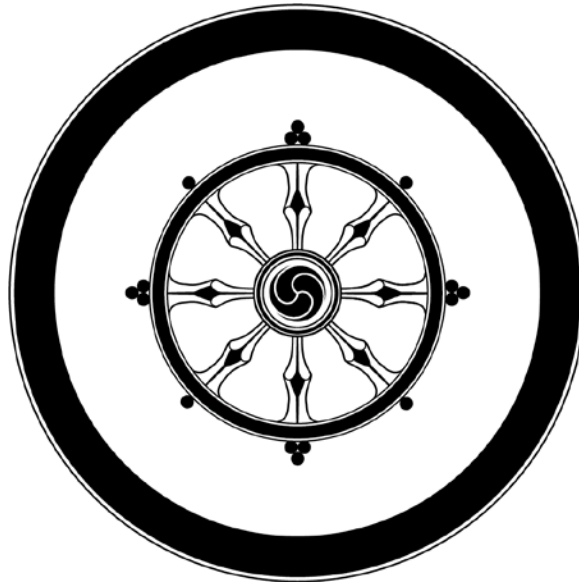


Shamatha & Vipashyana Meditation

A Selection of Essential Classic Texts from the Buddhist Masters of India and Tibet

For the Rime Shedra NYC Course: “The Practice of Shamatha
Vipashyana As Presented by Jamgon Kongtrul, Chogyam Trungpa and
Their Predecessors”

A Sourcebook of Readings



“All you who would protect your minds,
Maintain your mindfulness and introspection;
Guard them both, at cost of life and limb,
I join my hands, beseeching you.” v. 3

“Examining again and yet again
The state and actions of your body and your mind-
This alone defines in brief
The maintenance of watchful introspection.” v. 108

Chapter Five: Vigilance
Shantideva, Bodhicharyavatara

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 Practice of Shamatha Vipashyana from Jamgon Kongtrul to Chogyam Trungpa.
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Shamatha-Vipashyana Meditation
As Presented by Jamgon Kongtrul, Chogyam Trungpa,
And their Predecessors
A Rime Shedra NYC Course, January 19 to April 15, 2021

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- d) How to Meditate with Shamatha and Vipashyana United, *The Royal Seal of Mahamudra, Volume One: A Guidebook for the Realization of Coemergence*, Khamtrul Ngawang Kunga Tenzin, Trs. by Gerardo Abboud, pp. 267-269, two pages
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The Treasury of Knowledge By Jamgon Kongtrul

Chapter Eight: The Progressive Classification Of the Training in Superior Samadhi

Part One: The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana - The General Basis of All Samadhis

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

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Translator's Note

This text has been translated under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, a scholar 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
Dhagpo Kagyu Ling, 21 June 1985*

The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana
From *The Treasury of Knowledge* by Jamgon Kongtrul
Translated by Kiki Ekselius & Chryssoula Zerbini with Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche

Root Text Summary Outline

- 1) The Samadhi of Shamatha-Vipashyana**
 - a) The Essential Nature of Shamatha and Vipashyana
 - b) The Etymology of Shamatha and Vipashyana
 - c) The Necessity of Both
 - d) Their Progressive Order
- 2) Shamatha**
 - a) Basics of the Practice**
 - i) The Prerequisites for Shamatha
 - ii) The Progressive Classification
 - b) Progression of the Practice**
 - i) The Way to Meditate: The Eight-Fold Posture
 - ii) The Methods for Setting the Mind: The Objects of Observation
 - iii) The Progression of the Actual Meditation
 - iv) Identifying the Experiences Arising from Meditation
 - c) Fruition of the Practice**
 - i) The Measure of Accomplishment of Shamatha and its Benefits
 - ii) The Necessity of Accomplishing Shamatha
- 3) Vipashyana**
 - a) Basics of the Practice**
 - i) The Prerequisites for Vipashyana
 - ii) The Particular Types of Vipashyana
 - iii) The Classifications of Vipashyana
 - (1) The "four types of vipashyana investigating the essence":
 - (2) The "three gateways":
 - (3) The "six investigations"
 - (4) Summary of the Six Investigations as Three
 - (5) Twofold Condensation
 - b) Progression of the Practice**
 - i) The Way to Meditate
 - ii) The Stages of the Actual Meditation on Vipashyana
 - c) Fruition of the Practice**
 - i) The Measure of Accomplishment - Suppleness
- 4) Union of Shamatha-Vipashyana**
 - a) The Training in Shamatha and Vipashyana Conjoined
- 5) Supplementary Issues**
 - a) The Different Categories of Shamatha and Vipashyana
 - b) The Accomplishment of Shamatha and Vipashyana:
 - c) Supplementary explanation of the three stages of concentration

The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana

The Treasury of Knowledge by Jamgon Kongtrul

Translated by Kiki Ekselius and Chryssoula Zerbini

Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche

Root Text Outline

The Necessity of Practicing Samadhi

- 1) Identifying the Samadhi to be Practiced
 - a) Shamatha
 - b) Vipashyana
- 2) The Essential Nature of Shamatha and Vipashyana
- 3) The Etymology of Shamatha and Vipashyana
- 4) The Necessity of Both
- 5) Their Progressive Order

Shamatha

- 1) The Prerequisites for Shamatha
 - a) Having few desires refers to food and clothing.
 - b) Being content is being satisfied with just the bare essentials.
 - c) Forsaking excessive activity refers to buying and selling etc.
 - d) Adopting pure ethics means not transgressing one's vows of personal liberation or bodhicitta.
 - e) Giving up discursive thoughts refers to that mental activity which, arising out of desire, results in many shortcomings in both this and future lives.
- 2) The Progressive Classification
 - a) the mind of the desire realm
 - b) the concentrations
 - c) the formless absorptions
 - d) the absorption of cessation
- 3) The Way to Meditate: The Eight-Fold Posture
 - a) The legs should be in vajra posture or half-crossed.
 - b) The eyes should be half-closed.
 - c) The body should be held straight.
 - d) The shoulders should be level.
 - e) The gaze should be in the direction of the nose.

- f) There should be a slight gap between the teeth and between the lips.
 - g) The tongue should be touching the palate.
 - h) The breathing should be natural and effortless.
- 4) The Methods for Setting the Mind - The Objects of Observation
 - a) pervasive objects
 - b) objects for purifying deeds
 - c) objects that render skillful
 - d) objects for purifying afflictions
 - 5) The Progression of the Actual Meditation
 - a) Setting the mind with a concrete support
 - b) Setting the mind without concrete support
 - c) Setting the Mind in the Essential Nature
 - 6) Identifying the Experiences Arising from Meditation
 - a) The Tradition of the Great Treatises:
 - i) The five faults
 - ii) The eight antidotes
 - iii) The nine mental abidings
 - iv) The six powers
 - v) The four mental engagements
 - b) The Tradition of Oral Instructions:
 - i) The five experiences
 - 7) The Measure of Accomplishment of Shamatha and its Benefits
 - a) The Way Shamatha is Accomplished
 - b) The Signs of Correct Mental Engagement
 - i) Bliss
 - ii) clarity
 - iii) No concepts of designations
 - 8) The Necessity of Accomplishing Shamatha

Vipashyana

- 1) The Prerequisites for Vipashyana
 - a) To rely on a wise person
 - b) To seek the view by listening extensively and reflecting accordingly
- 2) The Particular Types of Vipashyana
 - a) The non-buddhists' mundane vipashyana
 - b) The shravakas' and pratyekabuddhas' contemplation of the four noble truths
 - c) The paramitayana's contemplation of emptiness
 - d) The mantrayana's teaching that emptiness is endowed with bliss
- 3) The Classifications of Vipashyana

- a) The "four types of vipashyana investigating the essence":
 - i) Discriminating
 - ii) Fully discriminating
 - iii) Examining
 - iv) Analyzing;
- b) The "three gateways":
 - i) Designations
 - ii) Thorough investigation
 - iii) Individual analysis;
- c) The "six investigations"
 - i) Meaning
 - ii) Thing
 - iii) Character
 - iv) Direction
 - v) Time
 - vi) Reasoning
 - (1) The reasoning of dependence
 - (2) The reasoning of function
 - (3) The reasoning of logical proof
 - (4) The reasoning of nature.
- d) Summary of the Six Investigations as Three
 - i) The meaning
 - ii) The mode of being
 - iii) The varieties
- e) Twofold Condensation
 - i) Preparatory or *analytic*
 - ii) Actual or *non-fluctuating*.
- 4) The Way to Meditate
 - a) Analyzing Selflessness
 - b) By Means of Superior Knowledge
 - c) Cut through misconceptions regarding the object's qualities
 - d) Rest in a state free from mental fabrications
- 5) The Stages of the Actual Meditation on Vipashyana
 - a) The nature of the percept is understood to be empty like space;
 - b) The perceiver is examined as to origin, abiding, shape, etc.;
 - c) Discriminating knowledge itself, like a fire produced by rubbing wood, vanishes in the expanse of "not finding";
 - d) Thus one rests free of grasping.
- 6) The Measure of Accomplishment - Suppleness

Union of Shamatha-Vipashyana

- 1) The Training in Shamatha and Vipashyana Conjoined
 - a) The Actual Method of Training
 - b) The Union of Shamatha and Vipashyana
 - c) The Fruition of Shamatha and Vipashyana

Supplementary Issues

- 1) The Different Categories
 - a) Of Shamatha
 - b) Of Vipashyana
- 2) The Accomplishment of Shamatha and Vipashyana:
 - a) By means of analytical meditation
 - b) By means of stabilizing meditation
- 3) Supplementary explanation of the three stages of concentration:
 - a) First by child-like concentration, one perceives signs such as smoke, etc.;
 - b) By the discrimination of phenomena, the sameness of pairs of opposites is realized and supreme concentration is accomplished;
 - c) By focusing on suchness, all phenomena are seen to be emptiness, which in turn is realized to be peace by nature.

The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana

Chapter Eight from The Treasury of Knowledge

By Jamgon Kongtrul

Translated by Kiki Ekselius and Chryssoula Zerbini

Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche

The Root Text

The Necessity of Practicing Samadhi

1. 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.

2. The Detailed Explanation

a. The Essential Nature of Shamatha and Vipashyana

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

b. Etymology

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

3. 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.

4. The Progressive Order

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

SHAMATHA

1. 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.

2. The Progressive Classification

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

3. The Way to Meditate: Posture

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

4. 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*
- *objects for purifying afflictions.*

5. The Progression of the Actual Meditation

a. Setting the mind with a concrete support

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

b. 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.

c. 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.

6. Identifying the Experiences Arising From Meditation

a. Brief Explanation

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

b. 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.

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.

c. Detailed Explanation: The Tradition of Oral Instructions

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

7. The Measure of Accomplishment of Shamatha and its Benefits

a. 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.

b. 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.

VIPASHYANA

1. The Prerequisites for Vipashyana

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

2. 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.

3. The Classifications of Vipashyana

a. Various Classifications

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.

b. Summary of the Six Investigations as Three

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

c. Twofold Condensation

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

4. 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-analytical images are the basis for analysis; having identified the particular object, one cuts through misconceptions regarding its qualities.

5. The Actual Meditation on Vipashyana

- *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.*

6. The Measure of Accomplishment - Suppleness

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

UNION OF SHAMATHA AND VIPASHYANA

1. The Training in Shamatha and Vipashyana Conjoined

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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. Brief Listing of the Categories

a. 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.

b. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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.*

7. Conclusion

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

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 and 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.

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 unmistakable 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.

**The Summary Identification of Samādhi
And Dispelling of Doubts
From *Moonbeams: An Eloquent Elucidation of the Way
To Cultivate Mahāmudrā, the Definitive Meaning*
By Tashi Namgyal, Trs. Elizabeth Callahan, pp. 15-17**

No matter which of the various approaches to practicing the samādhis of the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna is being discussed, these days the most well-known divisions and presentations of samādhi are the ones elucidated in Sūtra-oriented treatises. Since what appears in numerous sūtras of the Bhagavān (such as *Unraveling the Intent*), the Dharma Treatises of Maitreya, Asaṅga's Five Divisions of the *Yogācāryābhūmi* and *Compendium of Abhidharma*, Ratnākaraśānti's *Instructions on Prajñāpāramitā* (which summarizes those texts), and Kamalaśīla's *Stages of Madhyamaka-Meditation Trilogy* are the most well known and the most clear explications, I will explain the general principles of samādhi according to the teachings found in those texts.

A summary of samādhi. It is said in *Unraveling the Intent*:

Know that all the many aspects of samādhi, which I have presented for śrāvakas, bodhisattvas, and tathāgatas, are included within śamatha and vipaśyanā.

The middle *Stages of Meditation* comments:

Because these two contain all samādhis, yogins and yoginīs should definitely practice śamatha and vipaśyanā at all times.

Thus it is explained that all the samādhis of the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna are included within śamatha and vipaśyanā, like the way that every part of a tree (its leaves, branches, and the rest) is connected to its main trunk.

Nevertheless, we may wonder, How is it that śamatha and vipaśyanā include the many different types of Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna samādhis (those with objects of meditation and those without), the various ones associated with the Mantra approach (those with characteristics and those without characteristics), and the numerous samādhis of bliss, clarity, and nonconceptuality that are found in the Mahāmudrā system? Regardless of whether samādhi has an object or not, characteristics or not, when the mind is engaged

one-pointedly with a virtuous object of meditation it is in accord with śamatha. All virtuous states of prajñā that differentiate the nature of that object are in keeping with vipaśyanā. Similarly, in Mahāmudrā, all states of mind, high or low, that are concentrated undistractedly on their particular object of meditation are in keeping with śamatha. Differentiation and awareness of the nature of that object are in keeping with vipaśyanā.

In that way, all forms of samādhi are included within śamatha and vipaśyanā. The *Sūtra on Cultivating Faith in the Mahāyāna* comments:

Child of good family, this list will inform you that faith in the Mahāyāna of bodhisattvas and everything that develops from the Mahāyāna comes from correctly contemplating reality and the dharma with an undistracted mind.

“An undistracted mind” is a mind that is one-pointedly concentrated on an object of meditation. “Correct contemplation of the dharma” is the discernment and differentiation of reality.

Therefore, all the excellent qualities of the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna must be achieved by uniting one-pointed concentration on an object of meditation with the prajñā that analyzes reality. The final *Stages of Meditation* begins:

The Bhagavān taught immeasurable and limitless types of samādhis for bodhisattvas. Nevertheless, since śamatha and vipaśyanā cover all samādhis, I will explain the path that unites śamatha and vipaśyanā.

The Identification of the Essences of Śamatha and Vipāśyanā
From *Moonbeams: An Eloquent Elucidation of the Way*
To Cultivate Mahāmudrā, the Definitive Meaning
By Tashi Namgyal, Trs. Elizabeth Callahan, pp. 30-32

Unraveling the Intent states:

Staying alone in isolation and having correctly settled [their mind] internally, [bodhisattvas] bring to mind those dharma topics upon which they have reflected carefully. They are attentive because their mind continuously engages internally with the mental state that is being brought to mind. The physical and mental suppleness that arises while abiding that way and resting in that repeatedly is called śamatha.

It continues:

Having achieved physical and mental suppleness, they abide there and relinquish mental images. They discern, and have conviction about, the dharma topics being reflected upon as the representations for the sphere of internal samādhi. [50] With regard to those representations for the sphere of samādhi, any differentiation of the meaning of the knowable objects, thorough differentiation, complete discernment, complete analysis, forbearance, interest, differentiation of particulars, view, or thought is called vipāśyanā.

The *Jewel Cloud Sūtra* observes:

Śamatha is the one-pointed mind. Vipāśyanā is discernment of what is true.

The *Ornament for the Mahāyāna Sūtras* says:

Know the path of śamatha to be the summary of the names of the dharma.
Know the path of vipāśyanā to be the analysis of their meaning.

It also says:

Because, on the basis of correct stillness, mind rests in mind, and because phenomena are thoroughly differentiated, those are śamatha and vipāśyanā.

In his commentary on that text, Ācārya Vasubandhu remarks:

Because, on the basis of correct samādhi, mind rests in mind and because phenomena are thoroughly differentiated, we should know that those are, respectively, śamatha and vipaśyanā. They are not an absence of samādhi. Those are the characteristics of śamatha and vipaśyanā.

Generally speaking, it is clearly taught that concentrating on any object of meditation and resting the mind one-pointedly without distractions is śamatha. And it is taught that the mind that differentiates and analyzes by discerning the nature of knowable objects is vipaśyanā. Furthermore, everything from the first stages of settling the mind on its object and resetting up through the final stages of creating a single continuum and equipoise is said to be śamatha. Everything from attention and differentiating the characteristics of the nature of knowable objects up through the final stages, the full development of the spontaneous engagement of expertise and prajñā, is said to be vipaśyanā. The *Bodhisattvabhūmi* states:

Focusing the mind with certainty on just an inexpressible entity or an object that is a mere referent brings to mind perceptions that are free from elaborations and mental distractions. With dedication to all objects of meditation, settling the mind on the characteristics of internal samādhi, resetting, and up through the full development of creating a single continuum and the engagement in samādhi are called śamatha.

What is vipaśyanā? The same mental attention cultivated during śamatha that brings to mind the characteristics of those dharma topics being reflected upon, that differentiates, that thoroughly differentiates, that thoroughly differentiates dharma topics, up through that which fully develops expertise and that which engages with prajñā are considered vipaśyanā.

Distinction Between Shamatha and Vipashyana
The Royal Seal of Mahamudra, Volume One
A Guidebook for the Realization of Coemergence
Khamtrul Ngawang Kunga Tenzin, Trs. by Gerardo Abboud, pp. 227-228

Generally, vipashyana has many divisions:

1. The vipashyana that has the specific feature of coarse peace is the worldly kind;
2. 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 indispensable factor;
3. 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:

1. The vipashyana focusing on vipashyana,
2. The vipashyana during the experiences,
3. And the vipashyana of realization.

These can be further condensed and classified as two: path vipashyana and fruition vipashyana:

1. Path vipashyana is the examination carried out by discerning prajna in the lucidity

during shamatha.

2. 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*:

[228] 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 *Prajnaparamita 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.

The Treasury of Knowledge by Jamgon Kongtrul
Chapter Eight: The Progressive Classification of the Training in Superior Samadhi
Part One: The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana –
The General Basis of All Samadhis
Translated by Kiki Ekselius and Chryssoula Zerbini
Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche

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:
 - a) To have good facilities, i.e. To easily obtain food and clothing;
 - b) A wholesome environment, with no danger from robbers, thieves, etc.;
 - c) A healthy place, free from disease;
 - d) Good friends of like view and conduct;
 - e) 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.

7. Common Prerequisites for Meditating On Calm Abiding and Special Insight

***From The Stages of Meditation II by Kamalashila
In Stages of Meditation by The Dalai Lama***

**Translated by Ven Geshe Lobsang Jordhen, Losang Choephel Ganchenpa, and
Jeremy Russell, Root Text Excerpted from pp. 28-158**

Initially the yogi should seek the prerequisites that can assist him in actualizing calm abiding meditation and special insight quickly and easily.

The prerequisites necessary for the development of calm abiding meditation are: to live in a conducive environment, to limit your desires and practice contentment, not being involved in too many activities, maintaining pure moral ethics, and fully eliminating attachment and all other kinds of conceptual thoughts.

A conducive environment should be known by these five characteristics: providing easy access to food and clothes, being free of evil beings and enemies, being free from disease, containing good friends who maintain moral ethics and who share similar views, and being visited by few people in the daytime and with little noise at night.

Limiting your desires refers to not being excessively attached to many or good clothes, such as religious robes, and so forth. The practice of contentment means always being satisfied with any little thing, like inferior religious robes, and so forth. Not being involved in many activities refers to giving up ordinary activities like business, avoiding too close association with householders and monks, and totally abandoning the practice of medicine and astrology.

Even in the case of the statement that a transgression of the Hearers' vows cannot be restored, if there *is* regret and an awareness of the intention not to repeat it, and an awareness of the lack of a true identity of the mind that performed the action, or familiarity with the lack of a true identity of all phenomena, that person's morality can be said to be pure. This should be understood from the *Sutra on the Elimination of Ajatashatru's Regret*. You should overcome your regret and make special effort in meditation.

Being mindful of the various defects of attachment in this life and future lives helps eliminate misconceptions in this regard. Some common features of both beautiful and ugly things in the cycle of existence are that they are all unstable and subject to disintegration. It is beyond doubt that you will be separated from all of these things

without delay. So, meditate on why you should be so excessively attached to these things and then discard all misconceptions.

What are the prerequisites of special insight? They are relying on holy persons, seriously seeking extensive instruction, and proper contemplation.

What type of holy person should you rely upon? One who has heard many [teachings], who expresses himself clearly, who is endowed with compassion, and able to withstand hardship.

What is meant by seriously seeking extensive instruction? This is to listen seriously with respect to the definitive and interpretable meaning of the twelve branches of the Buddha's teachings. The *Unraveling of the Thought Sutra* says:

“Not listening to superior beings' teachings as you wish is an obstacle to special insight.”

The same sutra says,

“Special insight arises from its cause, correct view, which in turn arises from listening and contemplation.”

The Questions of Narayana Sutra says,

“Through the experience of listening [to teachings] you gain wisdom, and with wisdom disturbing emotions are thoroughly pacified.”

What is meant by proper contemplation? It is properly establishing the definitive and interpretable sutras. When Bodhisattvas are free of doubt, they can meditate single-pointedly. Otherwise, if doubt and indecision beset them, they will be like a man at a crossroads uncertain of which path to follow.

Yogis should at all times avoid fish, meat and so forth, should eat with moderation and avoid foods that are not conducive to health.

Thus, Bodhisattvas who have assembled all the prerequisites for calm abiding meditation and special insight should enter into meditation.

When meditating, the yogi should first complete all the preparatory practices. He should go to the toilet and in a pleasant location free of disturbing noise he should think, “I will deliver all sentient beings to the state of enlightenment.” Then he should manifest great

compassion, the thought wishing to liberate all sentient beings, and pay homage to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the ten directions by touching the five limbs of his body to the ground.

He should place an image of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, such as a painting, in front of him or in some other place. He should make as many offerings and praises as he can. He should confess his misdeeds and rejoice in the merit of all other beings.

Then, he should sit in the full lotus posture of Vairochana, or the half lotus posture, on a comfortable cushion. The eyes should not be too widely opened or too tightly closed. Let them focus on the tip of the nose. The body should not be bent forward or backward. Keep it straight and turn the attention inwards. The shoulders should rest in their natural position and the head should not lean back, forward, or to either side. The nose should be in line with the navel. The teeth and lips should rest in their natural state with the tongue touching the upper palate. Breathe very gently and softly without causing any noise, without laboring, and without unevenness. Inhale and exhale naturally, slowly, and unnoticeably.

The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana
The Treasury of Knowledge by Jamgon Kongtrul
Chapter Eight: The Progressive Classification of the Training in Superior Samadhi
Part One: The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana –
The General Basis of All Samadhis
Translated by Kiki Ekselius and Chryssoula Zerbini

Shamatha: The Basics of the Practice

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!

Mahasatipatthana Sutta

The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness

The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Digha Nikaya

Translated from the Pali by Maurice Walshe, pp. 335-336

Thus have I heard. Once the Lord was staying among the Kurus. There is a market-town of theirs called Kammasadhamma. And there the Lord addressed the monks: 'Monks!' 'Lord', they replied, and the Lord said: 'There is, monks, this one way to the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and distress, for the disappearance of pain and sadness, for the gaining of the right path, for the realization of Nibbana - that is to say the four foundations of mindfulness.

'What are the four? Here, monks, a monk abides contemplating body as body, **ardent, clearly aware and mindful**, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world; he abides contemplating feelings as feelings, ... ; he abides contemplating mind as mind, ... ; he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world.'

'And how, monks, does a monk abide contemplating the body as body? Here a monk, having gone into the forest, or to the root of a tree, or to an empty place, sits down cross-legged, holding his body erect, having established mindfulness before him. Mindfully he breathes in, mindfully he breathes out. Breathing in a long breath, he knows that he breathes in a long breath, and breathing out a long breath, he knows that he breathes out a long breath. Breathing in a short breath, he knows that he breathes in a short breath, and breathing out a short breath, he knows that he breathes out a short breath. He trains himself, thinking: "I will breathe in, conscious of the whole body." He trains himself, thinking: "I will breathe out, conscious of the whole body." He trains himself, thinking: "I will breathe in, calming the whole bodily process. He trains himself, thinking: "I will breathe out, calming the whole bodily process." Just as a skilled turner, or his assistant, in making a long turn, knows that he is making a long turn or in making a short turn, knows that he is making a short turn, so too a monk, in breathing in a long breath, knows that he breathes in a long breath ... and so trains himself, thinking: "I will breathe out, calming the whole bodily process." '

'So he abides contemplating body as body internally, contemplating body as body externally, contemplating body as body both internally and externally. He abides contemplating arising phenomena in the body, he abides contemplating vanishing phenomena in the body, he abides contemplating both arising and vanishing phenomena in the body. Or else, mindfulness that "there is body" is present to him just to the extent necessary for knowledge and awareness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. And that, monks, is how a monk abides contemplating body as body.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

How to Sustain the Meditation with Three Qualities
From *Moonbeams of Mahāmudrā*
By Dakpo Tashi Namgyal, Trs. by Elizabeth M. Callahan, pp. 307-312

**A General Discussion of How to Sustain [Meditation] with Mindfulness,
Alertness, and Conscientiousness**

[page 307] All occasions of meditation should involve resting with mindfulness, alertness, and conscientiousness, as is said in the sūtras:

[page 308] If you always turn to mindfulness and alertness, you will not be affected by mistaken notions.

