahamudra. Even at the level of nonmeditation, you still do not give up the technique and the style of shamatha and vipashyana discipline. You use the same technique, have the same posture, and the same sense of uprightness all the time.

In order to maintain the one-pointedness of the first yoga, it is important to concentrate on mindfulness and awareness. Shamatha is also important for the second yoga, simplicity, since it is still necessary to give up any possibility of having some kind of ground to hang on to. It is important for the third yoga of one taste, for through shamatha practice you begin to realize that you are not using your technique as a saving grace. Therefore, at the level of the fourth yoga, or nonmeditation, you begin to realize that sophistries such as meditating or not meditating are all used up. Because you have overcome the habitual patterns of your original backache and your original grandmother problems and your original "what have yous," you begin to develop a sense of freedom. From that point of view, shamatha practice is quite practical.

Shamatha is always important. You have to maintain a shamatha-like precision of body and speech. You have to be in that state all the time. In Tibet we used to have calligraphy lessons. First we wrote very slowly, making big letters; then we wrote at a medium pace; and finally we tried to write the cursive letters very fast, using the same format. In that way

we learned to do excellent calligraphy, and even our cursive handwriting became elegant.

If you had seen the Buddha giving his teachings, you would have seen that he sat upright. Even in vajrayana sadhana practices, we visualize the various deities in precisely prescribed postures, which are the product of shamatha practice. They may be holding symbols and scepters and so on, but they still have their form. It is a mark of ultimate training, a mark of being noble. Further accomplishment is referred to as the royal attainment. More accomplished people always have a quality of regalness. They eat properly, and they deal with things properly.

Over time, the shamatha technique becomes ingrained. So even when you have attained nonmeditation, you do not just collapse and you do not become an idiot. You always carry your dignity. But at this point, you have realized what is known as coemergent wisdom.