The *Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* advises:

To those who wish to protect their mind
I say: guard your mindfulness and alertness
even if it comes down to your life.
Vow to do that.

Mindfulness. This is the mental state of not forgetting the object for practice. Here it is [specifically] the mental formation that guards against unvirtue and engages in virtue, as the *Sūtra of the Questions of Ratnacūda* teaches:

Mindfulness does not allow any mental afflictions to arise. Mindfulness does not give the work of māras any chances. Mindfulness does not go down bad paths or misleading paths. Mindfulness does not act like a door opening the possibilities for unvirtuous minds or mental events. That is true mindfulness.

Mindfulness has many divisions. The *Compendium of Dharma Sūtra* describes the mindfulness that is part of the path to awakening and its enumerations:

What is true mindfulness on the path to awakening? It is the mindfulness that realizes phenomena. It is what discerns phenomena. It is that which analyzes phenomena. It accompanies phenomena. It reflects upon phenomena. It considers phenomena. That mindfulness realizes the characteristics belonging to each and every phenomenon.

The *Sūtra of the Questions of Aksayamati* discusses the distinctions of the true mindfulness on the path of noble ones:

What is true mindfulness? It is the mindfulness that rests closely with something. It is unshakeable, straightforward, and does not vacillate. It sees the shortcomings that flaw samsāra. It leads to [page 309] the path that connects with nirvāna. What is mindful, sound, and does not forget the noble path is called “true mindfulness.”

Furthermore, the *Compendium of Dharma Sūtra* presents the bodhisattva’s foundation of mindfulness:

Child of good family, what is the bodhisattvas’ foundation of mindfulness? What is mindfulness? What is the abode of mindfulness? I will answer those questions. Child of good family, mindfulness is the bodhisattvas’ recognition that phenomena are unborn. Bodhisattvas have the aspiration to know the unborn. Their mindfulness is fully trained through their recognition of the unborn. Always imperturbable, their mindfulness is unwavering. Its depth and limits are unfathomable. It is hard for the worldly, śrāvakas, and pratyekabuddhas to comprehend.

Although there are many such enumerations, what is relevant now [is to mention] the following [three types of mindfulness]. There is the mindfulness [or recollection] that looks to the past, as presented in the *Four Hundred Verses*:

Things seen do not reappear
and [their perceiving] mind does not arise again.
Thus what is called mindfulness [or recollection]
is simply being deceived about a deceptive object.

Dharmakīrti refers to the mindfulness that apprehends by linking previous and latter [moments]:

That which is other than the deluded sense [consciousnesses]
and, linking entities together,
doesn't identify them as separate is deluded:
that is mindfulness, which is conceptual.

The higher abhidharma [that is, the *Compendium of Abhidharma*] explains the particular mindfulness that ascertains objects:

[page 310] What is mindfulness? It is not forgetting a familiar object. Its function is to be undistracted.

Among those three, the first two are conceptual mindfulness and, therefore, are necessary during investigation and analysis. They are, however, to be abandoned during meditative equipoise. The latter is described as the mindfulness that is practiced during śamatha and, thus, is the mindfulness that is definitely necessary during meditative equipoise.

[Alertness]. On the basis of that [mindfulness], we examine the conduct of our three doors and give rise to the alertness that differentiates the bases to be adopted or rejected. The *Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* teaches:

When mindfulness sits at the mind's door
for the sake of guarding it,
alertness will come.

It also provides a definition of alertness:

Repeatedly examine
the condition of your body and mind.
That alone sums up the definition
of what it means to protect alertness.

Here it is important to cultivate primarily the mindfulness and alertness that sustain the abiding state of mind and that properly undertake abandoning and adopting during enhancing conduct. Lacking such mindfulness and alertness is problematic, as the *Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* explains:

Those whose minds are devoid of alertness
may listen, reflect, and meditate,
and yet, like water leaking out from a cracked vase,
none of it remains in their memory.

Those who have studied, who have faith,
and much perseverance,
[page 311] but who are flawed by a lack of alertness,
will be stained by downfalls.

The thief “no alertness”
shadows diminished mindfulness.
Like a thief stealing any merit we have amassed,
it sends us to the negative states.

[Conscientiousness]. Those with that type of mindfulness and alertness develop

conscientiousness. The essence of conscientiousness is that it protects our mind from afflictive phenomena and enables us to fully practice worldly and transcendent virtues. The *Sūtra on the Inconceivable Secret Teachings of the Tathāgatas* says:

Conscientiousness disciplines our mind, protects others' minds, dispels our predilection for the mental afflictions, and arouses our delight in the dharma.

It continues:

To be conscientious is to be without improper thoughts and without thoughts involving unvirtuous and evil qualities.

The *Moon Lamp Sūtra* teaches:

The root of all the qualities said to be virtuous—ethical discipline, listening, giving, and patience—is conscientiousness. The Sugata called it “the bestower of treasure.”

The *Letter to a Friend* says:

Miserliness, deceitfulness, idleness, overt pride, desire, aggression, and being inflated about your family, looks, learning, youth, or power should be seen as your enemies.

The Muni declared conscientiousness to be the source of amṛta and its lack, the abode of death.

[page 312] Therefore, be conscientious continuously and with respect so that your virtuous qualities may increase.

On the basis of those approaches there are the following sayings in the teachings of the practice lineage that we should know:

- Revulsion is the foot or owner of meditation.
- Devotion is the head or enhancement of meditation.
- Mindfulness is the lookout or main practice of meditation.
- Kindness, compassion, and bodhicitta are the activity of meditation.
- Consideration and integrity are the armor of meditation.

It is critical that we apply ourselves to abandoning distractions and to practicing the meditation of letting our mind settle into its natural state.

The Objects of Meditation
From *The Great Treatise on the Stages*
***of the Path to Enlightenment, Vol. 3* by Tsong-kha-pa**
Translated by the Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee, pp. 35-41

The Objects of Meditation Themselves

The Bhagavan stated that yogis have four types of objects of meditation, these being: (1) universal objects of meditation, (2) objects of meditation for purifying your behavior, (3) objects of meditation for expertise, and (4) objects of meditation for purifying afflictions.

1. Universal objects of meditation

Universal objects of meditation are of four types: (a) discursive images, (b) non-discursive images, (c) the limits of existence, and (d) achievement of your purpose.

The two types of images (*discursive* and *non-discursive*) are posited in terms of the observer: the first is the object of insight, and the second is the object of meditative serenity. The image is not the actual specifically characterized object upon which your mind is focused, but rather the appearance of that object's aspect to your mind. When you carry out analysis while observing an object, then the image is discursive since analytical thinking is present. When you stabilize your mind without analysis while observing an object, the image is said to be non-discursive since analytical thinking is absent. As for these images, what objects of meditation are they images of? They are the images, or aspects, of the five objects of meditation for purifying behavior, the five objects of meditation for expertise, and the two objects of meditation for purifying afflictions.

The *limits of existence* are posited with reference to the observed object. There are two: The limits of existence for the diversity of phenomena, which are expressed in the statement, "Just this is all there is; there is nothing more"; and the limits of existence for the real nature, expressed in the statement, "This alone is how things exist; they do not exist in any other way." In the case of the diversity of phenomena, this means that the five aggregates include all composite phenomena; the eighteen constituents and twelve sources include all phenomena; and the four truths include everything there is to know; there is nothing else beyond this. In the case of the nature, this means that reason establishes the truth or reality of those objects of meditation.

Achievement of purpose is posited in terms of the result. With either serenity or insight you direct your attention to the images of those objects of meditation. Then you stabilize on them, become accustomed to them, and, by virtue of repeated practice, you become free from your dysfunctional tendencies, undergoing a fundamental transformation.

2. Objects of meditation for purifying your behavior

Objects of meditation for purifying behavior are objects that purify behavior in which attachment or the like [hatred, delusion, pride, or discursiveness] is predominant. There are five such objects of meditation. Respectively they are: (a) ugliness, (b) love, (c) dependent-arising, (d) differentiation of constituents, and (e) inhalation and exhalation.

(a) Of these, the *objects of meditation on ugliness* consist of the thirty-six uglinesses pertaining to the body, such as head and body hair, and external uglinesses such as a corpse's turning blue. When an aspect of impurity and ugliness arises in your mind, you keep your attention on it.

(b) *Love* involves focusing on friends, enemies, and persons toward whom you have neutral feelings, and having an attitude—at the level of meditative equipoise—of providing them with help and happiness. Keeping your attention on these objects of meditation with a loving attitude is called “meditation on love”; love refers both to the subjective attitude and to the object.

(c) Regarding the *object of meditation on dependent-arising*: All there is in the past, the present, and the future is dependent-arising in which effects that are mere phenomenal factors simply arise based on mere phenomenal factors. Apart from these, there is no performer of actions or experiencer of their effects. You focus your attention on this fact, and hold it there.

(d) As for the *object of meditation on the differentiation of the constituents*: You differentiate the factors of the six constituents—earth, water, fire, air, space, and consciousness. You focus your attention on them and hold it there.

(e) Regarding the *object of meditation on inhalation and exhalation*: You focus your attention without distraction by counting and watching the breath move in and out.

3. Objects of meditation for expertise

There are also five objects of meditation for expertise, namely expertise in (a) the aggregates, (b) the constituents, (c) the sources, (d) dependent-arising, and (e) what is and is not possible.

(a) The *aggregates* are the five aggregates of form and the others [feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness]. Expertise in these is knowing that, apart from these aggregates, the self and what pertains to the self do not exist.

(b) The *constituents* are the eye and the others of the eighteen constituents. Expertise in them is knowing the causal conditions by which those constituents arise from their own seeds.

(c) The *sources* are the eye and the others of the twelve sources. Expertise in these is knowing that the six internal sources are the dominant conditions for the six consciousnesses, that the six external sources are the object-conditions, and that the mind which has just ceased is the immediately preceding condition.

(d) *Dependent-arising* is the twelve factors. Expertise in them is knowing that they are impermanent, suffering, and devoid of self.

(e) *What is and is not possible* refers to such things as it being possible for a pleasant fruition to arise from a virtuous action, but not possible for a pleasant fruition to arise from a non-virtuous action. Expertise in this is knowing that things are this way. This is a particular case of expertise in dependent-arising; the difference is that you understand diverse causes.

When you use these as objects of meditation for cultivating serenity, you keep your attention on just one of the perspectives in which the aggregates, etc. may be known.

4. Objects of meditation for purifying afflictions

Purifying afflictions means either merely reducing the strength of the seeds of the afflictions or else utterly eradicating the seeds. In the former case, the objects of meditation are the comparative coarseness of each lower stage and comparative calmness of each higher stage, proceeding from the level of the desire realm up to the level of Nothingness. In the latter case, the objects of meditation are impermanence and the other of the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths. When you use these as objects of meditation for cultivating serenity, you do not analyze, but instead keep your attention on any one cognition of an aspect of those objects that appears to it.

Kamalaśīla's second *Stages of Meditation* states that objects of meditation are three. (1) After you have brought together everything that all twelve branches of scripture say about determining, settling into, and having settled into reality, you stabilize your mind upon it. (2) You observe the aggregates, etc., which include phenomena to some extent. (3) You stabilize your mind on the physical form of the Buddha, which you have seen and heard about.

How do you stabilize your mind on things such as the aggregates? When you understand how all compositional things can be included within the five aggregates, you mentally collect them, gradually, into these five aggregates. Then you observe them and keep your attention on them. Just as discerning wisdom develops when you cultivate differentiation, so when you cultivate collectedness you develop concentration wherein your attention is brought together on the object of meditation without moving toward other objects. This is a personal instruction of the knowledge tradition. Likewise, when you understand how all phenomena can be included within the constituents and sources, you mentally collect them into these categories and keep your attention on this.

Summary of the Various Objects

Among these four types of objects of meditation, objects of meditation for purifying behavior, as explained, facilitate the stopping of attachment and such in those whose behavior is dominated by attachment and such. They are special objects of meditation because you may readily attain concentration based upon them. Objects of meditation for expertise are conducive to the development of the insight that knows emptiness inasmuch as they refute a personal self that is not included among those phenomena. Therefore, they are excellent objects of meditation for cultivating serenity. Objects of meditation for dispelling afflictions serve as general antidotes to the afflictions, so they have great significance. The universal objects of meditation are not distinct from the aforementioned three. Therefore, since you must achieve concentration using an object of meditative serenity that has a particular purpose, those who achieve concentration using things like pebbles and twigs for objects of meditation are clearly ignorant of the teachings on objects of concentration.

There are those who suppose that if you focus on an object of meditation and keep your attention on it, this is an apprehension of signs. They claim that meditation on emptiness means just stabilizing your mind without any basis, without focusing on any object of meditation. This is a total misunderstanding of how to meditate on emptiness. If you have no consciousness at that time, then neither will you have a concentration that cultivates emptiness. On the other hand, if you have consciousness, then you are

conscious of something, so you have to accept that there is an object of consciousness in terms of which consciousness is posited. If there is an object of consciousness, then precisely that is the object of meditation of that mind, because “object,” “object of meditation,” and “object of consciousness” have the same meaning. In that case, they would have to accept that even their method of concentration would apprehend signs. Thus, their approach is not correct.

Furthermore, whether something constitutes meditation on emptiness is determined by whether it is meditation founded upon the view that knows the way things are; it is not determined by whether there is any conceptualization vis-à-vis the object. This will be demonstrated at length below. Even those who claim to stabilize their minds without an object of meditation must think first, “I will keep my attention such that it does not stray toward any object whatsoever,” and then keep their attention in that way. After they have focused like that on the mind itself as an object of meditation, they must be certain to fix on this object without straying in any way. Thus, their own experience contradicts their claim that they have no object of meditation.

In this way, the classic texts on achieving concentration explain that there are many objects of meditation. The purposes of these meditative bases for stabilizing your mind are as explained above, so you should gain expertise in them. Kamalaśīla’s *Stages of Meditation* explains that the object of meditation of serenity is indeterminate, and Atisha’s *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* says, “[It is] whatever object or objects of meditation that are appropriate.” These statements mean that you are not required to stick with one particular object of meditation; they do not show how to define the range of existing objects of meditation.

Who Should Meditate on Which Objects

As there are various kinds of people, from those with a preponderance of attachment to those with a preponderance of discursiveness, Asanga’s *Śrāvaka Levels* cites an answer to a question of Revata:

Revata, if attachment uniquely dominates the behavior of a monk-yogi, a practitioner of yoga, then he focuses his mind on the object of meditation of ugliness. If hatred dominates his behavior, he meditates on love; if ignorance dominates his behavior, then he meditates on the dependent-arising of this condition; if pride dominates his behavior, he focuses his mind on the differentiation of the constituents.

And:

If discursiveness uniquely dominates his behavior, then he focuses his mind on an awareness of the exhalation and inhalation of the breath. In this way, he focuses his mind on an appropriate object of meditation.

Asanga's *Śrāvaka Levels* also states:

In this regard, persons whose behavior is dominated by attachment, hatred, ignorance, pride, or discursiveness should, for a while at the outset, just purify those behaviors by contemplating objects of meditation for purifying behavior. After this they will see the stability of their minds, and they will ascertain only their objects of meditation. So they should definitely persevere at using their objects of meditation.

Thus, you certainly should work with these objects of meditation.

If you are a person whose behavior is balanced, or one whose afflictions are slight, then it suffices to keep your attention on whichever of the aforementioned objects of meditation you like; it is not necessary to have a particular one. Asanga's *Śrāvaka Levels* states:

Those whose behavior is balanced should work at whichever object they like so as to attain just mental stability; this is not for the purpose of purifying behavior. Understand that the same applies to those with slight afflictions.

Being dominated by desire—or another of those five afflictions—means that in a previous life you were fully involved in that affliction, became accustomed to it, and expressed it frequently, so that now even if there is a minor object of desire—or another of the five—that affliction arises in a strong and long-lasting form. Balanced behavior means that you were not fully involved in desire and the others in your previous lives, you did not become accustomed to them, and you did not express them frequently. Still, you have not recognized that they are faults and you have not suppressed them, so while desire and such are not predominant or of great duration, it is not as though they do not occur. Having slight afflictions means that you were not fully involved and so on in desire—or another of those five—in your previous lives, and you do see their disadvantages, etc. Therefore, with respect to objects of desire and such that are major, many, or intense, your desire and such arise slowly, while for moderate or minor objects, these afflictions do not arise at all. Also, when desire or another of those five afflictions is predominant, you take a long time to realize stability; with balanced behavior, you do not take an excessively long time; with minor afflictions,

you do so very quickly.

An answer to a question of Revata [as cited in the *Śrāvaka Levels*] also explains who works on objects of meditation for expertise:

Revata, if a monk-yogi, a practitioner of yoga, is confused about the characteristic nature of all composite things, or confused about the thing called person, self, living being, life, that which is reborn, or the nourisher, he should focus his mind on the objects of meditation for expertise in the aggregates. If he is confused about causes, he should focus on the objects of meditation for expertise in the constituents. If he is confused about conditions, he should focus on the objects of meditation for expertise in the sources. If he is confused about impermanence, suffering, and selflessness, he should focus on the objects of meditation for expertise in dependent-arising, and on what is and is not possible.

As this states, you mainly use these five objects of meditation to stop confusion.

Which persons should focus their minds on objects of meditation for dispelling afflictions is also stated in the same sūtra [answering the questions of Revata]:

If you wish to be free from the attachment of the desire realm, focus your mind on the coarseness of the desire realm and the calmness of the form realm; if you wish to be free from the attachment of the form realm, focus your mind on the coarseness of the form realm and the calmness of the formless realm. If you wish to become disenchanted with all of the perishing aggregates, and wish to be free from them, then focus your mind on the truth of suffering, the truth of origins, the truth of cessation, and the truth of the path.

You can use these objects of meditation both for analytical meditation with insight and for stabilizing meditation with serenity, so they are not exclusively objects of meditation for serenity. Still, since some serve as objects of meditation for newly achieving serenity and others are used for special purposes after attaining serenity, I have explained them here in the section on the objects of meditation of serenity.

The Essential Instructions of the Mahasiddha Maitripa

A Spacious Path to Freedom

Practical Instructions on the Union of Mahamudra and Atiyoga

By Karma Chagme with commentary by Gyatrul Rinpoche

Translated by B. Alan Wallace, pp. 78-80

First there are three types of quiescence:

- [1] quiescence that depends on signs,
- [2] quiescence focused on conceptualization, and
- [3] quiescence that is settled in nonconceptualization.

[1] In the first there are two types:

- [a] maintaining the attention outwards, and
- [b] maintaining the attention inwards.

[a] Outwardly there are two types:

- [i] impure and [ii] pure.

Quiescence that Depends on Signs

Impure Outward Attention

[i] With the posture endowed with the seven attributes of Vairocana, adopt the gaze. Maintain your attention without distraction upon a pillar, a pot, a stick, or a pebble, etc., together with the posture and the gaze. Do this without indulging in distraction elsewhere and without the dispersion of conceptualization. While so doing, settle in relaxation. Moreover, if laxity or excitation arises, recognize whether the attention is being maintained above, below, to the right or to the left.

Pure Outward Attention

[ii] In the pure type, maintain the attention upon the Jina's body. In front of you place an image of Lord Amitabha, or if you do not have one, imagine it. Do not let thoughts proliferate away from it or indulge in distractions. While so doing, settle [the mind] while relaxing in simple nondistraction. This is maintaining the attention upon the pure body of the Jina.

In the practice of focusing on the Buddha's body, place before you a statue or some other representation of the Buddha's body. It may be large or small; it may be any

manifestation of the Buddha, such as Sakyamuni, Amitabha, or any other embodiment. Gaze upon this image for a while. Then, without looking at it, create a mental image of it. Scan this mental image from top to bottom, examining the details from the top of the head, to the face, and so on to the bottom of the body. Then scan again upwards. There are great benefits in attending to the Buddha's body in this meditative context: by doing so, you store karmic seeds for attaining a Buddha's body yourself. There are various ways in which you might practice visualizing the Buddha. You could visualize the Buddha stupendously large like a galaxy, or you could imagine it being microscopic in size. You could imagine it being single or multiple. The point of the training is to master this untamed mind, which is rigid and inflexible, so that it can become flexible and pliant, and can be applied to whatever you wish. At the end of the session, whatever the size of the image, you can gradually shrink it down to a single point; then allow that point itself to vanish into nothing. Finally, dwell in that nothingness for a while.

The real point of all this is to bring about the inner balance and serenity of your mind. That is the crux of the matter. It's important not to get into a great deal of conceptualization as to whether this is a Mahayana or Hinayana practice, or what sect it might be from—none of this is necessary. Don't be too clever. Just keep it simple and train the mind in this way, knowing that the real point is inner serenity, maintaining quiescence in the mind. If you make it too complicated, you simply create unnecessary obstacles for yourself in the practice of Dharma.

One way to focus on the Buddha's speech in the cultivation of quiescence is to focus on the syllable A or HUM. You can imagine the syllable as large or small, as one or many; and you can imagine them dissolving into emptiness. There are various valid approaches. The direct benefits of this practice are that you sow the karmic seeds for your own accomplishment of a Buddha's speech, and you purify unwholesome influences and imprints due to your own nonvirtuous speech in the past.

[b] In terms of maintaining the attention inwardly there are two types:

[i] impure and [ii] pure.

Impure Inward Attention

[i] Maintaining the attention upon an impure bindu: Maintain your attention on a white bindu, about the size of a pea, emitting rays of light, upon a lotus and moon-disk at your heart. Do not let thoughts proliferate away from it, or indulge in distractions. These are practical instructions on transforming ideation into the path without abandoning it. Quiescence that is of the [nature of the] spiritual path transforms ideation into the path, and attention is maintained by focusing on the ideation of the path. These are the practical instructions.

Instead of trying to stifle your thoughts, in this practice you transform them into the very path itself. The thought that is being transformed into the path is the visualization of the white bindu.

Pure Inward Attention

[ii] Maintaining the attention on the pure body of the Jina: maintain your attention on Avalokitesvara upon a lotus and moon-disk at your heart, his body the size of the outer thumb joint, and radiant with light. Do not let thoughts disperse away from it, or indulge in distractions. If laxity or excitation arises, for both the impure and pure methods maintain the attention by meditating on the forehead or the navel.

That is quiescence that is dependent upon signs.

Quiescence Focused on Conceptualization

[2] Quiescence in which the attention is focused on conceptualization: In relation to the excessive proliferation of conceptualization, including such afflictions as the five poisons or the three poisons, thoughts that revolve in duality, thoughts such as those of the ten virtues, the Six Perfections or the Ten Perfections whatever virtuous and nonvirtuous thoughts arise—steadily and nonconceptually observe their nature. By so doing, they are calmed in nongrasping; awareness vividly arises clear and empty, with no object of grasping; and it is sustained in the nature of self-liberation, in which it recognizes itself. Again, direct the mind to whatever thoughts arise, and without acceptance or rejection, you will recognize your own nature. Thus implement the practical instructions on transforming ideation into the path.

Quiescence that is Settled in Nonconceptualization

[3] The ultimate quiescence of maintaining the attention upon nonconceptualization: With the body possessing the seven attributes of Vairocana, sit upon a soft cushion in a solitary, darkened room. Vacantly direct the eyes into the intervening vacuity. See that the three conceptualizations of the past, future, and present, as well as virtuous, nonvirtuous, and ethically neutral thoughts, together with all the causes, assembly, and dispersal of thoughts of the three times are completely cut off. Bring no thoughts to mind. Let the mind, like a cloudless sky, be clear, empty, and evenly devoid of grasping, and settle it in utter vacuity. By so doing you will experience the quiescence of joy, clarity, and nonconceptuality. Examine whether or not attachment, hatred, clinging, grasping, laxity, or excitation enter into that, and recognize the difference between virtues and vices.

Calm Abiding and Insight
Middle Beyond Extremes Maitreya's Madhyāntavibhāga
With commentaries by Khenpo Shenga and Ju Mipham
Translated by The Dharmachakra Translation Committee, pp. 134-142

Calm Abiding

[134] On the first topic, the treatise states:

**Emergence and engagement in objects,
Savoring, dullness and agitation, [V.11c-d]**

**The trusting mind,
Directing the mind while fixating on the ego,
And the lesser mindset—these are what the wise
Must understand to be distraction. [V.12]**

Non-distraction is when the six distractions are absent. The six distractions are as follows: (1) Inherent distraction refers to the five collections of consciousness [that bring about one's] **emergence** from absorption, **and** (2) external distraction refers to **engagement in objects**. (3) Internal distraction involves **savoring** [the experience of] absorption, as well as **dullness and agitation**. (4) Distraction of marks **is the trusting mind** that apprehends marks with respect to the [absorption]. (5) Distraction that occurs through negative tendencies involves **directing the mind while fixating on the ego**, and (6) distraction in directing the mind with **the lesser mindset** is [the motivation] of the Lesser Vehicle. **These are what the wise must understand to be distraction.**

What is undistracted calm abiding? It is meditative absorption free of the six types of distraction. What are these six?

- 1) Inherent distraction refers to the eye consciousness and the other four collections of consciousness. Because they are naturally directed outward, they [cause one to] emerge from meditative absorption.
- 2) External distraction refers to a mental consciousness that reaches out towards or engages objects.
- 3) Internal distraction concerns dullness and agitation, as well as savoring one's meditative absorption.
- 4) The distraction of marks occurs when, trusting in meditative absorption, one apprehends marks of it and becomes

- 5) attached.
- 6) Distraction brought about by negative tendencies is when directing the mind involves the apprehending of an ego. This is said to refer to the mental act of pridefully believing oneself to be superior to others, or [simply any mental act] that involves apprehending an “I.”
- 7) The distraction of directing the mind occurs when one is caught up in the mindset of, and directs the mind in the style of, the Lesser Vehicle. [135]

The undistracted calm abiding that is determined by the elimination of those six is the unique calm abiding of the Great Vehicle. This is a state of one-pointed inner rest, a flawless calm abiding. In it, there is no apprehension of marks, as is the case when inner absorption alone is believed to bring liberation. Neither does it involve the ego apprehension that occurs in the concentrations of non-Buddhists. Further, one does not direct the mind as one would when cultivating the supports for the inferior paths [to liberation]. This is how the wise should understand the calm abiding of the Great Vehicle.

The Five Flaws and the Eight Applications
From *Middle Beyond Extremes: Maitreya's Madhyāntavibhāga*
With commentaries by Khenpo Shenga and Ju Mipham
Translated by The Dharmachakra Translation Committee, pp. 106-108

The Five Flaws

On the first topic, the treatise (by Maitreya) states:

**Being lazy, forgetting the instructions,
Dullness and agitation,
Non-application, and application—
These are held to be the five flaws. [IV.4]**

[Khenpo Shenga] What are the five flaws? They are (1) being lazy when it comes to the cultivation of meditative absorption; (2) forgetting the instructions on how to meditate; (3) dullness and agitation, which are counted as one flaw; (4) non-application, when it comes to pacifying these two; and (5) over-application once they have already been thoroughly pacified— these are held to be the five flaws.

[Ju Mipham] What are the five flaws that hinder the accomplishment of meditative absorption? They are (1) falling under the sway of laziness and, consequently, not exerting oneself, and (2) forgetting the instructions on meditative absorption; both of these hinder taking up the practice of meditative absorption. (3) Dullness and agitation hinder the actual practice of meditative absorption; the former is a state of inner withdrawal and the latter a proliferation of thought activity directed towards external objects. These two are counted as a single flaw. (4) When one is engaged in meditative absorption and dullness, agitation, or another flaw occurs, one should apply the appropriate remedy. Not applying the remedy in such a way is a hindrance. (5) On the other hand, once the remedies have been used to pacify dullness and agitation, to go on applying them in an excessive manner is also a hindrance, because that itself is a factor that creates turbulence. These last two flaws keep one's meditative absorption from developing. Laziness and the other four factors presented here are asserted to be the five flaws.

The Eight Applications

On the second topic, the treatise (by Maitreya) states:

**The basis and what is based on this,
Cause and result,
To not forget one's focal point and
To notice dullness or agitation,
To fully apply oneself to the elimination of these factors
And rest naturally once pacified. [IV.5]**

[Khenpo Shenga] The eight applications that eliminate these flaws are classified as follows. (1) Intention, the basis for effort, and (2) effort, what is based on this intention; (3) faith, the cause, or basis, of intention; and (4) flexibility, the result that rests on [the basis of] effort. The four remaining applications that eliminate [their respective flaws] are as follows: (5) mindfulness, to not forget one's focal point and (6) alertness, to notice the presence of either dullness or agitation; (7) volition, which allows one to fully apply oneself to the elimination of these factors once they have been noticed; and (8) equanimity, the mind's resting naturally once dullness and agitation have been pacified.

[Ju Mipham] There are four remedies that lead to the elimination of laziness: faith, intention, effort, and flexibility. If flexibility is attained laziness will not occur. This flexibility, in turn, is achieved through effort, which is itself attained by having one's intent directed towards cultivating meditative absorption. Intention arises by having trust and faith in this [practice] at the outset. Therefore, effort is based on intention, the explicit desire to achieve meditative absorption, while intention forms the basis for effort. The cause of this intention is faith and the result of effort is the achievement of flexibility. Laziness is eliminated by means of these four remedies.

Similarly, there are four remedies associated with the remaining four flaws: mindfulness, alertness, volition, and equanimity. Mindfulness prevents one from forgetting the focal point of the instructions. Alertness notices and comprehends occurrences of dullness and agitation. Volition allows one to apply the remedies that eliminate the flaws of dullness and agitation, while equanimity settles the mind in a natural state of ease once they have been pacified.

Shantideva's Bodhicharyavatara
Chapter Titles in Sanskrit and English

Contents	Wallace	Batchelor	Padmakara	Gyatso
1. Bodhichitta-anusamsa – 36 verses	The Spirit of BC	Benefits of BC	Excellence of BC	Benefits of BC
2. Papadesana - 65 verses	Confession of Sin	Disclosure of Evil	Confession	Disclosure of Evil
3. Bodhichitta-Parigrah – 33 verses	Adopting BC	Full Acceptance of BC	Taking Hold of BC	Full Acceptance of BC
4. Bodhichitta-apramada – 49 verses	Attending to BC	Conscientiousness	Carefulness	Conscientiousness
5. Samprajanya-Raksnama – 109 verses	Guarding Introspection	Guarding Alertness	Vigilant Introspection	Guarding Alertness
6. Ksanti-Paramita – 134 verses	Perfection of Patience	Patience	Patience	Patience
7. Virya-Paramita – 75 verses	Perfection of Zeal	Enthusiasm	Diligence	Effort
8. Dhyana-Paramita – 186 verses	Perfection of Meditation	Meditation	Meditative Concentration	Meditation
9. Prajna-Paramita -168 verses	Perfection of Wisdom	Wisdom	Wisdom	Wisdom
10. Parinamna --58 verses	Dedication	Dedication	Dedication	Dedication

Six Powers of Śamatha from Mahamudra Śamatha
From *Moonbeams of Mahāmudrā*
By Dakpo Tashi Namgyal, Trs. by Elizabeth M. Callahan, pp. 59

The Way Those [Nine] Mental States Are Achieved through the Six Strengths

[page 59] According to the teachings in the *Śrāvakabhūmi* on cultivating śamatha by means of the six strengths, the six are the strengths of hearing, reflection, mindfulness, alertness, diligence, and familiarization:

1. The strength of hearing produces the [first] mental state of settling because it enables you to settle your mind on an object of meditation simply by having heard from someone else about how to settle the mind on an object of meditation.
2. The strength of reflection ensures the [second] mental state of continuous settling. It enables you to settle a bit more by extending the continuity [of your concentration] since you repeatedly reflect upon, and sustain, your initial examination of the object of meditation.
3. The strength of mindfulness yields the two mental states of renewed settling and increased settling. If you are distracted from the object of meditation, mindfulness will cause you to recollect the previous object of meditation and draw [your attention] back. From the start, the force created by the strength of mindfulness prevents the mind from wandering from its object of meditation.
4. The strength of alertness brings the achievement of the two mental states of taming and pacification. Alertness is aware of thoughts [page 60] and secondary mental afflictions as they arise and the mind pursues them. Alertness also sees their disadvantages and does not allow the mind to scatter.
5. The strength of diligence produces the two mental states of full pacification and one-pointedness because, not tolerating even the smallest thought or secondary mental affliction, it energetically eliminates them and because it creates a continuous samādhi not interrupted by dullness or agitation.
6. The strength of familiarization results in the mental state of equipoise because the strength of familiarization with, and habituation to, all of the above causes your mind to settle in samādhi naturally and effortlessly.

Preventing the Strayings of Blank Shamatha

From *The Royal Seal of Mahamudra, Volume One:*

A Guidebook for the Realization of Coemergence

The Third Khamtrul Rinpoche, Ngawang Kunga Tenzin

Translated by Gerardo Abboud, pp. 199-201

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

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

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

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

If mindfulness is fully present, it will possess knowing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Six Powers

From *Boundless Wisdom: A Mahāmudrā Practice Manual*

By Shamar Rinpoche, Edited and translated by Tina Drasczyk, pp. 58-61

The following six powers help you to complete the nine skills of śamatha: (1) the power to listen and study, (2) the power of reflection, (3) the power of mindfulness, (4) the power of clear knowing, (5) the power of exertion, and (6) the power of familiarity.

(1) The power to listen and study

This pertains to the ability to listen to and study all of the relevant instructions about meditation with an open mind. It is also the ability to separate an authentic master from a person who merely claims to be one. The words of a true master have the ring of authority, and are based on authentic experience. An impostor can only draw on his or her fertile imagination. Today, there are all kinds of meditation. Apart from Hindu meditations, there are various New Age meditations. People concoct strange meditations that are of very little worth to themselves or to anyone else. The sole purpose of śamatha meditation is to stabilize the mind. How effective are these other meditations at doing that?

Serious meditators find excellent inspiration for their practice in the biography of Milarepa (1040-1123). He is considered one of the greatest yogis Tibet has ever witnessed. As the main heir of Marpa's transmission, he became one of the most important ancestors of the Kagyü lineage and the principal teacher of Gampopa. His collection of songs is brimming with useful instructions. Whenever he was inspired by a meditative experience, he burst into song. Whenever there was a problem, he sang a song. Whenever there was a solution to the problem, he sang another song. Through these songs, he also explained the remedy for each problem and how these various solutions were to be implemented. There was a song for every occasion, and each of his songs is filled with wisdom.

Similar to Milarepa, other accomplished meditation masters in the old days were also in the habit of singing songs inspired by their meditative experiences. These verses are very profound, and they command the highest praise and admiration, because they are the inspired utterance of great meditators. Later, teachers without meditative experience also produced so-called meditative songs in the hope of being taken as great meditators, thus enjoying the undeserved status of accomplished masters. Some songs that are just the contrived production of mediocre teachers might even be of unusual poetic beauty. However, lacking the basis of authentic experience in meditation, they

are not songs of accomplished masters. Therefore, they are of little significance to a serious meditator.

Now, the first of the six powers, the power of listening and studying, concerns receiving the relevant instructions through the process of relying on authentic teachers and their writings. This is especially helpful in accomplishing the first skill of śamatha, where you focus on settling the mind. With good advice on how to meditate, you should attain this first skill of śamatha without too much difficulty.

(2) The power of reflection

With all the instructions gathered, you are ready to give them some thought. You reflect and assimilate, absorbing the information into your mind. The power of reflection is a very good support for accomplishing the second skill of śamatha, which is to settle the mind continuously. This is the point where you should consider all aspects of śamatha in order to see which specific method is best for your specific case. Through reflection, there will be continuous stability of mind. Through continuous stability of mind, clarity of mind will come effortlessly.

(3) The power of mindfulness

As you meditate, remember to keep the mind in concentration, free from all distractions. This is helpful in accomplishing the third and fourth skills of śamatha. In terms of the third skill, you endeavor to settle the mind continuously, free from all disruptive distractions. In terms of the fourth skill, you endeavor to settle the intensely active mind that results from post-meditative stress and strain.

(4) The power of clear knowing

This helps to accomplish both the fifth and the sixth skills, pacifying and taming the mind. Clear knowing means to detect an undisciplined mind going astray, registering afflictions and concepts the moment they arise. Upon detection, note whatever arises and bring the attention back. Mindfulness is keeping the mind fully in concentration despite its tendency to stray, while clear knowing is being ever attentive to the mind going astray in all directions. To be mindful is basically preventative. To maintain clear knowing is to detect and to rectify.

(5) The power of exertion

It is through continuous exertion that you can accomplish both the seventh and eighth

skills, where you pacify the mind completely and see that the mind remains continuously in a focused state. These skills concern the steadfast effort required to continue and accomplish the meditation.

(6) The power of familiarity

Here meditation is spontaneous and natural. As the mind settles in equanimity, the meditator and the meditation effortlessly become inseparable. You no longer see meditation dualistically. The meditative state becomes so familiar and natural to you that a distinction can no longer be drawn between meditator and meditation. This allows for the accomplishment of the ninth skill, sustaining equanimity.

Conclusion

Throughout the nine skills of settling the mind, these six powers are as important to the meditator as rock-climbing equipment is to a mountain-climber. They are absolutely indispensable. In the beginning, you have to exert a great deal of deliberate effort until the first two skills have been accomplished. From the third skill all the way up through the seventh skill, concentration is not yet continuous. Although there are obvious signs of improvement in comparison to the first two skills, there will still be many disruptions along the way. On reaching the eighth skill, the power of concentration is so much stronger than the obstacles that they hardly ever occur. Should they occur, they can be easily overcome. Before the ninth skill, you need subtle mindfulness and exertion. Obstacles such as elation and overconfidence may appear in subtle forms. Therefore, you have to be very mindful. With the ninth skill, there are no longer any obstacles. The meditator has become inseparable from the meditation. As soon as you enter the meditative state, you abide in stability of mind continuously, without the slightest disruption.

The nine skills and the six powers can be accomplished while using any of the śamatha techniques explained above, for example the one where the breath is used as a support.

Cultivating Attention and Energy
As the Foundation for Uncovering Insight
From *Wake Up to Your Life* by Ken McLeod, pp. 361-362

Base of Attention

Rest attention on the breath for a few minutes at the beginning of each session until attention becomes stable.

Ecstatic Practice: Raising the Level of Energy

Raising the level of energy has four steps: frame, field, expansion, and rest. It is called ecstatic practice because you experience a pleasurable shift in energy as you open to experience. It transforms the energy of experience into attention. Practice this ecstatic technique both in formal sessions and during the day.

Begin with sensory experience. Sit in front of a window or open door. The window frame or door frame is the frame. Let your gaze rest on the window until you can see the whole frame all at once. This step sets the frame.

Open to the whole field defined by the frame. The field is everything in your field of vision that falls within the frame, regardless of its distance from you.

Initially, your eyes will pick out an object in the field, and your attention will collapse down to that object. As soon as you notice that you are looking at only a part of the field, expand from that object to the whole field again. In ecstatic practice a collapse down to an object is analogous to being distracted by a thought in breath meditation.

You will soon be able to see everything in the frame simultaneously and will feel a shift. Rest in the shift. You relax, and a pleasurable feeling pervades your body and mind. Subject-object differentiation lessens.

Work first with a well-defined frame, one that is small enough that you can actually open to the whole field. Then extend your practice by using larger and

larger frames until you can use the physical limits of your field of vision as the frame.

During the day, practice this energy transformation when you go for a walk, go shopping, or take a break in your workday. Shopping malls are good places to practice because they are full of visual objects, and the walls and ceilings provide natural frames. Sit in front of a waterfall until you can see every drop of water as it falls. Look at a tree, using the outline of the tree as a frame, until you can see every leaf and every branch at the same time. Look at a lawn, and see every blade of grass at once.

Once you have a sense of the shift in energy from working visually, work with the other senses. During the day, listen to a piece of music, hearing every instrument at the same time. Whenever your attention goes to one instrument or one strain, expand to include all the music and every instrument. Listen in the same way to people talking. Extend the practice to the sense of touch so that you are aware of all the clothing you are wearing, what you are sitting on, and any stiffness or tension in your muscles, all at the same time. Then include taste and smell as well.

Finally, include thoughts and feelings, until you can open to everything that arises in the moment, internally and externally, and experience it all simultaneously. This step extends the practice to emotional sensations and transforms the energy of all experience into attention.

Needless to say, you won't do all this in your first session. Over time, however, you become more adept at the practice and can open to more and more. In your formal meditation sessions, spend ten minutes doing this practice, resting in open experience and transforming energy into attention. Now you are ready to look.

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Shamatha Part II: The Progression of the Practice

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 arising 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 five 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 Five Flaws and the Eight Applications
From *Middle Beyond Extremes: Maitreya's Madhyāntavibhāga*
With commentaries by Khenpo Shenga and Ju Mipham
Translated by The Dharmachakra Translation Committee, pp. 106-108

The Five Flaws

On the first topic, the treatise (by Maitreya) states:

**Being lazy, forgetting the instructions,
Dullness and agitation,
Non-application, and application—
These are held to be the five flaws. [IV.4]**

[Khenpo Shenga] What are the five flaws? They are (1) being lazy when it comes to the cultivation of meditative absorption; (2) forgetting the instructions on how to meditate; (3) dullness and agitation, which are counted as one flaw; (4) non-application, when it comes to pacifying these two; and (5) over-application once they have already been thoroughly pacified— these are held to be the five flaws.

[Ju Mipham] What are the five flaws that hinder the accomplishment of meditative absorption? They are (1) falling under the sway of laziness and, consequently, not exerting oneself, and (2) forgetting the instructions on meditative absorption; both of these hinder taking up the practice of meditative absorption. (3) Dullness and agitation hinder the actual practice of meditative absorption; the former is a state of inner withdrawal and the latter a proliferation of thought activity directed towards external objects. These two are counted as a single flaw. (4) When one is engaged in meditative absorption and dullness, agitation, or another flaw occurs, one should apply the appropriate remedy. Not applying the remedy in such a way is a hindrance. (5) On the other hand, once the remedies have been used to pacify dullness and agitation, to go on applying them in an excessive manner is also a hindrance, because that itself is a factor that creates turbulence. These last two flaws keep one's meditative absorption from developing. Laziness and the other four factors presented here are asserted to be the five flaws.

The Eight Applications

On the second topic, the treatise (by Maitreya) states:

**The basis and what is based on this,
Cause and result,
To not forget one's focal point and
To notice dullness or agitation,
To fully apply oneself to the elimination of these factors
And rest naturally once pacified. [IV.5]**

[Khenpo Shenga] The eight applications that eliminate these flaws are classified as follows. (1) Intention, the basis for effort, and (2) effort, what is based on this intention; (3) faith, the cause, or basis, of intention; and (4) flexibility, the result that rests on [the basis of] effort. The four remaining applications that eliminate [their respective flaws] are as follows: (5) mindfulness, to not forget one's focal point and (6) alertness, to notice the presence of either dullness or agitation; (7) volition, which allows one to fully apply oneself to the elimination of these factors once they have been noticed; and (8) equanimity, the mind's resting naturally once dullness and agitation have been pacified.

[Ju Mipham] There are four remedies that lead to the elimination of laziness: faith, intention, effort, and flexibility. If flexibility is attained laziness will not occur. This flexibility, in turn, is achieved through effort, which is itself attained by having one's intent directed towards cultivating meditative absorption. Intention arises by having trust and faith in this [practice] at the outset. Therefore, effort is based on intention, the explicit desire to achieve meditative absorption, while intention forms the basis for effort. The cause of this intention is faith and the result of effort is the achievement of flexibility. Laziness is eliminated by means of these four remedies.

Similarly, there are four remedies associated with the remaining four flaws: mindfulness, alertness, volition, and equanimity. Mindfulness prevents one from forgetting the focal point of the instructions. Alertness notices and comprehends occurrences of dullness and agitation. Volition allows one to apply the remedies that eliminate the flaws of dullness and agitation, while equanimity settles the mind in a natural state of ease once they have been pacified.

STAGES AND CHARACTERISTICS OF SHAMATHA

FIVE OBSTACLES	EIGHT ANTIDOTES	SIX POWERS	NINE STAGES	EXPERIENCE	THREE LEVELS	THREE QUALITIES	FOUR MENTAL APPLICATIONS	
1. Laziness	1. Faith 2. Aspiration 3. Effort 4. Suppleness/ pliancy	Learning	1. Directed Attention	Movement (waterfall)	Preparation (stages 1-3)	Stability (stages 1-3)	engaging through concentration (stages 1-2)	
		Contemplating	2. Repeated Attention					
		Mindfulness	3. Continuous Attention					
2. Forgetting the instructions	5. Mindfulness or Remembering to apply the Instructions							
3. Elation / Laxity	6. Awareness / Introspection	Awareness/ Introspection (sheshin)	4. Close Placement (coarse laxity)	Approach (fast river)	Actual Meditation (stages 4-6)	Vividness Clarity (stages 4-5)	interruptedly engaging (stages 3-7)	
			5. Taming (subtle laxity)					
			6. Pacifying (subtle elation)					
4. Not applying the antidotes	7. Applying the antidotes	Exertion or Enthusiasm	7. Thoroughly Pacifying (subtle elation and laxity)	Familiarity (slow river)	Increasing Meditation (stages 7-9)	Strength (stages 6-9)	uninterruptedly engaging (stage 8)	
			8. Making One-Pointed					Stability (calm lake)
			9. Even Placement					Perfection (mountain)
5. Over-application of the antidotes	8. Resting in equanimity	Thorough Familiarity					effortlessly engaging (stage 9)	

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

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

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

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

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

If mindfulness is fully present, it will possess knowing.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Shamatha: Conclusion

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, if 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 their 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

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.”

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Vipashyana: Introduction

The Prerequisites for Vipashyana

The prerequisites for vipashyana 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 unmistakable 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 Different Forms of Vipāśyanā
The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation
A Commentary on the Eighth Chapter of the *Treasury*
***of Knowledge* by Jamgön Kongtrül by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche**
Translated by Peter Roberts, pp. 69-107

There are four main forms of vipāśyanā. The first kind of vipāśyanā is the vipāśyanā of the Tirthika (non-Buddhist) traditions and is found primarily in India. These non-Buddhist traditions practice śamatha meditation to pacify and eliminate most of the obvious kleśas. The second kind of vipāśyanā is the vipāśyanā teachings the Buddha gave to the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas who could not understand the very profound or vast meaning. The third kind of vipāśyanā is the vipāśyanā of the bodhisattvas who follow the six pāramitās. These teachings are very profound and vast. The fourth kind of vipāśyanā is that which uses bliss as a special method for quickly attaining realization, or the vipāśyanā of the mantrayāna.

In the vipāśyanā of the Tirthika tradition, one contemplates the “peaceful and the coarse” aspects. For example, one might contemplate a coarse kleśa such as anger in one’s meditation. One can realize that anger is harmful to oneself and others and that without anger the mind would be peaceful and happy. So it is easy to see the benefits of the absence of this obvious kleśa of anger, which is peace. So with this meditation one can then overcome anger. One may wonder if there is something wrong with this non-Buddhist form of vipāśyanā. Actually, there isn’t anything wrong with this tradition, which is called the “common tradition” because it is common to Buddhists and non-Buddhists. In the Buddhist tradition this vipāśyanā is known as the worldly level of vipāśyanā because one recognizes the mind poisons and their faults and tries to make the mind still and stable. The practice is performed to calm the mind and subjugate the mind poisons rather than to understand emptiness or the absence of self. Calming the mind eliminates the faults on the level of the desire realm so that one can attain the first level of mental stability in the form realm.

The vipāśyanā of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas (the solitary buddhas) is for those who are without the necessary fortitude to accomplish complete Buddhahood. These two kinds of realized beings, the śrāvakas and the pratyekabuddhas, are found within the hīnayāna tradition. The difference between them is the accumulation of merit. If there is some accumulation of merit, then one is a śrāvaka; if there is a great accumulation of merit, then one

is a pratyekabuddha. However, in terms of śamatha and vipaśyanā meditation there is only a slight difference between them because both meditate on the four noble truths. The practice of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas is based on the four noble truths, which are divided into sixteen aspects (see table 2).

With this type of vipaśyanā, peace is based on the four noble truths as a description of samsāra and nirvāna. The first noble truth is a description of samsāra, which is called the truth of suffering. The second truth of origination looks at the cause of samsāra, which originates from karma and the kleśas. The third truth of cessation occurs if karma and the kleśas are eliminated and this results in nirvāna. The fourth truth is following and practicing the truth of the path. In the vipaśyanā of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas the actual nature of these four truths has to be understood along with their subcategories. The truth of suffering is divided into impermanence, suffering, absence of self, and emptiness. The truth of origination, the truth of cessation, and the truth of the path are also divided into four parts, making a total of sixteen subdivisions.

What are the four noble truths? There is samsāra, from which one seeks to gain liberation, and there is nirvāna, which one seeks to attain. One wishes to attain liberation from samsāra, the nature of which is suffering. So the first truth of suffering is that one wishes to attain liberation from the suffering of samsāra. One wishes to attain nirvāna, and this is the third truth of cessation. However, one cannot simply say one wants to attain liberation and achieve it. This is because all phenomena arise from causes, so samsāra and nirvāna also arise from a cause. This cause is the second truth of origination, which is karma and the kleśas. Therefore, one needs to eliminate the cause of samsāra, which is karma and the mind poisons. When these are eliminated, one has attained freedom from the truth of suffering, from samsāra. To be able to attain freedom from the truth of suffering and samsāra, one must be able to eliminate the origin of suffering. One can't eliminate karma and the kleśas directly because their source is ego-clinging that has to be eliminated. The way to eliminate this is the fourth noble truth of path which is the meditation on selflessness, that is, to meditate on the five aggregates and one's association of the idea of "self" or "mine" to these five aggregates. Through realization of selflessness, one can eliminate the clinging to a self, and the mind poisons will naturally subside. When these subside, one will be able to practice the path, which is the fourth truth, and finally attain the truth of cessation.

In the vipaśyanā of the Tirthikas there is the partial elimination of the obvious mental negativities, but they are not completely eliminated. In the vipaśyanā of the śrāvakas the cause of the kleśas is identified as the clinging to the idea of self or of

“I” or “mine.” A belief in a self is a delusion because actually there is no self or things that belong to a self. When one is able to realize the absence of self in vipaśyanā meditation, then the natural clinging to self just vanishes. So the main meditation of the śrāvakas is the meditation on the absence of self. An example of this ego-clinging happened to me the other day when I noticed that one of the links in the metal strap of my watch was broken. When I saw that, I thought, “Oh no, the strap might break and I will lose my watch!” I was worried even though only a tiny bit of metal was missing. When one examines the watch, one cannot find any “mine” associated with the watch—it was made in a factory and it is just a piece of metal that didn’t originate from me in any way. If I were without the delusion of “my” associated with the watch, I wouldn’t have experienced the discomfort and suffering of seeing the broken link.

.....

The meditation of vipaśyanā of the bodhisattva of the mahāyāna path is the meditation on the selflessness of phenomena. A bodhisattva practices meditation based on the six paramitas. There is the selflessness of the individual already discussed and the selflessness of phenomena. This second kind of selflessness is the realization that inner consciousness and external phenomena are naturally peaceful and empty. So the mahāyāna meditator believes that the root of samsāra is the kleśas and that the root of the kleśas is ego-clinging. Eliminating clinging to a self is the way to be liberated from samsāra.

To eliminate kleśas, the mahāyāna meditators meditate on the nature of external and internal phenomena in detail to discover that they are completely insubstantial, like bubbles in water. With this realization the kleśas naturally disappear. The belief in the reality of external phenomena is called the obscuration of knowledge, and when this obscuration is eliminated there is liberation from samsāra. The bodhisattvas therefore meditate on emptiness (*śūnyatā*). In the *Heart Sūtra* the Buddha says there are “no eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, [etc.]” and that there is “no form, no sound, no smell, no taste, [etc.]” One might interpret this as the Buddha saying there are literally no eyes, and so on. When the Buddha gave this teaching, he was explaining what one experiences when one rests in this state of samādhi meditation. He didn’t explain this in the sūtra because at the time his pupils were in a meditative state and therefore were able to understand the teaching without explanation. The Buddha taught this way in the *Heart Sūtra* and the other *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras. These teachings are explained in commentaries such as Chandrakīrti’s *Entering into the Middle Way*; by examining cause and effect he demonstrates the nature of emptiness by examining the nature of cause. There is also Master Jñānagarbha who, in his *Differentiation of the Two Truths*, shows the

nature of emptiness through the analysis of the effect. Then there is Nāgārjuna's *Knowledge of the Middle Way*, which demonstrates the emptiness of all phenomena.

In Tibet there are a number of great commentaries on emptiness, such as that of Lama Mipam, who described how the Indian master Śāntaraksita came to Tibet and wrote the *Adornment of the Middle Way*, which explains emptiness in terms of things not being "one thing or many things." Mipam describes this approach as being very powerful and easy to understand. For example, for things to be real, they must be a single thing; let us say for a "hand" to exist it must be one thing: a hand. If one looks at it, one sees a hand; if one shows it to others, they agree it is a hand. However, examining it more closely, one sees that it is a thumb, a finger, skin, flesh and bones, and so on. So it is not a hand, but, as the Buddha said, it is just an aggregation of all sorts of parts that have come together. So the hand really is the appearance that arises from the interdependence of parts that we call a hand, but there is no real hand there. It is like this for all things, and using this logic, one becomes convinced of the nature of emptiness.

The vipaśyanā meditation of the mahāyāna is on the realization of emptiness, which is also called dependent origination. This means that all phenomena that arise have a dependence upon other phenomena and therefore no true existence of their own. For example, with the reflection of the moon on water, there is no real moon in the water, but due to the interdependence of the moon in the sky and the water on the ground, a reflection of the moon appears. Also, when one examines the water to see where the moon is, there isn't a single location where the moon's reflection is. In this same way, all phenomena originate through dependence upon something else and have no true existence of their own. The realization of this fact is the realization of emptiness, and with this realization, the kleśas cease. So to put an end to the kleśas, one meditates on emptiness.

.....

If one examines phenomena with logic and establishes that they are empty, one can gain an understanding of emptiness, but one doesn't gain a direct experience of emptiness. Also this logical method takes a long time. In the vajrayāna approach outer phenomena are understood to be empty; but the practice is to observe the mind. The mind is the source of all happiness and all suffering, the source of all craving and all anger, the source of all love and compassion; whatever occurs comes from the mind. When we first examine the mind, we think that it must be very powerful to create all this. However, looking inward, we are completely unable to find the mind; it is not outside the body, nor inside the body, nor in between these

two. So the mind is empty.

When we say the mind is empty, we don't mean that the mind doesn't exist like the "horns of a rabbit," which obviously do not exist. Nor is the emptiness of mind like empty space that has nothing in it. Rather the nature of mind is natural clarity. When we try to find the actual nature of mind directly, we cannot do so. It is both clarity and emptiness. When we examine mind, it is not just complete dullness or unconsciousness like a stone, but there is an uninterrupted continuum of clarity. The mind is normally full of thoughts and problems, but when we have understood the emptiness and clarity of the mind, then everything becomes very gentle and peaceful. So the text says the vipaśyanā in the vajrayāna has the nature of bliss.

The study of emptiness in the sūtras is the study of the *Prajñāpāramitā*. In the vajrayāna or tantra teachings the realization of emptiness is accomplished by looking at mind itself. Normally one thinks of the mind as being very strong and powerful, especially when all the thoughts and kleśas arise. But when one carefully examines to see where the mind actually is, one finds that there is nothing there, just a state of peace. This is called the state of great bliss because there is an absence of suffering and kleśas. While meditating one may think, "I cannot meditate because there are so many thoughts coming up." But when one examines where the thoughts come from and what they really are, one finds that they do not exist. There is just this natural state of peace.

When I was very young, my teacher would tell me that all phenomena were empty, but I thought that this was impossible and could not be right. Later when studying the texts, I realized that phenomena were empty after all, but I did not see how the mind could be empty. There were so many thoughts and there was a power to all these thoughts and feelings, so it was impossible for the mind to be empty. But after receiving the instructions for meditation and analyzing the mind, I realized, "Oh, the mind is empty after all." So first one discovers that phenomena are empty, then one analyzes the mind and finds that it is also empty. With analysis it is easy to understand the emptiness of mind. What is difficult is to familiarize oneself with and habituate oneself to that understanding. Just to analyze the mind to see that its nature is empty is not very beneficial. For instance, when suffering begins it is of little help to simply think, "The nature of suffering is emptiness." But if one accustoms one's mind to the understanding of emptiness, then the mind poisons will be eliminated and suffering will be pacified.

....

There are six root afflictions, or kleśas. The first is *anger*, so one looks for where anger first appears, where it comes from, where it stays, and so on. One does the same for the second kleśa, which is *craving* or *desire* for external objects. The third kleśa is *ignorance* and the fourth is *pride*. The fifth kleśa is *doubt* or *uncertainty*, which has a positive or negative form. The sixth is *afflicted view*, which means the belief in self, a clinging to a self. These are the six root mind poisons as described in the commentaries. With each of these one looks for where they first appear, where they dwell, and where they go. This is analytic meditation and through it one realizes the nature of the poisons.

When one has this realization, one rests one's mind in this realization. In this way one obtains the realization of the emptiness of things often described as the union of emptiness and knowledge. This knowledge is clarity, an activity that doesn't have any actual true nature because it is emptiness itself. It is just a function, but not an actual thing in itself. Clarity is like a quality or attribute, but there is no basis to that quality. There is a process of knowing, but there is no knower who knows. Other than its nature, it is just emptiness. So one has this union of clarity and emptiness or this union of knowledge and emptiness. Atīśa in his meditation instructions says that normally we think of mind as being a combination of past, present, and future thoughts. We put these together and think that it is mind. If we analyze it, however, we find that past thoughts don't exist, that they have gone and aren't there any more, that is, they are nonexistent. Future thoughts have not yet been created so they are naturally empty. So what we have is just the present, which is a very brief period of time. Examining the present mind is very difficult because we find nothing there with any color, shape, form, or nature. So we find present mind is not really anything either and is therefore also empty.

Having understood the nature of emptiness through analytic meditation, we now look to see who is knowing, who has this understanding, and we find the knower doesn't exist. So we recognize this indivisibility of knowing and emptiness. This is known as discriminating wisdom or discriminating prajñā.

There are siddhas, that is, accomplished vajrayāna masters, who have said that when one looks directly at anger, the anger disappears. Anger has its own emptiness. It attains its own natural empty state. Previously, it has been said that there is no direct remedy that one can apply to anger that is correct in the context of hīnayāna and mahāyāna meditation. But in vajrayāna meditation there is the remedy of looking directly into the nature of anger.

Distinction Between Shamatha and Vipashyana
The Royal Seal of Mahamudra, Volume One
A Guidebook for the Realization of Coemergence
Khamtrul Ngawang Kunga Tenzin, Trs. by Gerardo Abboud, pp. 227-228

Generally, vipashyana has many divisions:

1. The vipashyana that has the specific feature of coarse peace is the worldly kind;
2. 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 indispensable factor;
3. 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:

1. The vipashyana focusing on vipashyana,
2. The vipashyana during the experiences,
3. And the vipashyana of realization.

These can be further condensed and classified as two: path vipashyana and fruition vipashyana:

1. Path vipashyana is the examination carried out by discerning prajna in the lucidity

during shamatha.

2. 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*:

[228] 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 *Prajnaparamita 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.

The Ways to Cultivate Mahāmudrā Vipāśyanā
From *Moonbeams of Mahāmudrā*
By Dakpo Tashi Namgyal, Trs. by Elizabeth M. Callahan, p. 218-220

The Classifications of the Ways to Cultivate Vipāśyanā

[page 218] Among the many types of vipāśyanā, there are mundane vipāśyanā, with its aspects of calmness and coarseness, and Hīnayāna vipāśyanā that is concerned with the four truths. Although it is excellent to practice those, they [page 219] are not essential. The vipāśyanā of meditating on the absence of self is the vipāśyanā to be practiced here because it is the necessary basis by which we ascertain the abiding mode of all phenomena (which are included within percepts and perceivers).

The way to give rise to such vipāśyanā is as follows. The extensive approach is the fourfold vipāśyanā taught in *Unraveling the Intent* and the *Compendium of Abhidharma*. The intermediate approach is the threefold vipāśyanā explained in *Unraveling the Intent*. There is also the vipāśyanā of meditating on the twofold absence of self-entity, which summarizes those [other approaches]. Looking at this from the perspective of the latter, most who expound the scriptures and reasonings of the Indian masters explain many ways to meditate on the view of emptiness. Based on the treatises of the noble Nāgārjuna and Asanga, they analyze using the great reasonings, such as [demonstrating that a phenomenon] is neither a single unit nor a plurality, and thereby cultivate the view of emptiness in which all percepts and perceivers are determined to lack any reality. In this land of Tibet, while it is possible to realize the correct view on the basis of that approach, nowadays it seems that most rely on their inferential rational cognition and take an abstract idea of emptiness as their mental object. The way that leads to an intellectually fabricated, partial emptiness (an analytical emptiness, an emptiness of the inanimate, and so forth) was discussed already with references to scriptures and reasonings.

In this context, by relying on the major and minor texts, as well as shorter esoteric instructions, transmitted from the Great Brahman (Saraha), the glorious Śavaripa, and the lord of yogins Tilopa, we focus on just the mind to determine [the nature of] all percepts and perceivers—which is the instruction for taking direct perception as the path. This is the way to give rise to the view of the emptiness of nature. It has many distinctive profundities in that it involves little hardship and brings great benefit. It is, for the most part, identical with the key points of the Sūtra-oriented texts on the stages of meditation, the *Instructions on Prajñāpāramitā*, Kamalaśīla's three *Stages of Meditation*, and the Exalted [Lord Atīśa's] *Instructions on Madhyamaka*. It is most wonderful. This is the approach that I will explain as best I can.

The Way to Cultivate Vipāśyanā in This Context

[page 220] This has two parts:

- a) Determining the Essence of Mind and Its Various Appearances
- b) Eliminating Misinterpretations About a Root or Basis

a) Determining the Essence of Mind and Its Various Appearances

This has three sections:

- i) The Reasons That Objectives Are Achieved by Observing Just the Mind
- ii) Determining the Essence of Mind, the Root
- iii) Determining the Essence of Thoughts and Appearances, [Mind's] Expressive Power

i) The Reasons That Objectives Are Achieved by Observing Just the Mind

In a general sense, the presentation that all phenomena are mind, the problems that ensue from not meditating on the nature of mind, and the benefits of doing so were already explained. In brief, since the troubles of saṃsāra and the virtues of nirvāna depend on the mind, or arise from mind, it is crucial that we focus on our mind in meditation, as the *Compendium of Dharma Sūtra* explains:

The bodhisattva Mativikrama supplicated, to which the Bhagavān responded: "Phenomena, what we refer to as 'things,' do not abide as objects and do not abide spatially. Furthermore, phenomena are simply dependent on your own mind. Thus it is that you should concentrate on your mind, take it to its limits, tame it, rest it in equipoise, and subjugate it."

It is taught that if we understand mind, we understand all phenomena, and that if mind is liberated, everything is liberated. The *Jewel Cloud Sūtra* says:

The mind comes before all phenomena. If you comprehend the mind, you know all phenomena.

The *Wisdom at the Moment of Death* states:

When the mind is realized, there is wisdom. Therefore, meditate with the

awareness that buddhahood is not to be sought anywhere else.

The Great Brahman [Saraha] says:

When mind is fettered you are bound.
It can be liberated—have no doubts.

He also says:

KYE Ho. When the confused mind is realized to be mind,
it is self-liberated from all evil views.
Remaining in the sublime great bliss
under its power is the genuine siddhi.

Tilopa states:

If you sever the one root of a tree with spreading branches full of leaves,
all those many branches will wither.
The same thing happens to samsāra when you sever the root of mind.

Thus it is explained that cutting through the basis, or root, of mind cuts the continuum of samsāra.

Śāntideva teaches that when we do not understand mind, everything is a cause of suffering, and that recognizing the mind is the best protection and discipline. *Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* says:

Those who don't know the secret of mind,
what is of sublime importance in the dharma,
will wander futilely for a long time—
despite their desire to attain happiness and destroy suffering.

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
The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, pp. 447-453

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.

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3.28.2.1.2.2. Meaning

To start with, he examines 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 beginningless 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.

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.⁴⁶⁶

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.

The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana
The Treasury of Knowledge by Jamgon Kongtrul
Chapter Eight: The Progressive Classification of the Training in Superior Samadhi
Part One: The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana –
The General Basis of All Samadhis
Translated by Kiki Ekselius and Chryssoula Zerbini

Vipashyana: The Classifications

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 arising. 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.

Classifications of Insight
From *The Great Treatise on the Stages*
***of the Path to Enlightenment, Vol. 3* by Tsong-kha-pa**
Translated by the Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee, pp. 327-330

Kamalaśīla's second *Stages of Meditation* sets forth three requisites for insight: (1) reliance on an excellent being, (2) genuinely pursuing extensive study of explanations of reality, and (3) appropriate reflection. By relying upon these three, you will discover the view—the understanding of the two selflessnesses. Then cultivate insight.

What insights should you cultivate? Here, our immediate and primary concern is not the insights of the elevated stages; we are mainly setting forth the insights that you cultivate while you are an ordinary being. For an ordinary being, complete insight is the cultivation of the fourfold, the threefold, and the sixfold insight. The fourfold insight refers to differentiation and so forth, as stated in the *Sūtra Unravelling the Intended Meaning*. Differentiation observes the diversity of conventional phenomena. Full differentiation observes the real nature of phenomena. The first [differentiation] is of two types—thorough examination and thorough analysis; and the second [full differentiation] is of two types—examination and analysis. Examination and analysis are distinguished according to whether the object is coarse or subtle. Asanga's *Śrāvaka Levels* says:

What is the fourfold insight? It is thus. Using the serenity within his mind, a monk differentiates, fully differentiates, fully examines, and fully analyzes phenomena. How does he differentiate? He differentiates by way of their diversity the objects of meditation that purify analysis, the objects of meditation of the learned, and the objects of meditation that purify the afflictions. He fully differentiates through analyzing the real nature of those three types of object. Full examination occurs when he uses conceptual attention endowed with those two kinds of wisdom to apprehend the distinguishing signs of those three types of object. When he analyzes them correctly, it is full analysis.

The same four paths of insight are set forth in Asanga's *Compendium of Knowledge*. The identification of them in Ratnākaraśānti's *Instructions for the Perfection of Wisdom* also agrees with the *Śrāvaka Levels*.

Regarding the threefold insight, the *Sūtra Unravelling the Intended Meaning* says:

Bhagavan, how many types of insight are there?

Maitreya, there are three types: that which arises from signs, that which arises from thorough searching, and that which arises from analytical discrimination.

What is insight which arises from signs? It is insight that attends only to a conceptual image within the sphere of concentration.

What is insight which arises from thorough searching? It is insight that attends to features which were not well understood by previous wisdom consciousnesses bearing upon the given object, so that those features may be well understood.

What is insight which arises from analytical discrimination? It is insight that attends to features that were well understood by earlier wisdom consciousnesses bearing upon the given object, so that you may feel the genuine bliss of liberation.

Regarding this, *Asanga's Śrāvaka Levels* says that those at the stage of equipoise may attend to a teaching they have studied and memorized, or to personal instructions. This is attention but it is not contemplation; nor is it consideration, evaluation, or examination. It is involved only in the signs. As you move from contemplation through to examination, you are engaged in thorough searching. To have exact analytical discrimination of what has been thus determined constitutes engaging in analytical discrimination of that for which you have thoroughly searched. Those three are the three doors of insight. To summarize, in the first you might, for example, observe the meaning of selflessness and attend to its signs, but you do not do much to come to a conclusion. In the second, you come to a conclusion in order to determine what you had not previously determined. In the third, you analyze, as before, a meaning that you have already determined.

The sixfold insight refers to the observation of six bases; it is a search procedure for the insight of thorough searching. You thoroughly search for—and, after you have sought, analytically discriminate—meanings, things, characteristics, categories, times, and reasonings.

- *Searching for meanings* refers to seeking the meaning of a given term.
- *Searching for things* refers to seeking [to determine] whether something is an internal thing or an external thing.
- *Searching for characteristics* is of two types: seeking to determine whether something is a general characteristic or a specific characteristic, and seeking to

determine whether a characteristic is shared or unique.

- *Searching for categories* is seeking to determine what is in the negative category based on its faults and defects and seeking to determine what is in the positive category based on its good qualities and benefits.
- *Searching for times* is seeking to determine how something could have occurred in the past, how it could occur in the future, and how it might be occurring in the present.
- *Searching for reasoning* is of four types:
 - (1) the reasoning of dependence is that effects arise in dependence on causes and conditions. You search from the distinctive perspectives of the conventional, the ultimate, and their bases.
 - (2) The reasoning of performance of function is that phenomena perform their own functions, as in the case of fire performing the function of burning. You search, thinking, "This is the phenomenon, this is the function, this phenomenon performs this function."
 - (3) The reasoning of tenable proof is that something is proven without being contradicted by valid knowledge. You search, thinking, "Is this supported by any of the three forms of valid knowledge—perception, inference, and reliable scripture?"
 - (4) The reasoning of reality gives you confidence in the reality of things as known in the world—e.g., the reality that fire is hot and water is wet—or confidence about inconceivable realities, or confidence about the abiding reality; it does not consider any further reason as to why these things are that way.

A yogi's understanding of the six just presented is of three types: the meaning of the terms expressed, the diversity of objects of knowledge, and the actual nature of objects of knowledge. The first of the six kinds of searching, searching for meanings, falls within the first type, the meaning of the terms expressed. Searching for things and searching for specific characteristics fall within the second type, the diversity of objects of knowledge. Searching for general characteristics and searching for the remaining three of those six fall within the third type, the actual nature of objects of knowledge.

Asanga's *Śrāvaka Levels* says:

This is the observation of the three doors of insight and the six categories within the basis. In brief, these fully encompass all types of insight.

This means those that are explained there in the *Śrāvaka Levels* encompass all types of insight.

Furthermore, the doorways to the four insights that we explained first are the three types of insight—that which is arisen from just the signs, etc. It is said that you enter them through searching with the six ways of searching from the point of view of those three doorways, so it seems that the three doorways and the six ways of searching are included within the previous fourfold division. Asanga's *Śrāvaka Levels* states that the attention of tight focus, etc.—a set of four explained above—are common to both serenity and insight; hence, insight also has these four attentions. Therefore, Ratnākaraśānti's *Instructions for the Perfection of Wisdom* says:

Thus, completing the cultivation of the fourfold insight frees you from the bondage of rebirth in the miserable realms. Completing the cultivation of the ninefold serenity frees you from the bondage of signs.

There are a great many texts that say the same thing; hence, insight is cultivated via the four—differentiation and so forth—as they are indicated in the *Sūtra Unravelling the Intended Meaning*. Serenity is cultivated via the nine states of mind which stabilize your attention without any discursive movement from object to object.

Equivalence with Other Systems of Vipashyana Meditation
From *The Royal Seal of Mahamudra, Volume One:*
A Guidebook for the Realization of Coemergence
Khamtrul Ngawang Kunga Tenzin, Trs. by Gerardo Abboud, pp. 264-267

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:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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 [page 265] 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 prajna, 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 prajna 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 prajna, 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 [page 266] 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.

[page 267] 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.

Correlating This Vipāśyanā with Other Approaches
From *Moonbeams: An Eloquent Elucidation of the Way*
To Cultivate Mahāmudrā, the Definitive Meaning
By Tashi Namgyal, Trs. Elizabeth Callahan, pp. 255-258

[page 255] A correlation [of the vipāśyanā presented here] with the explanation of the four types of vipāśyanā, such as the differentiation of phenomena, found in *Unraveling the Intent* and elsewhere, is as follows:

- Here, our focus on the quantitative aspect of the phenomena of percepts and perceivers, which are included within the thoughts and appearances arising as the mind's expressive power, is the vipāśyanā that differentiates phenomena because, by focusing on all phenomena—that is, the quantitateness of all knowable objects—they are differentiated.
- Our focus on all things that are perceived or are perceivers as lacking an essence of their own is the vipāśyanā that differentiates thoroughly because, by focusing on the qualitateness of knowable objects, they are differentiated.
- Our discernment of those two [the quantitative and the qualitative aspects] with an apprehension of their characteristics is the vipāśyanā that discerns completely because discerning coarse qualitateness and quantitateness along with an apprehension of their characteristics is discernment.
- Our careful analysis of those two [the quantitative and the qualitative aspects] is the vipāśyanā that analyzes completely because it is the correct analysis of the most subtle aspects of qualitateness and quantitateness.

The *Śrāvakabhūmi* teaches:

How is differentiation done? Differentiation is conducted with the quantitative aspects of the objects of meditation for purifying behavior, objects of meditation for expertise, and the objects of meditation for purifying mental afflictions. Thorough differentiation is conducted with the qualitative aspect [of those three objects].

When attention endowed with prajñā joins with discernment to apprehend the characteristics [of those three objects], that is complete discernment. When

there is correct discernment, that is complete analysis.

[page 256] A correlation [of the vipaśyanā presented here] with the explanation of the three types of vipaśyanā, such as that which arises from characteristics, found in *Unraveling the Intent*, is as follows.

- Here the way we discern the objects of vipaśyanā is the vipaśyanā that arises from characteristics because that only brings to mind conceptual representations as the objects of vipaśyanā.
- The way we understand that all such [phenomena] lack an essence is the vipaśyanā that arises from thorough investigation because it is the attention comprehending an object of understanding that was not previously understood.
- The way that we attain and become familiar with the liberation in which all phenomena lack an essence is the vipaśyanā that arises from discernment because, by realizing the abiding state of phenomena with our discerning prajñā, we feel true bliss through liberation and become familiar with that.

Unraveling the Intent explains:

What is the vipaśyanā that arises from characteristics? It is that which only brings to mind a conceptual representation for its sphere of samādhi.

What is the vipaśyanā that arises from thorough investigation? It is that which brings to mind dharma topics that were not well understood by the prajñā [that was directed] at them in order that such [topics] be understood.

What is the vipaśyanā that arises from discernment? It is that which brings to mind dharma topics that were well understood by the prajñā [that was directed] at them, in order that [bodhisattvas] may feel bliss through liberation.

Although those classifications of vipaśyanā are listed in the sūtras and *Unraveling the Intent*, the texts on the stages of meditation do not explain the way to determine each of them specifically. However, since their key points are contained within the determination of the two absences of self-entity and that approach is well known in the Sūtra context in both India and Tibet, those [two absences of self-entity] will be correlated with [the vipaśyanā presented here] as follows.

[page 257] Here the way the essence of mind is determined is similar to the way the

absence of a self of persons is determined in the Sūtra context. In the Sūtra context, the person is considered to be what holds the continua of the skandhas with awareness. [Belief in] the self of persons is that that [“person”] takes itself to be permanent and singular, and believes itself to be “I” and “me.” [Recognition of] the absence of a self of persons is to know that to be without any nature. Here, what holds itself to be permanent and singular, and believes itself to be “I” and “me” is the mind itself. We determine that to be without any nature.

The way [the natures of] thoughts and appearances are determined is similar to the way that the absence of a self-entity of phenomena is determined in the Sūtra context. In the Sūtra context, phenomena [in this instance] refers to the skandhas, dhātus, and so forth that are imagined by the self of persons. [Belief in] a self-entity of phenomena is to believe those to be objectively existent things. [Recognition of] the absence of a self-entity of phenomena is to know those to be without any nature. Here we determine all objectively existent appearances—the mental events imagined by the mind itself and external forms, sounds, and so forth—to be without any nature.

Despite those similarities, the sequence of how [the nature of] objects and perceiving subjects are determined is different. In the Sūtra context, it is taught that without first determining [the nature of] objects (what are perceived), [the nature of] mind (the perceiving subject) will not be determined. As Dharmakīrti observes:

Without invalidating the object
it is impossible to eliminate it.

Āryadeva adds:

When you see that the object has no self-entity,
the seed of existence is destroyed.

Here it is thought that approaching it that way makes determining [the nature of] the perceiving mind later on much harder, whereas determining the perceiving mind first makes it easy to determine perceived objects—it will be as if they are self-liberating. It is analogous to the way that cutting the root of a tree causes its branches and leaves to wither, as taught [page 258] by Tilopa. This is what appears in all the instructions on the ultimate essence.

That completes the explanation of the instructions in vipaśyanā.

Categories of Vipāśyanā
The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation
A Commentary on the Eighth Chapter of the *Treasury*
***of Knowledge* by Jamgön Kongtrül by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche**
Translated by Peter Roberts, pp. 69-107

There are three main categories of vipāśyanā: the vipāśyanās of the *four essences*, the vipāśyanā of the *three doorways*, and the vipāśyanā of the *six investigations*.

The four essences of vipāśyanā are described in the *Explanation of the View sūtra* and in Asanga's *Compendium of the Abhidharma*. In this analysis there are two categories of vipāśyanā—differentiation and complete differentiation. Each of these categories has two aspects—examination and analysis—so that there are actually four categories. Differentiation involves the understanding or prajñā that can distinguish between all the various kinds of phenomena. Complete differentiation is the understanding that distinguishes the actual nature of all phenomena. Examination is the gaining of an understanding of something on an obvious level. Analysis is gaining an understanding on a very subtle level.

The vipāśyanās of the *four natures* are: (1) differentiation through examination, (2) differentiation through analysis, (3) complete differentiation through examination, and (4) complete differentiation through analysis. But in the *Explanation of the View sūtra* each of these four categories is divided again to make sixteen categories in all. The first category (differentiation through examination) is divided into four degrees of examination, namely (a) perfect examination, which means the examining is done very well, (b) definitive examination, in which a more complete understanding results, (c) perfect evaluation, which is even more complete, and (d) essential examination, which is the most complete. So each of these four essences of vipāśyanā has four degrees, making sixteen categories in all.

In the *Compendium of the Abhidharma* Asanga gives a description of the vipāśyanā with four essences in terms of their effect, that is, in terms of their activity. Asanga describes the first two essences of vipāśyanās, the differentiation of phenomena and the complete differentiation of phenomena, as remedies for negative propensities (Skt. *dausthulya*, Tib. *na ga len*) and the conceptualization of phenomena. The last two essences of vipāśyanā, through examination and through analysis, eliminate what needs to be eliminated, such as the mistaken beliefs about phenomena. With these eliminated one can rest in an unmistaken understanding.

In the *Explanation of the View* sūtra there is a description of the vipaśyanā of the *three doorways*, or entrances. In this sūtra Maitreya asks the Buddha, “How many kinds of vipaśyanā meditations are there?” The Buddha replies that there are three kinds. First, there is the vipaśyanā that arises from conceptual characteristics. If one meditates, for example, on selflessness one doesn’t simply think about selflessness but one contemplates the reasons, proofs, and characteristics of selflessness. By going through these and thinking them over, one is able to develop a certain understanding of selflessness. One develops the insight that arises from contemplating the conceptual characteristics of something. The second of the vipaśyanās of the three doors is the insight that arises from investigation. Once one has developed the certainty of the first doorway, then one rests one’s mind in that certainty and this is the second doorway. The third doorway arises from analysis. Because of familiarization with and habituation to certainty, one rests directly within the understanding of selflessness.

Next is the vipaśyanā of the *six investigations* into the characteristics of things. Three kinds of understanding come from these six investigations. First is *the investigation of meaning*, in which one has to investigate the words of the dharma and find out what is the meaning behind the words.

Second is *the investigation of things* or the investigation of external phenomena and internal objects, which refers to mind and mental events. The understanding of the mind is arrived at through the understanding of the eight consciousnesses. The understanding of mental events is the understanding of the kleśas—the negativities of the mind. The investigation of external objects is the understanding of the external sensory experiences of sight, sound, smell, taste, and physical sensation. This is the understanding of the five aggregates of form, sensation, recognition, mental events, and consciousness, the twelve āyatanas, which are the source of perception and so on.

Third is the *investigation of characteristics*, which is examining the object in more detail; for example, discovering that the visual consciousness perceives a visual object, the ear consciousness perceives sounds, etc. One examines the actual characteristics of all the different aspects in more detail. One investigates, for example, the visual form and identifies it as being the object of visual consciousness. Generally, there are two kinds of wisdom—the wisdom of the true nature of things and wisdom of the variety of things. First one has to examine all outer and inner objects to gain an understanding of their qualities. When one has attained this understanding, then one can understand their true nature.

The next three kinds of realization deal with the actual nature of things. These are the *investigation of direction*, *investigation of time*, and *investigation through reasoning*. We can easily understand emptiness with the investigation of direction and time. We normally think that there is a north, a south, an east, and a west. We think of directions as having an actual existence. We also talk about “here” and “there” as if there really were a “here” and a “there.” But on closer examination, for example, one could say the wooden table in front of me is on the east side of the throne. When one moves the table a little, then one would say it is north of the throne. Direction, in fact, has no solid reality. So the investigation of direction leads to an understanding of emptiness.

The second investigation of the nature of things is the investigation of time. One usually thinks that there is a past, a present, and a future or one thinks in terms of a day, a month, a year, and so on. But when one examines this more closely, one finds that past does not really exist. Where is the present? One finds that other than being a conceptual projection on things, time has no reality of its own.

The third investigation of the nature of things is through reason. The Buddha said that his teachings should be examined and not taken on trust. For example, if one is buying gold, it wouldn't be correct to simply accept the seller's word that it is gold. One should test it by heating it with a flame to see whether it changes color. The gold might have a different metal inside so next one has to cut it open. Finally, there might be some fine particles of nongold in the lump. So one has to rub it against a stone to see if it is pure gold. In the same way, the Buddha said that his teachings should not be taken on trust, but one should engage in the process of investigation so that one can develop an understanding of the actual nature of things. Once one has gained this understanding, one can apply it to phenomena.

There are four kinds of reasoning. The first two relate to something arising from activity. The first is *the reasoning of dependence* and is involved with cause and effect. Using this reasoning, one can develop an understanding of how one's present life is due to events in a previous life. Since this is difficult to prove and understand, the Buddha taught cause and effect by reasoning, saying that if something exists, it is dependent and must have arisen from previous conditions or a cause. For example, a flower does not appear by itself but is dependent upon the previous conditions of a seed, soil, air, water, and so on. Many things have to come together for the flower to come into existence. So whatever exists is dependent upon previous causes and conditions. This is true of one's body and one's mind, which are the effect of previous causes and conditions in one's previous lifetimes.

The second kind of reasoning is *the reasoning of function*. This is the reasoning of

dependent effect, which means that an effect depends on a particular cause. By understanding the first kind of reasoning and this second kind, one is able to avoid suffering by understanding that every cause has an effect and every effect has a causal condition. For example, in the Guru Rinpoche practice the mantra *Om Ye Dharma Hetu Prabhava*, etc., can be translated as “All phenomena arise from causes.” The Buddha taught that all phenomena are an effect that had to arise due to a certain cause. The mantra says “All the causes have been explained by the Buddha.” That is the second sentence in the mantra. If one wishes to attain perfect happiness, one must be able to find the correct cause of this happiness. To stop suffering, which is the result of causes, one must stop the causes of suffering. Therefore, one can find out how to eliminate suffering and attain happiness in the Buddha’s teachings, which is done through the two kinds of reasoning—the reasoning of a cause having an effect and the reasoning of an effect being dependent on a cause. This means that whatever exists will create a result. Thus external objects or internal objects (such as the mind) will create results in the future. So the first reasoning of previous conditions proves previous lifetimes and the second reasoning of function proves future lifetimes.

The third kind of reasoning is the *reasoning of validity*, or how one knows something is true. There are three subtypes of this reasoning. First, one may experience something directly through seeing, hearing, or one of the other senses and this is called directly perceived validity. Second, there are things one cannot experience directly with the senses, but one understands them through logical deduction, or deduced validity. For example, the understanding of the emptiness of all phenomena or that a previous life must exist are examples of this second kind of knowledge.

The third kind of reasoning is scriptural authenticity. One gains understanding by studying the teachings of the Buddha and of scholars and accomplished masters. There is a subject called *pramāna* in Sanskrit meaning “valid knowledge.” There were two great masters of this in India—Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. Dignāga said there were three kinds of valid knowledge: that which is perceived directly; that which is obtained through deductive reasoning; and that which is received through scriptural authority. But then Dharmakīrti, the other great master of the *pramāna*, said that there are only two kinds of knowledge, direct knowledge and deductive analysis, because scriptural authority is understanding through examination and analysis, which is in fact the result of direct experience. So scriptural authority is encompassed by both of the other two kinds of knowledge and is not a separate third category.

The fourth kind of reasoning is the *reasoning of intrinsic nature*. There are two kinds of

intrinsic reasons: relative intrinsic nature and absolute intrinsic nature. An example of the relative aspect is the fact that fire is hot and burns. One may ask, “What is the reason that fire is hot and burns?” But there really isn’t any reason except that this is the intrinsic nature of fire. Similarly, one cannot ask, “Why is water wet?” because water is just wet and that is the intrinsic nature of water. Similarly, the nature of all phenomena is empty and that is just the intrinsic nature of all phenomena. There is no real reason why this is true; it is just something that has to be realized.

For example, in the beginning one isn’t certain of the absence of a self or of the nature of emptiness. Through a process of reasoning, one can develop a definite understanding of selflessness and impermanence using logic. By going through these four reasonings, one develops certainty from analytical meditation and through this one gains clarity. Sometimes by doing this analytic meditation too much, one’s mental stability decreases. If this happens, one does more nonanalytic meditation in which one just rests the mind without analyzing. This will bring about more stability.

There are six kinds of investigations—investigation of meaning, things, characteristics, directions, time, and reasoning—that can be used to gain an understanding of relative and absolute phenomena. Vipāśyanā can also be summed up into two types: preparatory vipāśyanā and actual vipāśyanā. Preparatory vipāśyanā, also known as discriminating vipāśyanā, is a preparation stage during which one investigates and analyzes in order to develop a definite understanding. In the actual stage, also called unwavering samādhi, one has gained definite understanding and the mind is able to dwell there.

The vipāśyanā of the four essences, six investigations, and three doorways are all analytical meditations. In general there are two kinds of meditation: the analytical meditation of the pandita who is a scholar and the nonanalytical meditation or direct meditation of the *kusulu*, or simple yogi. So the analytical meditation of the pandita occurs when somebody examines and analyzes something thoroughly until a very clear understanding of it is developed. Doing this, one gains a very definite and lasting understanding, so that there is no danger of making an error. However, this path of the pandita takes a long time. The meditation of the *kusulu* develops from knowing how to meditate, and then meditating very extensively. This method is much swifter, but there is a danger of going astray and making a mistake. So one usually begins with an analysis and examination of the reasons and proofs so that a definite understanding is developed. Then one familiarizes oneself with this and develops an understanding and from this one begins the *kusulu* meditation.

In analytical meditation, for example, one meditates on selflessness, and in trying to identify the “self” one finds that it doesn’t exist internally, externally, or in between. It is similar to śamatha meditation in that one focuses the mind on an object, just as one rests the mind on the in- and out-breath in śamatha meditation. Similarly, when resting on the absence of self, the mind is kept focused one-pointedly on this and just rests, and from this develops the experience of the certainty of the absence of self. It is the same method employed in śamatha meditation so it is called the analytical meditation on the absence of self.

Analytic meditation is not just hearing, receiving, and contemplating the teachings. Instead it is the definite insight one has gained united with śamatha meditation. In śamatha meditation one focuses the mind on breathing or focuses it on no object whatsoever. Here one has definite knowledge that is gained through analytic deduction. This knowledge is joined together with the stability of mind in śamatha and one meditates on the union of these two. This is what is meant by analytic meditation.

The direct, nonanalytical meditation is called kusulu meditation in Sanskrit. This was translated as *trömeh* in Tibetan, which means “without complication” or being very simple without the analysis and learning of a great scholar. Instead, the mind is relaxed and without applying analysis so it just rests in its nature. In the sūtra tradition, there are some nonanalytic meditations, but mostly this tradition uses analytic meditation.

Insight
Middle Beyond Extremes Maitreya's Madhyāntavibhāga
With Commentaries by Khenpo Shenga and Ju Mipham
Translated by The Dharmachakra Translation Committee, pp. 135-142

The second topic includes (1) a brief presentation, and (2) detailed explanation.

Brief Presentation

On the first topic, the treatise states:

**Syllables, meanings, mental activity,
Freedom from conceptual constructs, the two characteristics,
Purity and impurity, the adventitious,
Fearlessness, and lack of conceit. [V.13]**

It should be understood that there are ten ways of being unmistaken: being unmistaken about (1) **syllables**, (2) **meanings**, (3) **mental activity**, (4) **freedom from conceptual constructs**, (5-6) **the two characteristics** (the general and specific), (7) **purity and impurity**, (8) **the adventitious**, (9) **fearlessness**, and (10) **lack of conceit**.

In the Great Vehicle, insight entails the correct realization of all things, both as they are and as they appear. This can be summarized under ten topics: being unmistaken regarding (1) syllables, (2) meanings, (3) mental activity, (4) freedom from conceptual constructs, (5) the specific characteristic and (6) the general characteristic, (7) purity and impurity, (8) the adventitious, (9) fearlessness, and (10) lack of conceit.

Detailed Explanation

In this second section, the ten topics covered in the brief presentation are expanded upon. These are:

- 1) Being unmistaken regarding syllables, the medium for expression;
- 2) Being unmistaken regarding the meaning they express, which is imaginary and lacks any nature;
- 3) Being unmistaken regarding mental activity, the mere awareness of the dependent nature, the cause of dualistic appearances;
- 4) Being unmistaken by not constructing the two extremes, which occurs through realizing dualistic appearance to be illusory and false;

- 5) Being unmistaken about the thoroughly established nature's specific characteristic, its absence of apprehended and apprehender;
- 6) Being unmistaken about the general characteristic of phenomena, knowing that no phenomenon lies outside this non-dual reality;
- 7) Being unmistaken about the purity and impurity that are based on realizing or not realizing reality;
- 8) Being unmistaken with the knowledge that because the nature [of phenomena] is pure, the appearances of purity and impurity are adventitious;
- 9) Being unmistaken regarding the original purity [of all phenomena], which ensures that one need not fear being obscured by the thoroughly afflictive; and
- 10) Being unmistaken in understanding that because [the qualities of] complete purification do not develop, there is no [basis for] feeling conceited about having such special qualities.

Syllables

On the first topic, the treatise states:

Connection and familiarity,

Lack of connection and no familiarity:

**Due to the first two, meaning is present and to the latter two,
it is not—**

This is being unmistaken about syllables. [V.14]

Syllables [convey meaning] when they are expressed with an uninterrupted **connection** between them **and** when there is **familiarity** with the particular expression. On the other hand, when the opposite is the case and there is a **lack** of such **connection and no familiarity**, [the syllables do not convey any meaning].

Thus, **due to the first two, meaning is present and to the latter two, it is not—** [understanding] **this is being unmistaken about syllables. [137]**

There are two factors that lend meaning to the syllables that express [this meaning]. First, syllables must be correctly connected with one another in a sequence. Second, once linguistic symbols have been set forth based on these syllables, the mind must be familiar with the way a given linguistic symbol is associated with a particular meaning. Take the word "pillar," for example. When the two syllables in this word are arranged and pronounced in the customary order, "pil-lar," one will understand [that this refers to] an entity that performs the function of supporting beams. If the sequence were reversed so that "lar" were stated before "pil," or if the syllables were expressed separately without being linked with one another, they would be unable to convey this

meaning. Hence, these two syllables are set forth in this way as a linguistic symbol for something that functions to support beams. English speakers who have previously familiarized themselves with this particular term will be able to derive meaning from its use. However, this would not necessarily be the case with those from foreign lands. Therefore, it is these two factors that make a linguistic symbol meaningful: connection and familiarity. Alternatively, when there is no connection or familiarity, syllables will not convey any meaning.

Understanding correctly in this way is being unmistaken regarding syllables. When a meaning is understood through a linguistic symbol composed of syllables, it is because people have made designations based on connections they themselves created; they were not there to begin with.

There is no intrinsic relationship between a name and its meaning. This [type of insight] allows one unerringly to ascertain the way in which meanings are understood from syllables. Based on this, Bodhisattvas come to understand that ultimately words do not express any meaning.

Meaning

On the second topic, the treatise states:

Dualistic appearances

Are not what they seem.

This is being unmistaken about the meaning

That transcends existence and non-existence. [V.15]

The **dualistic appearances** of apprehended and apprehender **are not what they seem**; [they do not exist] in the way they appear. Seeing [138] the meaning in **this way is being unmistaken about the meaning that transcends** both the **existence** of apprehended and apprehending entities **and** the **non-existence** of the delusive appearance of such entities.

The dualistic appearances of apprehended and apprehender do not exist as they appear. They appear, yet are unreal. Realizing this is referred to as “being unmistaken about the meaning.” This meaning, or nature, transcends the extreme of existence because duality is unestablished. It transcends the extreme of non-existence because the mere appearance [of duality] does exist. Based on this, a realization free of apprehended and apprehender arises.

Mental Activity

On the third topic, the treatise states:

**Infusion with concepts forms the basis
For conceptual mental activity.
This is being unmistaken about mental activity
That causes the appearance of duality. [V.16]**

Thorough **infusion with the concepts** of apprehended and apprehender **forms the basis for conceptual mental activity**. [Understanding] **this is being unmistaken about mental activity**. What type of mental activity is one unmistaken about? It is with respect to mental **activity that causes the appearance of duality** or, in other words, conceptual mental activity suffused with mistaken notions formed [in the past].

Because [the mind] is suffused with concepts of apprehended and apprehender formed in the past, subsequent concepts arise and appear as places, objects, and bodies. This forms the basis for mental activity. When this is understood correctly, one is said to be “unmistaken regarding mental activity”; to have realized the nature of mental activity, of mere conceptuality, just as it is.

What is the basis, or foundation, of this mental activity? It is understood to be caused by the all-ground consciousness, the cause of dualistic appearance. Considering the fact that it is the causal [foundation] for the infusion of all manner of concepts, it is termed the “all-ground of various habitual tendencies.” This consciousness is termed the “all-ground of [139] maturation,” considering how the myriad of internal and external phenomena manifest through its power. Hence, the all-ground is the cause of everything.

Freedom from Conceptual Constructs

On the fourth topic, the treatise states:

**In actuality non-existent, yet existent,
They are held to be like illusions and so forth.
This is being unmistaken regarding freedom from conceptual constructs
Since there is no conceptual construction of existence or nonexistence. [V.17]**

The things explained above are **in actuality non-existent, yet existent**. Therefore, **they are held to be like illusions**, dreams, mirages, reflections of the moon in water, **and so forth**. While none of these exist as entities, the mere delusion [of such an existence] is not nonexistent either. As it sees that they in fact resemble illusions and so forth, the mind does not create conceptual constructs. **This type of seeing is being unmistaken regarding freedom from conceptual constructs, since there is no conceptual construction of existence or non-existence.**

All phenomena subsumed under apprehended and apprehender are intrinsically non-existent; this is their actual nature. Nevertheless, they do exist as mere appearances. In this way, they are held to be like illusions, dreams, and so on. This is what is meant by being unmistaken regarding freedom from conceptual constructs because as one avoids falling into one-sided positions in this way, [believing phenomena to be] either existent or non-existent, conceptual constructions do not occur.

The Specific Characteristic

On the fifth topic, the treatise states:

**Because no concepts apply,
Everything is purely nominal. [140]
This is being unmistaken about the specific characteristic,
The ultimate specific characteristic. [V.18]**

Because no concepts apply, everything that is spoken of as “eye” and “form,” up to “mind” and “[mental] phenomena,” **is purely nominal. This understanding is being unmistaken about the specific characteristic.** About what type of characteristic? One is unmistaken about **the ultimate specific characteristic**, since at [the level of] the relative one does not think, “everything is purely nominal!”

None of the concepts of apprehended and apprehender apply to the specific characteristic of [phenomena’s] real nature. This is because the ultimate object of individual self-aware wakefulness is the pacification of all constructs. This kind of nature does not contain various divisions. All the appearances of different types of phenomena, whatever they may be, are not established as distinct, specific characteristics, despite their appearance. In reality, they are without any essence of their own; they are nothing more than nominal designations. Thus, the specific characteristic of all phenomena is emptiness.

Understanding this is what is called “being unmistaken regarding specific characteristics.” At the level of worldly convention, the appearances of distinct features may be referred to by speaking of the specific characteristics of pillars, vases, and so on. Here, however, the [term] “specific characteristic” is used to refer to the specific characteristic of the ultimate—the way all phenomena are.

The General Characteristic

On the sixth topic, the treatise states:

**Apart from the basic field of phenomena
There are no phenomena.
Therefore, this is being unmistaken
About the general characteristic. [V.19]**

Apart from the basic field of phenomena, the nature of which is the selflessness of phenomena, **there are no phenomena** whatsoever. Therefore, this understanding is **being unmistaken about the general characteristic**. [141]

By nature, the basic field of phenomena is empty of duality. There are no “phenomena” whatsoever apart from this basic field because this basic field is the nature of all phenomena. For this reason, the basic field of phenomena is the general characteristic that pervades all phenomena. Knowing this is to be unmistaken regarding the general characteristic.

Impurity and Purity

On the seventh topic, the treatise states:

**Based on whether or not mistaken mental activity
Has been eliminated,
It is either impure or pure.
This is being unmistaken about that. [V.20]**

Based on whether or not mistaken mental activity has been eliminated, it (the basic field of phenomena) **is either impure or pure**. This understanding is **being unmistaken about that** (impurity and purity).

Though we may speak of cyclic existence and the transcendence of suffering, purity and impurity, they are not established in an objectively distinct way, not in the slightest.

Rather, purity and impurity are spoken of with reference to someone who has eliminated the view of self and other forms of mistaken mental activity, and someone who has not. Understanding this is being unmistaken regarding the meaning of purity and impurity.

The Adventitious

On the eighth topic, the treatise states:

**The basic field of phenomena is pure by nature
And, therefore, like space.
The two are adventitious occurrences.
This is being unmistaken with respect to that. [V.21]**

The basic field of phenomena is pure by nature and, therefore, like space. The two, impurity and subsequent purity, are adventitious occurrences. Understanding **this is being unmistaken with respect to that**, the latter being the adventitious occurrence of these two.

Because the basic field of phenomena is completely pure by nature, like space, it never changes. This is the way things are, their innate nature. Occurrences of impurity and subsequent purity happen adventitiously; merely in terms of how things appear. To understand this is to be unmistaken about the adventitious.

Fearlessness and Absence of Conceit

On the ninth and tenth topics, the treatise states:

**Because they do not exist, persons and phenomena
Are neither afflicted nor purified.
Thus, there is no fear and no ego.
This is being unmistaken with respect to that. [V.22]**

Because they do not exist, persons and phenomena are neither afflicted nor purified. Thus, there is no fear and no ego-centered pride. This is being unmistaken with respect to that fearlessness and absence of conceit.

Because they are devoid of any essence, the nature of both phenomena and beings is free from thorough affliction and complete purification. As exemplified by space, that which has no essence can neither be bound by afflictions nor liberated from them. In

terms of the way things truly are, there is not a single phenomenon that is afflicted or purified. Therefore, there is [no basis] to the fear that attachment and other factors of thorough affliction will develop, nor [are there any grounds] for feeling conceited about the development of faith and the other factors of complete purification. The reason for this is that there are no observable bases for fear or pride. This is what is meant by being unmistaken about fearlessness and the absence of pride.

Classifications of Insight
From *The Great Treatise on the Stages*
***of the Path to Enlightenment, Vol. 3* by Tsong-kha-pa**
Translated by the Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee, pp. 327-330

Kamalaśīla's second *Stages of Meditation* sets forth three requisites for insight: (1) reliance on an excellent being, (2) genuinely pursuing extensive study of explanations of reality, and (3) appropriate reflection. By relying upon these three, you will discover the view—the understanding of the two selflessnesses. Then cultivate insight.

What insights should you cultivate? Here, our immediate and primary concern is not the insights of the elevated stages; we are mainly setting forth the insights that you cultivate while you are an ordinary being. For an ordinary being, complete insight is the cultivation of the fourfold, the threefold, and the sixfold insight. The fourfold insight refers to differentiation and so forth, as stated in the *Sūtra Unravelling the Intended Meaning*. Differentiation observes the diversity of conventional phenomena. Full differentiation observes the real nature of phenomena. The first [differentiation] is of two types—thorough examination and thorough analysis; and the second [full differentiation] is of two types—examination and analysis. Examination and analysis are distinguished according to whether the object is coarse or subtle. Asanga's *Śrāvaka Levels* says:

What is the fourfold insight? It is thus. Using the serenity within his mind, a monk differentiates, fully differentiates, fully examines, and fully analyzes phenomena. How does he differentiate? He differentiates by way of their diversity the objects of meditation that purify analysis, the objects of meditation of the learned, and the objects of meditation that purify the afflictions. He fully differentiates through analyzing the real nature of those three types of object. Full examination occurs when he uses conceptual attention endowed with those two kinds of wisdom to apprehend the distinguishing signs of those three types of object. When he analyzes them correctly, it is full analysis.

The same four paths of insight are set forth in Asanga's *Compendium of Knowledge*. The identification of them in Ratnākaraśānti's *Instructions for the Perfection of Wisdom* also agrees with the *Śrāvaka Levels*.

Regarding the threefold insight, the *Sūtra Unravelling the Intended Meaning* says:

Bhagavan, how many types of insight are there?

Maitreya, there are three types: that which arises from signs, that which arises from thorough searching, and that which arises from analytical discrimination.

What is insight which arises from signs? It is insight that attends only to a conceptual image within the sphere of concentration.

What is insight which arises from thorough searching? It is insight that attends to features which were not well understood by previous wisdom consciousnesses bearing upon the given object, so that those features may be well understood.

What is insight which arises from analytical discrimination? It is insight that attends to features that were well understood by earlier wisdom consciousnesses bearing upon the given object, so that you may feel the genuine bliss of liberation.

Regarding this, *Asanga's Śrāvaka Levels* says that those at the stage of equipoise may attend to a teaching they have studied and memorized, or to personal instructions. This is attention but it is not contemplation; nor is it consideration, evaluation, or examination. It is involved only in the signs. As you move from contemplation through to examination, you are engaged in thorough searching. To have exact analytical discrimination of what has been thus determined constitutes engaging in analytical discrimination of that for which you have thoroughly searched. Those three are the three doors of insight. To summarize, in the first you might, for example, observe the meaning of selflessness and attend to its signs, but you do not do much to come to a conclusion. In the second, you come to a conclusion in order to determine what you had not previously determined. In the third, you analyze, as before, a meaning that you have already determined.

The sixfold insight refers to the observation of six bases; it is a search procedure for the insight of thorough searching. You thoroughly search for—and, after you have sought, analytically discriminate—meanings, things, characteristics, categories, times, and reasonings.

- *Searching for meanings* refers to seeking the meaning of a given term.
- *Searching for things* refers to seeking [to determine] whether something is an internal thing or an external thing.
- *Searching for characteristics* is of two types: seeking to determine whether something is a general characteristic or a specific characteristic, and seeking to

determine whether a characteristic is shared or unique.

- *Searching for categories* is seeking to determine what is in the negative category based on its faults and defects and seeking to determine what is in the positive category based on its good qualities and benefits.
- *Searching for times* is seeking to determine how something could have occurred in the past, how it could occur in the future, and how it might be occurring in the present.
- *Searching for reasoning* is of four types:
 - (1) the reasoning of dependence is that effects arise in dependence on causes and conditions. You search from the distinctive perspectives of the conventional, the ultimate, and their bases.
 - (2) The reasoning of performance of function is that phenomena perform their own functions, as in the case of fire performing the function of burning. You search, thinking, "This is the phenomenon, this is the function, this phenomenon performs this function."
 - (3) The reasoning of tenable proof is that something is proven without being contradicted by valid knowledge. You search, thinking, "Is this supported by any of the three forms of valid knowledge—perception, inference, and reliable scripture?"
 - (4) The reasoning of reality gives you confidence in the reality of things as known in the world—e.g., the reality that fire is hot and water is wet—or confidence about inconceivable realities, or confidence about the abiding reality; it does not consider any further reason as to why these things are that way.

A yogi's understanding of the six just presented is of three types: the meaning of the terms expressed, the diversity of objects of knowledge, and the actual nature of objects of knowledge. The first of the six kinds of searching, searching for meanings, falls within the first type, the meaning of the terms expressed. Searching for things and searching for specific characteristics fall within the second type, the diversity of objects of knowledge. Searching for general characteristics and searching for the remaining three of those six fall within the third type, the actual nature of objects of knowledge.

Asanga's *Śrāvaka Levels* says:

This is the observation of the three doors of insight and the six categories within the basis. In brief, these fully encompass all types of insight.

This means those that are explained there in the *Śrāvaka Levels* encompass all types of insight.

Furthermore, the doorways to the four insights that we explained first are the three types of insight—that which is arisen from just the signs, etc. It is said that you enter them through searching with the six ways of searching from the point of view of those three doorways, so it seems that the three doorways and the six ways of searching are included within the previous fourfold division. Asanga's *Śrāvaka Levels* states that the attention of tight focus, etc.—a set of four explained above—are common to both serenity and insight; hence, insight also has these four attentions. Therefore, Ratnākaraśānti's *Instructions for the Perfection of Wisdom* says:

Thus, completing the cultivation of the fourfold insight frees you from the bondage of rebirth in the miserable realms. Completing the cultivation of the ninefold serenity frees you from the bondage of signs.

There are a great many texts that say the same thing; hence, insight is cultivated via the four—differentiation and so forth—as they are indicated in the *Sūtra Unravelling the Intended Meaning*. Serenity is cultivated via the nine states of mind which stabilize your attention without any discursive movement from object to object.

The Categorizations of Vipāśyanā
From *Moonbeams: An Eloquent Elucidation of the Way*
To Cultivate Mahāmudrā, the Definitive Meaning
By Tashi Namgyal, Trs. Elizabeth Callahan, pp. 35-36

There are the three types, vipāśyanā arising from characteristics and the others, taught in *Unraveling the Intent*:

“Bhagavān, how many types of vipāśyanā are there?”

“Maitreya, there are three: that which arises from characteristics, that which arises from thorough investigation, and that which arises from discernment.”

That text identifies them as follows:

What is the vipāśyanā that arises from characteristics? It is that which only brings to mind a conceptual representation for its sphere of samādhi.

What is the vipāśyanā that arises from thorough investigation? It is that which brings to mind dharma topics that were not well understood by the prajñā [that was directed] at them, in order that such [topics] be understood.

What is the vipāśyanā that arises from discernment? It is that which brings to mind dharma topics that were well understood by the prajñā [that was directed] at them, in order that [bodhisattvas] may feel bliss through liberation.

There are also the four types of vipāśyanā—the vipāśyanā that differentiates phenomena, that differentiates thoroughly, discerns completely, and analyzes completely—taught in the *Compendium of Abhidharma*:

What is vipāśyanā? It is the differentiation, thorough differentiation, complete discernment, and complete analysis of phenomena because it is the remedy for negative propensities and characteristics, overturns what is fallacious, and is the settling of the mind in what is not fallacious.

They are identified in the *Śrāvakabhūmi* as follows:

What are the four types of vipāśyanā? Bhikṣus, based on the internal mind’s śamatha, they are the differentiation, thorough differentiation, complete discernment, and complete analysis of phenomena.

How is differentiation done? Differentiation is conducted with the quantitative aspects of the objects of meditation for purifying behavior, the objects of meditation for expertise, and the objects of meditation for purifying mental afflictions. Thorough differentiation is conducted with the qualitative aspect [of those three objects].

When attention endowed with *prajñā* joins with discernment to apprehend the characteristics [of those three objects], that is complete discernment. When there is correct discernment, that is complete analysis.

Furthermore, the *Śrāvaka* *bhūmi* says:

Those are the three doors of *vipaśyanā* and the focuses on the six categories of the basis. In brief, these encompass all forms of *vipaśyanā*.

Although it uses the term “six categories,” those are six modes of inquiry undertaken with the *vipaśyanā* of thorough investigation. Since they are explained as the investigation of meaning, entities, characteristics, qualities, time, and reasonings, they are called “the *vipaśyanā* that investigates meaning” and so forth.

Distinction Between Shamatha and Vipashyana
The Royal Seal of Mahamudra, Volume One
A Guidebook for the Realization of Coemergence
Khamtrul Ngawang Kunga Tenzin, Trs. by Gerardo Abboud, pp. 227-228

Generally, vipashyana has many divisions:

1. The vipashyana that has the specific feature of coarse peace is the worldly kind;
2. 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 indispensable factor;
3. 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:

1. The vipashyana focusing on vipashyana,
2. The vipashyana during the experiences,
3. And the vipashyana of realization.

These can be further condensed and classified as two: path vipashyana and fruition vipashyana:

1. Path vipashyana is the examination carried out by discerning prajna in the lucidity

during shamatha.

2. 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*:

[228] 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 *Prajnaparamita 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.

Vipaśyanā Meditation in Three Steps
Different Modes of Inquiry in Vipaśyanā
From *Boundless Wisdom: A Mahāmudrā Practice Manual*
By Shamar Rinpoche, pp. 74-91

To distinguish phenomena, you should first raise questions regarding the characteristics of perceived objects, and then regarding their nature. Finally, look at the perceiving mind. The following questions might help you in your inquiry:

(1) What are the characteristics of a given phenomenon that is being perceived?

What are the characteristics that distinguish one existent phenomenon from another? A piece of wood or a piece of stone, for example have very different distinguishing characteristics. This is obvious when you first explore their color, shape, substance, and so on, which set them apart from any other phenomenon.

Next, investigate the reality of the given phenomenon further, in order to see how different factors come together to form this entity. Ask yourself: Do these factors and attributes exist separately, each independent of other attributes? Is it possible that a given thing exists by itself? Consider the possibility that without its attributes, there can be no entity.

(2) What is the nature of a given phenomenon?

Are these characteristics, factors, and attributes that constitute an entity truly existent or not? Is this thing inherently existent? If it is, where and in what way does it abide?

As you meticulously research the nature of things, sooner or later you will begin to understand that, although appearances occur and function in their individual ways, they are simultaneously not truly existent, lasting, independent entities. Thus, not being inherently existent, they have the feature of being illusion-like. What you see is merely the conventional aspect of reality, but not the ultimate truth. A phenomenon in its appearance is neither permanently existent, nor is it a separate entity. Take soap suds in water as an example. What you can see are the bubbles. Do these bubbles truly exist or not? They are visible as apparent forms. And yet, these apparent forms are insubstantial and impermanent. One bubble is connected with other bubbles. And these interdependent bubbles are all fleeting. They are in no way self-sustaining, enduring entities. This description does not only apply to soap bubbles. It applies to every

phenomenon that seems to independently exist. Vipāśyanā at this stage means having a precise intellectual understanding of this interdependence.

While investigating the characteristics and nature of outer phenomena, little attention is paid to the perceiving mind, which makes these investigations possible. This brings us to the third and final step of this insight meditation, which is the truly liberating one.

(3) What is the nature of the mind perceiving a given phenomenon?

Don't just look into the reality of the object perceived, but look at the mind, the perceiver of the object. In order to do so, look into the relationship between the perceived object and the perceiving mind. Understand that in the absence of a perceived object, there cannot be a mind beholding an object. In this way you conclude that the so-called perceiving mind is also without intrinsic nature. This inquiry involves a shift of perspective, and it is for good reason that this aspect of insight meditation, which explores the perceiving mind, is called the transmudane vipāśyanā of liberating wisdom. The analytical investigation of the nature of outer phenomena is not in itself liberating. It cannot go beyond the duality of thinking that things exist separately from the mind.

Nevertheless, it is still beneficial, because understanding that things are not as real as they seem paves the way for the insight that the dualistic mind perceiving things is not real either. This knowledge is very valuable, because as long as there is the deluded concept that both the perceiver and the object perceived truly exist, you are far from accessing liberation. Therefore, these different steps are required to arrive at a level of vipāśyanā which opens the gateway to the kind of insight, which, when further cultivated, will eventually liberate you from dualistic notions, and thus from samsara.

In short, based on the understanding that outer phenomena are not as real as they seem to be, investigate the nature of the mind more deeply, and realize that the perceiving mind is also not as real as it seems.

Summary

To summarize: For conceptual vipāśyanā, first differentiate one phenomenon from another. Do so by identifying the distinguishing characteristics and attributes of each phenomenon. Examine them. See what they are and how they make up the various phenomena. Also, look into the nature of the phenomenon in question to see if it is intrinsically existent. When you come to the conclusion that the intrinsic existence of outer phenomena cannot be found, you will arrive at the understanding that no

phenomena--outer or inner--truly exist, because in the absence of a perceived object, the perceiving mind is not established either. This in turn means that an interaction between these two, the very process of perception, also does not truly take place. In the last stage, the focus is on mind itself and on the insight that neither the perceived object, nor the perceiving mind, nor the interaction between the two, for that matter, have any true reality. Here, vipaśyanā: takes on a liberating quality.

In this way, the meditator ultimately comes to the logical conclusion that the object perceived, the perceiving mind, and thus the very process of perception are all without intrinsic nature. This triad, even though conventionally appearing and functioning, does not ultimately exist.

Vipaśyanā Meditation in Four Steps
Different Modes of Inquiry in Vipaśyanā
From *Boundless Wisdom: A Mahāmudrā Practice Manual*
By Shamar Rinpoche, pp. 76-80

Different texts offer varying models of how vipaśyanā can be developed. The *Samdhinirmocanasutra* teaches the development of vipaśyanā through a four-fold process: (1) distinguishing phenomena, (2) fully distinguishing phenomena, (3) complete examination, and (4) complete analysis. Let's apply this four-fold analysis by means of an example: the relationship between the body and fire.

(1) Distinguishing phenomena

This means examining phenomena in detail from various perspectives. The human body, for example, is normally seen as an entity, as one whole. First, consider that it is comprised of many countless parts. Then distinguish this phenomenon of *body* further, by analytically breaking it into ever smaller units. The effect is that the body will soon be reduced to its smallest particles or atoms. In these minute particles, no human body can be found either collectively or individually. Seen from this perspective, the human body does not exist and has never existed. It is merely a collection of minute particles to which the label *body* is applied.

As another example, investigate the phenomenon *fire*, which has many attributes as well. Fire burns and gives heat. Fire can be red, yellow, or blue in color, in all kinds of shades. These attributes, among many others, constitute *fire*, which you therefore usually perceive as one entity. Analytically, break this phenomenon *fire* down into its finest parts. You will discover that fire as such has never existed, because it is merely a collection of minute particles or processes, neither of which individually or collectively truly constitute fire. You merely label a collection of parts *fire*. This is the first of the four stages in this insight meditation, which helps us to overcome our usual way of seeing things in a very coarse, generalized way as unitary, singular phenomena.

(2) Fully distinguishing phenomena

Having investigated both the human body and fire individually, you come to the logical conclusion that neither of them is truly existent. Now investigate their relationship. What happens when the body comes into direct contact with fire? What is the physical sensation of burning? Where does the painful sensation come from? Does it come from

the fire or from the body? The fire and the body were both proven not to exist, but where else could the pain come from? Could it come from the mind? If the painful sensation were to exist only within the mind, it should exist there independently of the fire and of the body. If such were the case, pain should be felt unremittingly, even when the body is not in contact with fire. If the sensation were to exist within the fire, pain would be felt even if the body were not in contact with it. If the sensation were to exist within the body, then a dead body, in which the mind no longer functions, should still feel pain when it comes into contact with fire.

As you contemplate the reality of the sensation, you will reach the conclusion that a painful sensation does not arise independently of the fire, the body, or the dualistic mind. On the face of it, sensation undoubtedly exists. When the body is in contact with fire, conventionally pain is felt. On closer scrutiny, however, the factors that constitute pain are not truly identifiable; they do not really exist. Thus, it becomes apparent that there are, in fact, two aspects of reality. There is the conventional reality where you are undeniably sensitive to pain: *it hurts*. And there is the absolute reality, where the constitutive factors of pain are proven not to exist.

Here, the point is to differentiate the constitutive factors and the entity in question precisely, and to understand that while they appear, they are inherently empty. As such, no real relationship between them can be established. And still, while all phenomena--the perceived, the perceiver, and the interaction--are empty in and of themselves, simultaneously there is the sensation of heat, and thus the experience of the conventional appearances of the body and the fire. With this second step, your understanding of conventional phenomena and their true nature deepens.

Before we go on to the third stage, let me briefly recapitulate. The first step is to distinguish the characteristics and attributes of an entity. As you contemplate the fire, differentiate its characteristics. As you contemplate the human body, differentiate its parts. In the second stage, investigate the relationship between the body and the fire, with the body as the experiencer and the fire as the object of experience. When there is contact with fire, the sensation of heat is experienced. The sensation does not arise on its own; it arises in dependence on the body, the fire, and the dualistic mind. A sensation is therefore the result of converging factors.

When the conditions and the factors are there, the sensation arises. A sensation, being in this way a *dependent* phenomenon, is therefore without a truly existent basis. It is but a fleeting convergence of factors and conditions. And these factors and conditions are all proven to also be without true, permanent existence, because they too are nothing but dependent occurrences triggered by still other causes and conditions. The

conceptual mind labels *body, fire, sensation*, and so on, without these entities having an inherent existence.

In conceptual insight meditation, as you engage in contemplation, this understanding will progressively deepen. In time, it will become a certainty, beyond all doubt, that any apparent phenomenon, although it manifests whenever particular conditions gather together, is inherently empty. That is the simultaneity of conventional and absolute truth in every phenomenon.

(3) Complete examination

For the third stage, examine this unity of conventional and ultimate truth more deeply. Turn inwards to contemplate the perceiving mind that is experiencing all of this. You started out by differentiating outer phenomena such as the body or fire; then you analyzed the connection between them and how an experience comes about. You looked at the different elements. You saw that they do not exist as real, solid entities, but that they are all dependent and interrelated. Now, look into the mind that is experiencing. Try to examine the different processes taking place in the mind. What is required in order for the mind to experience this? How does the mind get to this experience? What are the factors? Observe how outer occurrences are transmitted to, and experienced by, the mind.

(4) Complete analysis

Having examined objects, the relationship between the mind and perceived objects, and the perceiving mind, now look at mind's nature in the fourth and final stage. Examine the actual nature of mind, moment by moment. *Moment by moment* here means to inquire as to whether or not any given moment of mind has intrinsic reality. Do this again and again. As you do so, you simultaneously experience whatever you find in terms of mind's nature. Thus, as you persevere, you come to realize what mind truly is. Does a passing moment of mind truly exist? Through the teachings, you have intellectually understood that nothing whatsoever is truly existent, that although they appear, all things are without intrinsic reality. This theoretical knowledge, however, is not enough. Now everything depends on your having your own experiences. In this sense, you must now put conceptual vipaśyanā to the test. Look for yourself, and gain direct experience through practice. Then you will have your own genuine experience, uninfluenced by theoretical explanations. In the early stages, however, follow the guidelines and instructions on how to enter into this meditative experience.

Vipaśyanā Meditation in Six Steps
Different Modes of Inquiry in Vipaśyanā
From *Boundless Wisdom: A Mahāmudrā Practice Manual*
By Shamar Rinpoche, pp. 80-84

The following six forms of contemplation belong to the category of conceptual vipaśyanā. In these meditations, you are investigating perceived objects. You neither investigate the perceiving mind directly nor scrutinize the relationship between the perceiving mind and the object perceived. These two investigations belong to the final levels of vipaśyanā that result in enlightenment, called the vipaśyanā of liberating wisdom.

Based on these six contemplations, you will understand that even though an object might be vividly perceived, it is, in fact, without inherent existence. As perception nevertheless occurs, the first thing to bear in mind is that whatever you perceive does not exist independently from the perceiving mind. Secondly, you must also understand that the dualistically perceiving mind is not to be known without the object perceived. A perceived object reflects the existence of the perceiving mind. In that sense, they are interdependent. It is due to confusion that you are unable to see that without an existing object of experience, the existence of the mind--that is, the experiencer--cannot be established. And when we say that the mind is inherently empty, we are referring to the fact that the experiencer is non-established.

(1) Contemplation of the relationship between a perceived object and the name given to it

A name can only be given after an object has been perceived. The name and the perceived object are clearly separate and distinguishable. For instance, there is a uniqueness to a particular cup perceived, as there can only be one such cup in the whole world. On the other hand, the name *cup* is a generality that applies to all the different cups in the world. The purpose of this meditation is to remove the error of confusing the *concept* of a perceived object, that is, the generality or abstraction, with the concrete, particular perceived object itself. The general term *cup*, for example, should not be confused with the particular cup that you are able to see and to hold.

You need to recognize the concepts that preoccupy the dualistic mind and see how the mind attaches these concepts to everything it perceives. This is a matter of understanding. When you can understand that the concept of the cup is merely a

preoccupation of the conceptual, dualistic mind, the mind can become free from this preoccupation. Thus, in the beginning, the practice consists of contemplating the fact that the label applied to an object is not the thing itself, but rather a name attached to it by the dualistic mind.

(2) Contemplation of the existence of the object

The object itself still appears to exist substantially. Take the bubbles in water as an example. The word *bubble* is just a label, a name given to the froth on the water. But look at the bubble itself. The bubble does not stand freely on its own. The existence of one bubble is dependent on the existence of other bubbles, water, and so on. In the same way, no perceived object exists independently as a separate entity in its own right. Apart from depending on the convergence of multiple factors, of causes and conditions, it is in itself just a collection of parts. Upon continuous subdivision of its parts into ever smaller parts, it is found to be nothing but a collection of the most minute particles. A substantial object therefore never really exists. This is how you contemplate the existence of a perceived object. The overwhelming impression you may have of the universe is of incredible beauty. However, upon scrutiny there is nothing substantially real there. Exactly the same holds true for everything in life. Nothing has an enduring quality. Thus, everything can be compared to the illusory form of a mirage. Analytically, reduce everything--every appearance, shape, or part--to the smallest atoms, to its smallest constituent parts. And even these minute particles, upon further investigation, are found to be without intrinsic reality.

(3) Contemplation of how a perceived object is being defined

The third aspect of this vipaśyanā meditation is to look at how a perceived object is defined. Look analytically into the workings of the dualistic mind to see how it relates to illusory forms and how the concept of the perceived object is produced. We can use fire as an example again. The definition of fire is *that which is hot and burning*. If you only say that fire is hot without saying that it is also burning, the definition of fire is incomplete, because there are so many things that are hot but not burning. None of them is a fire. *Hot and burning* is a concept made up in the mind, the conventional idea of what a fire is. It is the mental image of a fire. It is a generality that does not refer to any particular fire you happen to think of. Thus, there is the definition of fire as *hot and burning*, as well as the concept of fire upon which the definition *hot and burning* is based. Both the definition and the concept are ideas, fabricated by the dualistic mind. They are based on a tangible object that you can touch and see. As long as you do not investigate this, the definition, the concept, and the tangible object are seen as one. In a general state of confusion, you are unable to differentiate among these three, which are

all created through the workings of the dualistic mind. Thus, based on mistaken notions, you assume the existence of the fire. Consequently, you subjectively react to the fire with attachment or aversion, and thus these processes involuntarily come into being as well.

In the process of this meditation, engage in analysis to fathom the reality of the fire. Separate what is merely a concept fabricated in the dualistic mind from the actual fire itself. Moreover, attachment and aversion to the fire are also found to be without intrinsic reality, and so the entire concept of *fire*, including our reaction to it, is revealed to be a fabrication of the mind. Upon analyzing the existence of the fire, you will make the remarkable discovery that the mind can never actually perceive an outer object directly. This is because the perceiving mind and the perceived object share no common ground; they have entirely different qualities. Therefore, there can be no direct point of contact between them. The mind cannot directly contact something outside of itself. You do not, in fact, see an outer world, but rather a sensory imprint of an outer world, which is a fabrication of the dualistic mind. In a way, the mind is like a mirror that reflects outer objects; it appears in the shape of those objects. Therefore, recollect that when you perceive an object, what you see is but a mental image--an impression of it--and not the outer object itself.

(4) Contemplation of the dimensional aspect of the object

This contemplation pertains to the analysis of the dimensional or directional aspect of the object of contemplation; look at the divisions or parts of the object with respect to the four cardinal directions, the four sub-directions, the zenith and the nadir. This analysis shows that any outer entity is not comprised of a single indivisible unit, and that the directions are interdependent. The back of something, for example, is only the back in relation to the front, and so on.

(5) Contemplation of the temporal aspect of the object

This is the systematic analysis of the existence of an object in relation to time. When you observe how it merely exists moment by moment, the object of analysis will be understood to fall short of having a single identity throughout time.

(6) Contemplation of the continuity between moments

This is the analysis of the continuity between one moment and the next. Consider how one moment flows smoothly into the next without either colliding or dislocating.

Observe how time passes without interruption as you contemplate the apparently existent object.

These six types of vipaśyanā meditation are very useful because they show us the interdependence of all phenomena, and likewise the unreality of the perceiving mind. They do not, however, belong to the liberating type of vipaśyanā practice. For that, you eventually have to settle in mind's true nature, discerning essencelessness directly.

The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana

The Treasury of Knowledge by Jamgon Kongtrul

Chapter Eight: The Progressive Classification of the Training in Superior Samadhi

Part One: The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana –

The General Basis of All Samadhis

Translated by Kiki Ekselius and Chrissy Zerbini

Vipashyana: 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.”

Methods of Vipāśyanā
The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation
A Commentary on the Eighth Chapter of the *Treasury*
***of Knowledge* by Jamgön Kongtrül by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche**
Translated by Peter Roberts, Excerpts from pp. 69-107

The basis of vipāśyanā meditation is a state of samādhi, a meditation state without thoughts and concepts. Its primary quality is that it cuts through all the misconceptions, inaccuracies, and misunderstandings we might have. It says in the text that it is necessary to have the viewpoint of the absence of self and without this viewpoint we cannot develop genuine vipāśyanā meditation. Therefore, we have to develop this understanding of the absence of self. The text states that if we don't have an understanding of what the meditation should be directed at, we are like a person without arms trying to hold onto the side of a cliff. So the basis of meditation is the definite understanding of the absence of self. We need to first recognize this, then contemplate it until we have a definite understanding of the absence of self.

Once we have developed this understanding, then the mind must be able to rest upon this understanding—relaxed and completely unagitated. If we have the view, but just think intellectually about it, we will not be able to properly develop our meditation because we won't be able to eliminate the obscurations. Hence the text says that even if we are learned and have studied and understood the view of the absence of self, but have not meditated on it, we are like a miser with great wealth who can't use any of it because of his stinginess. Not only is all of the wealth of a miser of no use to him, but it is also of no good to others because he doesn't give it to anyone. Similarly if we have the understanding and view of the absence of self, without meditation we won't derive any benefit from it because we are not able to develop wisdom and eliminate the kleśas. We also then cannot benefit others because we are not able to follow the path and gain enlightenment.

To summarize, to develop the view of the absence of self, one has to meditate. One needs to study first the teachings of selflessness, then analyze and contemplate them so that one can develop a definite understanding of this view. Then one rests one's mind on that, focused in that view but in a completely relaxed state. This resting is like the union of stability of mind and insight, the union of śamatha and vipāśyanā. One must balance the analytic meditation that develops clarity of mind with stability of mind. Too much analytic meditation will reduce one's stability.

Therefore, one must relax the mind in a nonanalytic state of meditation. Too much nonanalytic meditation will diminish the clarity of mind and one begins to sink into dullness. So one then does repeated analytic meditation to regain one's balance. Developing both clarity and stability will make the mind very powerful. Generally, the main practice of all the schools in Tibet was first to analyze phenomena repeatedly to gain an understanding of the view and having done this, to then rest the mind in nonanalytic meditation.

Emptiness is the essence of the dharma teachings because it is the way we eliminate all the mind poisons and faults. So selflessness and emptiness are very important. Emptiness can become an obstacle to our understanding of karma and our practice of good actions because we may think, "Everything is emptiness, nothing exists, so I don't have to practice dharma." So there is danger involved in this teaching on emptiness. Nāgārjuna said that we have to understand emptiness correctly, otherwise it will have a bad effect. In India siddhas would pick up poisonous snakes. Through the power of their mantras on the snake they would be able to perform miracles and increase prosperity by holding the snake. Without the power of meditation and the power of the mantra anyone holding a poisonous snake would be bitten. In the same way, if we have a good understanding of emptiness, it helps to develop our meditation, but if we have a mistaken idea of emptiness and think there is no need to do good actions, we are in danger of developing an obstacle to our dharma practice.

.....

As mentioned before, when one has developed śamatha meditation, many different kinds of thoughts and images from internal and external events appear in the mind. These are called unexamined images. This means that they are not actual external images, but are just the appearance of things, images that arise in the mind. In vipaśyanā meditation one takes these images and analyzes them to develop the conviction that they have no true existence of their own. In this method the mind is turned inward. For example, one doesn't look at a pillar and think, "Well, this is a pillar and the pillar has no reality of its own," and so on. Instead one examines whatever appears in the mind and sees that it has no existence of its own. What one needs in this meditation is discriminating knowledge so that all things are seen as distinct from each other. One needs discriminating knowledge in meditation because one needs to be able to focus on particular objects in meditation. Nothing becomes mixed or overlapping so things do not turn out to be vague, indistinct, or unclear.

.....

In vipaśyanā meditation one meditates on the mind poisons as being the inseparability of emptiness and awareness. One can also meditate on neutral thoughts. Neutral thoughts are thoughts that are neither good nor bad. There are

two kinds of neutral thoughts: creative neutral thoughts and thoughts of activity. Creative neutral thoughts are something like “I want to make dinner” and neutral thoughts of activity are something like “I must leave” or “I want to go to eat.” These thoughts are neutral but one can examine them to see who is thinking the thought “I want to eat” and where this thought is located. One discovers that the nature of neutral thoughts is that they have no reality and are the indivisibility of emptiness and awareness.

One therefore examines the internal understanding of the indivisibility of emptiness and awareness and the external understanding of the indivisibility of emptiness and appearance. The discriminating knowledge understands this indivisibility, and one realizes that the discriminating knowledge also has no reality, so that the mind rests in the percept, the perceiver, and the understanding of these two. For example, in the past one rubbed two sticks together to make a fire and when the fire was started, it burned up the two sticks as well. In the same way, the understanding of the indivisibility of emptiness and awareness, and of emptiness and appearance, also has the nature of emptiness. The practice instructions of Atīśa say the mind of the past has ceased to exist and the mind of the future has not come into existence. The present mind is difficult to examine because it has no color, shape, or location. It is just like space—it is unborn and it is not one or many things. Even though it is empty, the clarity of mind never ceases. There is this continuous clarity of mind and the mind never becomes blank or like a stone. One also can’t locate where this clarity comes from.

The meditational state of *vipaśyanā* is described as having no appearances, which means that there is the realization of the inseparability of emptiness and appearances do not have any reality of their own. In spite of this emptiness, there is the unceasing clarity of mind that has no reality of its own so the mind in meditation is free from any complications or elaborations. It is not “existent” and it is not “nonexistent” and it is not “neither existent nor nonexistent” and it is not “both existent and nonexistent.” It is free from these four complications and is neither created or something that ceases. Because if it existed, then it must be born and if it is born then it must also die (cease to exist). But there is nothing there to be born or die. Through this realization one can eliminate the defects of dullness and agitation in meditation. With these removed, there is no clinging or grasping, the mind doesn’t think “This is good and has to be kept” and “This is bad and has to be rejected.” This is what is meant by *vipaśyanā* meditation.

The Way to Cultivate Vipāśyanā in This Context
From *Moonbeams of Mahāmudrā*
By Dakpo Tashi Namgyal, Trs. by Elizabeth M. Callahan, p. 218-220

[page 220] This has two parts:

- a) Determining the Essence of Mind and Its Various Appearances
- b) Eliminating Misinterpretations About a Root or Basis

a) Determining the Essence of Mind and Its Various Appearances

This has three sections:

- i) The Reasons That Objectives Are Achieved by Observing Just the Mind
- ii) Determining the Essence of Mind, the Root
- iii) Determining the Essence of Thoughts and Appearances, [Mind's] Expressive Power

i) The Reasons That Objectives Are Achieved by Observing Just the Mind

In a general sense, the presentation that all phenomena are mind, the problems that ensue from not meditating on the nature of mind, and the benefits of doing so were already explained. In brief, since the troubles of samsāra and the virtues of nirvāna depend on the mind, or arise from mind, it is crucial that we focus on our mind in meditation, as the *Compendium of Dharma Sūtra* explains:

The bodhisattva Mativikrama supplicated, to which the Bhagavān responded: "Phenomena, what we refer to as 'things,' do not abide as objects and do not abide spatially. Furthermore, phenomena are simply dependent on your own mind. Thus it is that you should concentrate on your mind, take it to its limits, tame it, rest it in equipoise, and subjugate it."

It is taught that if we understand mind, we understand all phenomena, and that if mind is liberated, everything is liberated. The *Jewel Cloud Sūtra* says:

The mind comes before all phenomena. If you comprehend the mind, you know all phenomena.

The *Wisdom at the Moment of Death* states:

When the mind is realized, there is wisdom. Therefore, meditate with the awareness that buddhahood is not to be sought anywhere else.

The Great Brahman [Saraha] says:

When mind is fettered you are bound.
It can be liberated—have no doubts.

He also says:

KYE Ho. When the confused mind is realized to be mind,
it is self-liberated from all evil views.
Remaining in the sublime great bliss
under its power is the genuine siddhi.

Tilopa states:

If you sever the one root of a tree with spreading branches full of leaves,
all those many branches will wither.
The same thing happens to samsāra when you sever the root of mind.

Thus it is explained that cutting through the basis, or root, of mind cuts the continuum of samsāra.

Śāntideva teaches that when we do not understand mind, everything is a cause of suffering, and that recognizing the mind is the best protection and discipline. *Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* says:

Those who don't know the secret of mind,
what is of sublime importance in the dharma,
will wander futilely for a long time—
despite their desire to attain happiness and destroy suffering.

Evaluating whether Vipashyana has Arisen or Not
From *The Royal Seal of Mahamudra, Volume One*
A Guidebook for the Realization of Coemergence
Khamtrul Ngawang Kunga Tenzin, Trs. by Gerardo Abboud, pp. 261-264

Every time one practices vipashyana as described above, one investigates with discerning prajna. 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 [page 262] 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 unmistakable 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 [page 263] 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 unmistakable 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, [page 264] 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.

The Instruction on Stillness, Occurrence, And Awareness in Mahamudra

By Mipham Rinpoche

From *Perfect Clarity: A Tibetan Buddhist Anthology of Mahamudra and Dzogchen*, Translated by Erik Perna Kunsang, Pages 69-70

If you can simply practice mahamudra and experience stillness, occurrence, and awareness according to the vital instruction of that practice, you will ultimately perceive the truth of reality. This is because the nature of your mind has the sugata essence. Apply the related key instruction. The basis of all things is mind. After understanding the mind's secret, seek the vital point of your mind and you will become skilled in all things and realize the meaning of egolessness.

Since I am teaching according to the oral instructions of the realized ones, I will leave out various logical investigations. Stillness is when you look into your mind, direct yourself inward, and remain devoid of any kind of thinking. Occurrence is when various kinds of thoughts arise. Awareness is your mind being conscious of either of these. If you maintain this continuously, you will come to understand the following vital point: Various feelings such as joy and sadness arise from your own mind and dissolve back into your mind. Understanding this, you will come to recognize that all experiences are the personal experiences of your mind.

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

When realizing this secret point of mind, although there is no separate watcher or something watched, to experience the naturally luminous and innate mind-essence is known as recognizing awareness. This is what is pointed out in both mahamudra and dzogchen.

According to Saraha, if you can sustain it, "By looking again and again into the primordially pure nature of space, seeing will cease."

As stated in the Prajnaparamita, "Mind is devoid of mind; the nature of mind is luminous."

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

Cultivating Energy as the Foundation for Uncovering Insight

From *Wake Up to Your Life* by Ken McLeod, pp. 361-362

Base of Attention

Rest attention on the breath for a few minutes at the beginning of each session until attention becomes stable.

Ecstatic Practice: Raising the Level of Energy

Raising the level of energy has four steps: frame, field, expansion, and rest. It is called ecstatic practice because you experience a pleasurable shift in energy as you open to experience. It transforms the energy of experience into attention. Practice this ecstatic technique both in formal sessions and during the day.

Begin with sensory experience. Sit in front of a window or open door. The window frame or door frame is the frame. Let your gaze rest on the window until you can see the whole frame all at once. This step sets the frame.

Open to the whole field defined by the frame. The field is everything in your field of vision that falls within the frame, regardless of its distance from you.

Initially, your eyes will pick out an object in the field, and your attention will collapse down to that object. As soon as you notice that you are looking at only a part of the field, expand from that object to the whole field again. In ecstatic practice a collapse down to an object is analogous to being distracted by a thought in breath meditation.

You will soon be able to see everything in the frame simultaneously and will feel a shift. Rest in the shift. You relax, and a pleasurable feeling pervades your body and mind. Subject-object differentiation lessens.

Work first with a well-defined frame, one that is small enough that you can actually open to the whole field. Then extend your practice by using larger and larger frames until you can use the physical limits of your field of vision as the frame.

During the day, practice this energy transformation when you go for a walk, go shopping, or take a break in your workday. Shopping malls are good places to practice because they are full of visual objects, and the walls and ceilings provide natural frames. Sit in front of a waterfall until you can see every drop of water as it falls. Look at a tree, using the outline of the tree as a frame, until you can see every leaf and every branch at the same time. Look at a lawn, and see every blade of grass at once.

Once you have a sense of the shift in energy from working visually, work with the other senses. During the day, listen to a piece of music, hearing every instrument at the same time. Whenever your attention goes to one instrument or one strain, expand to include all the music and every instrument. Listen in the same way to people talking. Extend the practice to the sense of touch so that you are aware of all the clothing you are wearing, what you are sitting on, and any stiffness or tension in your muscles, all at the same time. Then include taste and smell as well.

Finally, include thoughts and feelings, until you can open to everything that arises in the moment, internally and externally, and experience it all simultaneously. This step extends the practice to emotional sensations and transforms the energy of all experience into attention.

Needless to say, you won't do all this in your first session. Over time, however, you become more adept at the practice and can open to more and more. In your formal meditation sessions, spend ten minutes doing this practice, resting in open experience and transforming energy into attention. Now you are ready to look.

Training in the Ultimate Awakening Mind
From *A Commentary on the Seven-Point Mind Training*
By Sé Chilbu Chökyi Gyaltsen in *Mind Training: The Great Collection*
Compiled by Shönu Gyalchok and Könchok Gyaltsen,
Trs. Thupten Jinpa, pp. 87-93

Training in the Two Minds of Awakening, the Main Practice

[Page 90] The second point, the training in the two minds of awakening, is the main practice. It has two parts: the ultimate [mind] and the conventional [mind]. Given the sequence in which meditative equipoise and post-meditation stages arise within a single person, these two [minds] are presented here in the following order. First, to train in the ultimate awakening mind, there are two parts: the actual meditation session and the subsequent period [practices].

Training in the Ultimate Awakening Mind

The Actual Meditation Session

The meditation session divides into three-preparatory practices, the main practice, and the concluding practice.

Preparation

As for preparation, undertake the seven-limb practice inside your chamber of divinities, make supplications to meditation deities and your teachers, and having seated yourself comfortably on your meditation cushion, count your respiration—exhalation and inhalation—twenty-one times. With these practices, you enable your body, speech, and mind to become a fit vessel for meditative concentration. Then generate, as a precursor, the conventional awakening mind accompanied by the beneficial qualities of meditative stabilization.

Main Practice

During the main session, given that all of these [mind training practices] [Page 91] adhere to the tradition of "simultaneous engagement," you should simultaneously meditate on the emptiness of all phenomena, including that of your own self and the self of others. Although this is true, during the preparatory stage you must relate to these phenomena in a gradual manner, enumerating each phenomenon by means of the pristine cognition of discriminative awareness. This, the master said, has the benefit of allowing the moisture of tranquil abiding to give birth to the shoots of realization.

1. Next, **the initial meditation on the absence of intrinsic existence of perceived objects** is presented in the following line:

Train to view all phenomena as dreamlike.

This entire world of the external environment and the beings within it, which are by nature mere appearances, are nothing but apparitions of your own deluded mind. Thus not even a single atom exists with a reality separate from the mind. When you examine thus, you will come to realize that even on the conventional level no referent of your awareness is established as possessing substantially true existence. Contemplate in this manner.

2. Next, **the meditation on the absence of the intrinsic existence of perceiving subjects** is presented in the following line:

Examine the nature of the unborn awareness.

Contemplate thus: Similar [to the preceding meditation], the very mind that negated the intrinsic existence of the perceived objects [1] in terms of its past is no more, [2] in terms of its future is yet to be, and [3] in terms of its present is composed of three parts. It is devoid of color, shape, and spatial location; it cannot be said to be located in any specific point of the body; when analyzed, it is empty of all identifiable characteristics. [The perceiving mind too] abides as primordially unborn. [45]

3. Next, **the meditation on the absence of the intrinsic existence of [all] phenomena** is presented by the following line:

The remedy, too, is freed in its own place.

Thus, the very mind that performs the act of applying the remedies through experiencing the emptiness of all phenomena, including your body and mind, is not established. [In general,] all objects of knowledge are subsumed [Page 92] within the class of either objects or minds. Furthermore, since the mind in its generality has already been examined, you should think, "Certainly nothing is established primordially as possessing substantial reality." Free the mind of conceptualization in this manner and release it in this state of nongrasping at intrinsic nature in terms of any of the three times.

4. Focus the mind with ease, lucidity, and vibrancy, not allowing it to fall under the influence of either dullness or excitation. This is presented by the following line:

Place your mind on the basis-of-all, the actual path.

You should identify the ordinary mind and place it in a state free of negation or affirmation. Since all seven types of consciousness are conceptual minds, relinquish them. The essential point is to avoid being tainted by a conceptualization of subject-

object duality. Subsequently, whenever conceptualization arises, by observing awareness with awareness, let it rest free within reality itself.

Since this constitutes actual meditation of clear light, keep your sessions intense but of short duration; within one session, you can have many subsessions. As for the length of the meditation session, it is said that "the best session should have a stable base and should end in a joyful state."

Concluding Practice

At the conclusion, after dissolving your visualizations, cultivate great compassion for those without such realization. Thinking, "I shall place all beings in the undistorted truth of such ultimate mode of being," dedicate all virtues to the benefit of others. Then slowly undo your crossed legs and perform the seven-limb rites inside the chamber of divinities.

The Subsequent Period [Practices]

How to train in the subsequent practices is presented by the following:

In the intervals be a conjurer of illusions.

The subsequent periods must be cultivated without losing the flavor of your meditative equipoise [on emptiness]. Therefore, even though perceptions of self and others, the external environment and the beings within it, and so on arise, it is your delusion that causes nonexisting things to appear [as existing]. Contemplating such things as indistinguishable from illusory horses and elephants, relinquish clinging to substantial reality. Although you perceive yourself in terms of your five aggregates, you are but an appearance of [Page 93] the mere aggregation of dependently originated things. Apart from this, no self possesses an eternal and unitary nature. [46] Contemplate and see [yourself] as an illusory person who engages in the activity of going and coming and interacts with objects. Do not remain blank, thinking nothing, but instead be sustained by mindfulness, and the instant something appears to the senses, think, "This too is illusionlike, it is dreamlike." In this way, you experience objects by relying upon such adages [as well].

As you view [everything] in this manner, during the subsequent periods your mind will not become remote from the dreamlike experience of the meditation session. In this way, during the intervals between sessions, turn all your virtuous activities into the path. Abide thus in the great union, not losing the experience of the meditation session throughout all activities. To make these points, the master cited the following stanza and explained the practices of the relevant points together with their beneficial qualities:

Thus ensure that all your practices remain
Untainted by the clinging of grasping at real entities
And spread them across the vast spacelike great emptiness;
You will [then] travel in the sphere of immortal great bliss.

How to Cultivate Vipāśyanā in Brief
From *Moonbeams of Mahāmudrā*
By Dakpo Tashi Namgyal, Trs. by Elizabeth M. Callahan, p. 85

[page 85] Having discovered the view for vipāśyanā, when you are sustaining it, do the following: Cultivate a stream of mindfulness that is not distracted from that very view. Be watchful with the alertness that dispels dullness and agitation. Arouse applied intention right within the view, free from dullness and agitation. Rely on equanimity such that your mind does not apply itself to anything other than that [view]. With all of those, employ the four types of attention (the attention that is tightly focused and the rest), being aware that they apply equally to śamatha and vipāśyanā, as the *Śrāvakabhūmi* explains.

That completes the explanation of the way to cultivate vipāśyanā.

Evaluating whether Vipashyana has Arisen or Not
From *The Royal Seal of Mahamudra, Volume One*
A Guidebook for the Realization of Coemergence
Khamtrul Ngawang Kunga Tenzin, Trs. by Gerardo Abboud, pp. 261-264

Every time one practices vipashyana as described above, one investigates with discerning prajna. 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 [page 262] 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 unmistakable 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 [page 263] 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 unmistakable 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, [page 264] 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.

Sutra Model of Meditation on Selflessness And Subsequent Illusory-Like Appearance

**From “Paradigm Change in Meditation on Selflessness in Tibetan Buddhism: The
Progression from Space-Like Meditative Equipoise to Deity Yoga”
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The Fifth Dalai Lama presents the process of cultivating the perfection of wisdom in two parts: “the practice of the selflessness of persons and the practice of the selflessness of [other] phenomena.” He frames both practices around four essential steps:

1. Ascertaining what is being negated
2. Ascertaining the entailment of emptiness
3. Ascertaining that the object designated and its basis of designation are not inherently one
4. Ascertaining that the object designated and its basis of designation are not inherently different.

First Essential: Ascertaining What Is Being Negated

The first step in this meditation is to gain a clear sense of the reified status of the “I” as inherently existent. Even though such a misconception is subliminally always present, a condition of its obvious manifestation is required. Therefore, the meditator remembers a situation of false accusation that elicited a strong response or a situation of happiness that did the same, trying to watch the type of “I” that manifested and how the mind assented to its ever so concrete appearance. Since watchfulness itself tends to cause this gross level of misconception to disappear, the first essential is said to be very difficult to achieve. One has to learn how to let the mind operate in its usual egoistic way and at the same time watch it, keeping watchfulness at a minimum such that the usual conception of a concrete and pointable “I” is generated. The Fifth Dalai Lama compares this dual functioning of the mind to simultaneously watching the path and your companion when walking. The demand for watchfulness is mitigated by the need to allow what is usually unanalyzed to operate of its own accord; thus, the activity of introspection must be done subtly.

When success is gained, the meditator has found a sense of an inherently existent “I” that, far from seeming to be non-existent, is totally convincing in its trueness. As the

present Dalai Lama said while lecturing to Tibetan scholars in Dharamsala, India in 1972, one has such strong belief in this reified “I” that upon identifying it, one has the feeling that if it is not true, nothing is. It would seem, therefore, that the first step in developing the view of the Middle Way is the stark and intimate recognition that for the meditator the opposite of that view is true.

In the face of this particular consciousness, mind and body are not differentiated and the “I” is not differentiated from mind and body. However, the “I” is seen to be self-established, self-instituting, under its own power, existing in its own right. It is not that one has the sense that mind, body, and “I” *cannot* be differentiated; rather, for *that* consciousness, mind, body, and “I” simply are not differentiated. For instance, for a consciousness merely apprehending a particular city say, Taipei, the ground, buildings, and people of that city are not differentiated. These are the bases of designation of Taipei, which seems inextricably blended with these and yet has its own thing.

Recognition of such an appearance with respect to the “I” and recognition of your assent to this appearance constitute the first essential step in realizing selflessness, emptiness. With this identification, analysis can work on that object; without it, analysis is undirected. From the viewpoint of the scholar-practitioners of the Ge-luk-ba tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, most attempts to penetrate emptiness fail at this initial step, tending either to assume that the phenomenon itself is being refuted or that a superficial, philosophically constructed quality of the phenomenon, rather than one innately misconceived, is being refuted.

Second Essential: Ascertaining The Entailment of Emptiness

Whereas in the first step the meditator allows an ordinary attitude to operate and attempts to watch it without interfering with it, in the second step the meditator makes a non-ordinary, intellectual decision that must be brought gradually to the level of feeling. Here, one considers the number of possible relationships between a phenomenon designated and its basis of designation.

Phenomena designated are things such as a table, a body, a person, and a house. Their respective bases of designation are four legs and a top, five limbs (two arms, two legs, and a head)⁷ and a trunk, mind and body, and a number of rooms arranged in a certain shape. The meditator considers whether within the framework of inherent existence these two—phenomenon designated and basis of designation—must be either inherently the same or inherently different, or whether there are other possibilities. If

there seem to be other possibilities, can these be collapsed into the original two—being inherently the same or being inherently different?

Nagarjuna lists five possibilities:

1. Inherently the same
2. Inherently different
3. The object designated (the *i*) inherently depends on the basis of designation (mind and body)
4. The basis of designation inherently depends on the object designated (the *i*)
5. The object designated (the *i*) possesses the basis of designation either as a different entity in the way a person owns a cow or as one entity in the way a tree possesses its core

Chandrakirti adds two more:

6. The object designated (the *I*) is the special shape of the basis of designation
7. The object designated (the *I*) is the collection of the bases of designation.

The last five can be collapsed into the first two as refinements of them: the third and fourth are forms of difference; the first aspect of the fifth is a form of difference; the second, a form of sameness of entity; the sixth and seventh [122] are variations of sameness. Hence, it is held that all possibilities of inherent existence can be collapsed into the original two.

Conventionally, however, it is said that the “*I*” and its basis of designation are different but not different entities and that they are the same entity but not the same. This is technically called being one entity and different isolates⁸—essentially meaning that conceptuality can isolate the two within their being one entity. Why not consider this an eighth possibility?

The answer is that if the relationship of being one entity and different conceptually isolatable factors is within the context of inherent existence, then this possibility is internally contradictory since within the context of inherent existence whatever is inherently the same is the same in all respects, making different isolates impossible. However, if the relationship of being one entity and different conceptually isolatable factors is within the context of conventional existence, then there is no need to include it here in this list of possibilities within inherent existence.

The list, therefore, does not include all possibilities for the mere existence of a phenomenon designated—such as an *I*—and its bases of designation—such as mind and body—because the examination here is concerned only with whether the “*I*” exists in the *concrete* manner it was seen to have during the first essential. If it does exist so

concretely, one should be able to point concretely to it when examining it with respect to its basis of designation. Since this decision—that inherent existence involves the necessity of the phenomenon designated being either one or different from the basis of designation—is the anvil on which the sense of an inherently existent “I” will be pounded by the hammer of the subsequent reasoning, the second essential is not an airy decision to be taken lightly, despite its intellectual character. It must be brought to the level of feeling, this being done through considering that anything existent is either one or different. A chair is one; a chair and a table are different; a chair and its parts are different; tables are different, and so forth. The yogi must set standards that limit the possibilities so that the subsequent analysis can work, eventually causing disbelief in such an inherently existent I.

Upon coming to this decision of logical limitations, one begins to question a little the existence of the self-instituting “I” identified in the first essential. The late Geshe Rabten, a Ge-luk-ba scholar who served as abbot of a monastery in Switzerland,⁹ compared the effect of this step to having doubts about an old friend for the first time. The emotionally harrowing experience of challenging one’s own long believed status has begun.

Third Essential: Ascertaining that the “I” and the Aggregates Are Not One

The next step is to use reasoning to determine whether the “I” and the mental and physical aggregates could be inherently the same or inherently [123] different. In this context, reasoning is a matter not of cold deliberation or superficial summation but of using various approaches to find one that can shake yourself to your being. The seeming simple-mindedness and rigidity of the reasonings suggested must be transcended through gaining intimate experience with them.

The Fifth Dalai Lama lays out a *series* of approaches through reasoning, rather than just one, on the principle that certain reasonings would not work for some people. The first is a challenge from common experience: If “I” were one with body, how could “I” speak of “my body”? If “I” were inherently one with mind, how could “I” speak of “my mind”? Should we also speak of body’s body? Or my I?

If the “I” inherently exists, then oneness with its basis of designation would be one of two exhaustive possibilities. The reference is not to ordinary misconception but to a *consequence* of inherent existence, such concreteness requiring a pointable identification under analysis.

The rules for inherent existence, therefore, are not the rules for mere existence. Within the context of inherent existence, sameness of entity requires utter oneness in all respects. Thus, the issue that is central to evaluating the soundness of this reasoning is not whether beings ordinarily conceive of such oneness (since it is not claimed that we do), but whether the logical rules that have been formulated for concrete, pointable existence are appropriate.

More Reasonings

The mere presence of the reasoning is clearly not expected to be convincing, and thus the Fifth Dalai Lama continues with permutations of the same reasoning. For these further reasonings to work, the meditator must have gained belief in rebirth. They are: If the “I” and the body are one, after death when the body is burned, so the “I” also would absurdly be burned. Or, just as the “I” transmigrates to the next life, so the body also would absurdly have to transmigrate. Or, just as the body does not transmigrate, so the “I” also would absurdly not transmigrate.

From meditating on such reasonings, one might come to think that probably the “I” is not the same as the body but is perhaps one with the mind; then, one is instructed to consider the following fallacies: Since it is obvious that the suffering of cold arises when the “I” is without clothes and it is obvious that the sufferings of hunger and thirst arise when the “I” lacks food and drink, these would—if the “I” were merely mental—be mental in origin, in which case one could not posit a reason why the same suffering would not be experienced in a life in a Formless Realm. Also, since the mind would be one with the “I,” it would absurdly still have to make use of gross forms such as food and clothing which do not exist in the Formless Realm.

[124] These absurd permutations of oneness will have prepared the mind for reaching a conclusion upon reflecting on a few more reasonings. First, the selves would have to be as many as mind and body, that is to say, two; or, put another way, the selves would have to be as many as the five aggregates (forms, feelings, discriminations, compositional factors, and consciousnesses), five. This reasoning may seem extraordinarily simple-minded, but the requirements of such pointable, analytically findable existence—not the requirements of mere existence—are the anvil. The meditator is attempting through this analysis, not to describe how he or she ordinarily conceives such an inherently existent “I,” but to subject it to the hammering of reasoning based on *consequences* of such inherent existence. Because the ordinary sense of concrete selfhood is the object on which the analysis is working, the experience is fraught with emotion.

The second additional reasoning revolves around the entailment that the “I” would have inherently existent production and disintegration, in which case it would be discontinuous. The third additional reasoning also depends upon a belief in rebirth; for me, it reflects the type of reasoning, in reverse, that many use against rebirth. Its concern is not explicitly with the “I” and the mental and physical aggregates that are its bases of designation but the relationship between the “I” of this life and the “I” of the last life. It is: If they were one, then the sufferings of the former life would absurdly have to be present in this life.

The last additional reasoning expands on the fault of discontinuity between lives, suggested earlier in the second reasoning but not pursued. If they were different, which by the rules of inherent existence would make them totally, unrelatly different, (1) remembrance of former lives would become impossible; (2) moral retribution would be impossible; and (3) undeserved suffering would be experienced. Such difference would make a mere-I, the agent that travels from lifetime to lifetime, engaging in actions and experiencing their effects, impossible. Oneness of the “I” and its bases of designation—the mental and physical aggregates—is impossible.

Fourth Essential:

Ascertaining that the “I” and the Aggregates Are Not Inherently Different

The meditator has been so disturbed by the analysis of oneness that he or she is ready to assume difference. However, the rules of inherent existence call for the different to be unrelatly different, again the assumption being not that persons ordinarily consider the “I” and its bases of designation to be unrelatly different but that within the context of inherent existence, that is, of such pointable, solid existence, difference necessitates unrelatness. If something seems to be found separate from [125] mind and body, would this be the “I” that goes to the store? Would this be the “I” that desires? Hates?

Still, the question is not easy to settle, and it does not appear that easy answers are wanted. Rather, the Fifth Dalai Lama emphasizes that deeply felt conviction is needed:

It is not sufficient that the mode of non-finding be just a repetition of the impoverished phrase, “Not found.” For example, when an ox is lost, one does not take as true the mere phrase, “It is not in such and such an area.” Rather, it is through searching for it in the highland, midland, and lowland of the area that one firmly decides that it cannot be found. Here also, through meditating until a decision is reached, you gain conviction (see note 3).

Realization of Selflessness

With such conviction, the decision reached is that the “I” cannot be found under analysis. The decision is not superficially intellectual but a startling discovery of a vacuity when such an “I” is sought. This vacuity shows, not that the “I” does not exist, but that it does not inherently exist as it was identified as seeming to in the first essential. This unfindability is emptiness itself, and realization of it is realization of emptiness, selflessness.

Incontrovertible inferential understanding, though not of the level of direct perception or even of special insight,¹⁰ has great impact. For a beginner it generates a sense of deprivation, but for an experienced meditator it generates a sense of discovery, or recovery, of what was lost. The Fifth Dalai Lama conveys this with examples:

If you have no predispositions for emptiness from a former life, it seems that a thing that was in the hand has suddenly been lost. If you have predispositions, it seems that a lost jewel that had been in the hand has suddenly been found (see note 3).

The perception of this vacuousness, the absence of inherent existence, carries emotional force—first of loss, since our emotions are built on a false sense of concreteness, and then of discovery of a lost treasure that makes everything possible. From a similar point of view, the emptiness of the mind is called the Buddha nature, or Buddha lineage, since it is what allows for development of the marvelous qualities of Buddhahood. However, unless the meditator has predispositions from practice in a former life, the first experience of emptiness is one of loss; later, its fecundity and dynamism become apparent.

Space-Like Meditative Equipose

The realization of the absence of inherent existence needs to be increased through a process of alternating analytical meditation and stabilizing meditation. If the meditator has developed the power of concentration of the level of calm abiding, the analysis of the status of the “I” can be done within the context of this highly stable mind. However, too much analysis will induce excitement, reducing stabilization, and too much stabilization will induce an inability to analyze. Thus, analytical and stabilizing meditation must be alternated until the two are in such harmony that analysis itself induces even greater stabilization which, in turn, enhances analysis.

At the point when meditators have not yet reached the level of special insight but are

close to it, they attain a similitude of special insight and a space-like meditative equipoise. This meditative equipoise is called “space-like” because just as uncompounded space¹¹ is a mere absence—a mere negative—of obstructive contact, so emptiness is a mere absence, a mere negative, of inherent existence. Such steady reflection on emptiness, therefore, is called space-like meditative equipoise. At the point of harmony and mutual support between analysis and stabilization, special insight, which necessarily also involves a union of calm abiding and special insight, is achieved. Brought to the level of direct perception, it gradually serves as the antidote to both the artificially acquired and innate afflictive emotions.

The Fourth Pa-chen Lama, Lo-sang-bel-den-den-bay-nyi-ma,¹² describes the mind of space-like meditative equipoise from two points of view—in terms of appearance and in terms of ascertainment. To that consciousness only an immaculate vacuity—an absence of inherent existence—*appears*, and that consciousness *ascertains*, understands, comprehends, and realizes the absence of inherent existence of the I. Although reasoning has led to this state, the mind is not now reasoning; it is experiencing the fruit of reasoning in a state of continuous, one-pointed ascertainment of emptiness; the only thing appearing is an utter vacuity—an absence—of inherent existence. In space-like meditative equipoise only an immaculate vacuity that is a negative of inherent existence appears—nothing else. What is ascertained, understood, is also an absence of inherent existence. The same is also true for direct realization of emptiness, though any sense of duality, knower and known, has vanished.

Appearances Subsequent to Meditative Equipoise

When the state of one-pointed concentration on selflessness is left, that is, when the meditator takes to mind any object other than emptiness, the object is viewed as *like* an illusion, appearing one way but existing another. [127] Just as a magician’s illusory elephant appears to be an elephant but in fact is not, so forms, sounds, and so forth appear to exist inherently but are understood as not existing inherently. The meaning of being like an illusion is not that the “I” or forms, sounds, and so forth appear to exist but actually do not; rather, their mode of existence appears to be concrete but is understood not to be so. The same is true for the I. Mere realization that a magician’s illusions or dream objects are not real does not constitute realizing phenomena to be like a magician’s illusions, nor does realization of phenomena as like illusions mean that one merely desists from identifying appearances. The essential point is that the meditator first must realize that these objects do not inherently exist; there is no other method for inducing realization that phenomena are like illusions. Realization of the emptiness of inherent existence is said, in this system, to be the *only* method for gaining the subsequent realization that phenomena are like illusions.

The Fourth Pan-chen Lama speaks similarly but also addresses the issue of the substance of those appearances that are left over. He calls for viewing them as the sport¹³ of emptiness.¹⁴ Since the emptiness of inherent existence makes appearance possible, phenomena are, in a sense, the sport of emptiness. It even may be said that their basic substance is emptiness. However, emptiness is a non-affirming negative, a mere absence or mere elimination of inherent existence, which does not imply anything in place of inherent existence even though it is compatible with dependently arisen phenomena. Hence, emptiness is not a positive substance giving rise to phenomena, even if it is their ground. Emptiness is what makes cause and effect possible; the emptiness of the mind is called the Buddha nature, the causal lineage of Buddhahood, even though it is not itself an actual cause. As a mere negative of inherent existence, it makes enlightenment possible.

Summation of the Sutra Model of Meditation on Selflessness and Appearance

Including the steps of setting the basic motivation for meditation on the selflessness of the person as well as the subsequent state of realizing appearances to be like illusions, we can distinguish seven steps in the Sutra process of meditating on the selflessness of the person:

1. Adjustment of motivation: taking refuge and developing an altruistic intention to become enlightened
2. Ascertaining what is being negated—inherent existence
3. Ascertaining entailment of emptiness
4. Ascertaining that the “i” and the aggregates are not inherently the same [128]
5. Ascertaining that the “i” and the aggregates are not inherently different
6. Realizing the absence of inherent existence of the “i” in space-like meditative equipoise
7. Emerging from space-like meditative equipoise and viewing all phenomena as like a magician’s illusions.

All activities are to be done within realization that phenomena are like illusions, understanding that space-like meditative equipoise negates only a false sense of *inherent* existence and not the very existence of objects.

The Sutra model of meditation on selflessness and subsequent relation with appearance is built around an analytical search for the seemingly concrete existence of an object, such as oneself, the existence of which has hitherto been uncontested. Though the

mode of search is analytical, the examination of the object is intensely emotional since emotions such as desire and hatred are built on a perceived status of objects that is now being challenged. Thus, the analysis is neither cold nor superficially intellectual but an expression of the intellect in the midst of the clatter of emotional rearrangement and unreasoned re-assertion of the concrete findability of the object. The analysis is by no means a rote run-through of a prescribed ritual, nor is it merely aimed at refuting other philosophical systems; rather, it is aimed at the heart of one's emotional and intellectual life, at the ideational underpinnings of our self-conceptions, our relations with others, our conceptions of subject and object, and our ideologies.

At the end of successful analysis, what is experienced is merely a non-finding—a void, a vacuity—of the object in which one originally so intensely believed. That very object, in all of its seeming concreteness, has literally disappeared from mind; the very type of mind that believed in it has now sought for it according to rules of analysis that have been seen to be not just appropriate but binding. It has not found that object, even though so many emotions have been built in dependence on its seemingly verifiable status. The experience of not finding this previously reliable object is earth-shattering.

The meditator does not immediately rush back to perception of appearances but remains with this vacuity, a mere absence of such an inherently existent object, appreciating its implications, letting the ramifications of the analytical unfindability of the object affect his/her mind, letting it undermine the emotional frameworks of countless lives in a round of suffering induced by ignorance of this fact. After such immersion, the meditator again returns to the world of appearance, at which point objects dawn as like a magician's illusions, seeming to exist in their own right but being empty of such concrete existence. The world—oneself, others, and objects such as chairs and tables—is seen in a new way, falsely seeming to have a status that it actually does not have, but now unmasked.

But what do objects appear from? What is their substance? What is its relation with one's own mind? These are issues that the tantric model of meditation goes on to face, not so much through conceptual presentation but through a mode of experiencing objects, after realizing emptiness, that bridges the gap between emptiness and appearance in an even more vivid way. Let us turn to the Mantra model of meditating on emptiness and subsequent relation with appearance.

NOTES

1. Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).
2. See “Paradigm Change in Theology and Science,” in *Theology for the Third Millennium: An Ecumenical View* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), pp. 123–169.
3. Nga-wang-lo-sang-gya-tso (*ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho*, 1617–1682), Dalai Lama V, *Instruction on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment, Sacred Word of Mañjushri* (*byang chub lam gyi rim pa'i khrid yig 'jam pa'i dbyangs kyi zhal lung*) (Thimphu: kun-bzang-stobs-rgyal, 1976), pp. 182.5–210.6. For an English translation, see Jeffrey Hopkins, “Practice of Emptiness” (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1974). Dzong-ka-ba's five main texts on the Sutra realization of emptiness form the background of the discussion even though not cited. In order of composition these are his *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path* (*lam rim chen mo*); *The Essence of the Good Explanations* (*legs bshad snying po*); *Explanation of (Nagarjuna's) "Treatise on the Middle": Ocean of Reasoning* (*dbu ma rtsa ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa shes rab ces bya ba'i rnam bshad rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*), *Medium Length Exposition of the Stages of the Path* (*lam rim 'bring*); and *Extensive Explanation of (Chandrakirti's) "Supplement to (Nagarjuna's) 'Treatise on the Middle'": Illumination of the Thought* (*dbu ma la 'jug pa'i rgya cher bshad pa dgongs pa rab gsal*).
4. *bya spyod kyi spyi'i cho ga'i rnam par bzhag pa rigs gsum la sbyor tshul rje'l phyag bzhes bzhin 'dul ba 'dzin pas bkod pa*, *Collected Works of Rje Tson-kha-pa Blo-bzan-grags-pa*, vol. 17 (*na*), pp. 437–449.6.
5. *rgyud sde spyi'i rnam par gzhaq pa rgyas par brjod pa*; Ferdinand D. Lessing and Alex Wayman, *Mkhas Grub Rje's Fundamentals of the Buddhist Tantras* (The Hague: Mouton, 1968), pp. 158–163; see the same range of pages for their translation.
6. I have translated these respectively in H.H. the Dalai Lama, Tsong-ka-pa, and Jeffrey Hopkins, *Tantra in Tibet* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1977; reprint Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion, 1987), and in H.H. the Dalai Lama, Tsong-ka-pa, and Jeffrey Hopkins, *The Yoga of Tibet* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1981; reprinted as *Deity Yoga* with minor changes, Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1987).
7. In a culture, such as that of pre-modern Tibet, where people think in their chests, the head is a limb and not an integral part of the trunk as it is often depicted elsewhere. Thus, here in this exposition there are *five* limbs and a trunk.
8. *ngo bo gcig la ldog pa tha dad*.
9. For an account of his life and a sample of his teachings, see *The Life and Teachings of Geshe Rabten*, trans. and ed. by Alan Wallace (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1982).
10. *lhag mthong, vipasyana*.
11. *'dus ma byas kyi nam mkha'*, *asamskrtakasa*.
12. *blo bzang dpal ldan bstan pa'i nyi ma*, 1781–1852/4. See Geshe Lhundup Sopa and Jeffrey Hopkins, *Cutting Through Appearances: The Practice and Theory of Tibetan Buddhism* (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1990), p. 98.
13. *rnam rol, lila*.
14. Sopa and Jeffrey Hopkins, *Cutting Through Appearances*, p. 98.

Vipaśyanā Meditation on the Mind Itself
Different Modes of Inquiry in Vipaśyanā
From *Boundless Wisdom: A Mahāmudrā Practice Manual*
By Shamar Rinpoche, pp. 74-91

These six types of vipaśyanā meditation are very useful because they show us the interdependence of all phenomena, and likewise the unreality of the perceiving mind. They do not, however, belong to the liberating type of vipaśyanā practice. For that, you eventually have to settle in mind's true nature, discerning essencelessness directly.

Having first scrutinized outer objects and thus understood that they are not real, you then analyze the mind. This leads to the understanding that the dualistic mind that experiences objects of perception is equally unreal, because the mind and its objects are interdependent. The world does not exist outside of, or apart from, your mind. In our confusion, we usually do not register the interdependence of mind and its objects, the perceiver and the perceived. But in fact, in the absence of an object, there can be no mind experiencing it. If one of them is not real, the other is not real either. From this perspective, it becomes obvious that the perceiving mind is empty, precisely the same way that the perceived object is empty.

Once you have understood this, the next step is to look at the nature of mind. This means examining mind itself, instead of mind in relation to its objects. In what way can you speak about the nature of mind? Try to look methodically for various aspects of mind, such as shape, size, and color. Ask yourself if it is something tangible. As you investigate in this way, you will soon realize that the mind is without any such attributes, and is not something to which you can apply labels. It is beyond all conceptualization and definition. It cannot be identified or located. The mind is not a collection of parts and does not have physical dimensions. And it cannot be said that the mind is with or without continuity; it has no temporal dimension.

The mind is beyond all names, images, words, and description. Analytical vipaśyanā will lead you to this conclusion about mind. At the same time you conclude that the mind is not real, is not something tangible, and is without attributes, you must also know that the mind is not simply nothing. *Nothingness* is based on the concept of something. Without the concept of *something*, the concept of *nothing* cannot be established. *Nothing* means the absence of something. The nature of mind is beyond all affirmations and negations, beyond existence and non-existence, being and non-being, something and nothing. It transcends all conceptualization. As inner experience, mind's nature is untouched by the passing phenomena transmitted to it through the senses. It is pure awareness that knows its own true nature.

To know this is actual vipaśyanā, deep insight. Let your mind rest in this experience. If-- while the mind is in stable śamatha--you can rest the mind in this understanding, mind's true nature will become increasingly clearer to you. In the Space-like Samādhi Sutra, the Buddha says:

*Through the nectar of the noble teacher,
you understand your mind to be like space.
To not be distracted from this,
is known as (vipaśyanā)-samādhi.*

Nectar refers to the pointing-out instructions from a spiritual guide. Through these instructions, the meditator develops the precise understanding that mind's nature resembles space. This means that it is totally free from all obstructions, from size, concepts, emotions, words, time, directions, etc. The immeasurable expanse of outer space is used as a metaphor for the unfathomable nature of the mind. If you can rest the mind in this experience without distraction, the mind transcends conceptual thinking. This kind of samādhi is actual vipaśyanā, deep insight meditation. If you can rest in that, the mind liberates itself from samsaric delusions. This is the ultimate goal of vipaśyanā.

During meditation, the mind is experienced to be like space. Actually, the meaning of the direct experience of the true nature of mind, which is compared to space, cannot be conveyed through explanations. It is compared to space just to give us a general idea of what it is like.

Post-Meditation

In meditation, the experienced meditator cultivates the spacelike samādhi. In post-meditation, he or she experiences the samādhi that knows everything to be like an illusion. This means that after rising from meditation, all phenomena are perceived to be illusory, similar to a mirage. The direct experience of the mind is thus reflected in the post-meditation period in the way we perceive the outer world. To perceive it like a mirage is very different from the way we perceive it now. Now, we see the outer world as solidly existing due to our strong and deluded attachments. When the attachments are subdued, phenomena will appear dream-like and insubstantial. All problems in life will lose their hold over us. Therefore, through meditation, innate attachments are reduced. We come to realize that there is no such thing as a truly existing mind. At such a level, the sense of relief is unimaginable.

Chapter Eight: The Questions of Maitreya
From *Wisdom of Buddha: The Samdhinirmocana Sutra*
Translated by John Powers, pp. 147-217

1. [149] Then the Bodhisattva Maitreya asked the Bhagavan, “Abiding in what and depending upon what do Bodhisattvas in the Great Vehicle cultivate shamatha and vipasyana?”

The Bhagavan replied “Maitreya, abiding in and depending upon an unwavering resolution to expound doctrinal teachings and to become unsurpassably, perfectly enlightened, [Bodhisattvas cultivate shamatha and vipasyana].

2. The Bhagavan has taught that four things are objects of observation of shamatha and vipasyana: conceptual images, non-conceptual images, the limits of phenomena, and accomplishment of the purpose.”

- a. “Bhagavan, how many of these are objects of observation of shamatha?”

The Bhagavan replied "One, non-conceptual images."

- b. "How many are objects of observation of vipasyana?"

The Bhagavan replied "Only one, conceptual images."

- c. "How many are objects of observation of both?"

The Bhagavan replied "There are two: the limits of phenomena and accomplishment of the purpose.

3. “Bhagavan, abiding in and depending upon these four, objects of observation of shamatha and vipasyana, how do Bodhisattvas seek shamatha and become skilled in vipasyana?”

[151] “Maitreya, I have set forth these [twelve forms of] doctrinal, teachings to Bodhisattvas Sutras, discourses in prose and, verse, prophetic discourses, verses, purposeful statements, specific teachings, narratives, historical discourses, stories of, [the Buddha’s] former lives, extensive discourses, discourses, on miraculous phenomena, and discourses that delineate [topics of specific knowledge]. Bodhisattvas hear well, apprehend, well, repeat well, analyze well with their minds, and, through insight, fully realize these [teachings].”

“Then, remaining in seclusion, having genuinely settled [their minds] inwardly, they mentally attend to those doctrines just as they have contemplated them. With continuous inner attention, they mentally attend to that mind which is mentally contemplated by any mind. The physical and mental pliancy that arises through engaging [in this practice] in this way and continuing in this [practice] is shamatha. This is how Bodhisattvas seek shamatha.”

“Having obtained physical and mental pliancy, they abide, in only that. Having abandoned [certain] aspects of the mind, they analyze and inwardly consider those very doctrines in the way they have been contemplated as images that are the focus of samadhi. The differentiation, thorough differentiation, thorough investigation, thorough analysis, forbearance, interest, discrimination, view, and investigation of the objects, that are known with respect to images that are the focus of [153] such samadhi is vipashyana. This is how Bodhisattvas become, skilled in vipashyana.”

4. "Bhagavan, prior to attaining physical and mental pliancy, when a Bodhisattva inwardly attends to the mind observing the mind, what is this mental activity called?"

“Maitreya, this is not shamatha. Know that it resembles intensified interest concordant with shamatha.”

5. "Bhagavan, prior to attaining physical and mental pliancy, when a Bodhisattva inwardly attends to those doctrines just as, they have been contemplated as images that are the focus of, samadhi, what is this mental activity called?"

“Maitreya, this is not vipashyana. Know that it resembles intensified interest concordant with vipashyana.”

6. "Bhagavan, are the path of shamatha and the path of vipashyana different or not different?"

The Bhagavan replied: “Maitreya, although they are not different, they are also not the same. Why are they not different? Because [shamatha] observes the mind, which is also the object of observation of vipashyana. Why are they not the same? Because [vipashyana] observes a conceptual image.”

7. "Bhagavan, what is the image, the focus of samadhi which perceives [an image]? Is it different from the mind or is it, not different?"

[154] "Maitreya, it is not different. Why is it not different? Because that image is simply cognition-only. Maitreya, I have, explained that consciousness is fully distinguished by [the fact that its] object of observation is cognition-only."

8. "Bhagavan, if that image, the focus of samadhi, is not different from the physical mind. How does the mind itself investigate the mind itself?"

The Bhagavan replied: "Maitreya, although no phenomenon apprehends any other phenomenon, nevertheless, the mind that is generated in that way appears in that way. Maitreya, for instance, based on form, form itself is seen in a perfectly clear round mirror, but one thinks, I see an image. The form and the appearance of the image appear as different factualities. Likewise, the mind that is generated in that way and the focus of samadhi known as the image also appear to be separate factualities."

9. "Bhagavan, are the appearances of the forms of sentient, being and so forth, which abide in the nature of images of, the mind, not different from the mind?"

The Bhagavan replied: "Maitreya, they are not different. However, because childish beings with distorted understanding do not recognize these images as cognition-only, just as, they are in reality, they misconstrue them."

10. "Bhagavan, at what point do those Bodhisattvas solely cultivate [the practice] of vipasyana?"

[157] The Bhagavan replied: "When they attend to mental signs, with continuous mental attention."

11. "At what point do they solely cultivate shamatha?"

The Bhagavan replied: "When they attend to the uninterrupted, mind with continuous mental attention."

12. "At what point, having combined the two, shamatha and vipasyana, do they unite them?"

The Bhagavan replied: "When they mentally attend to the one-pointed mind."

13. "Bhagavan, what are mental signs?"

"Maitreya, they are the conceptual images that are the, focus of samadhi, the

objects of observation of vipasyana.”

14. "What is an uninterrupted mind?"

“Maitreya, it is a mind that observes the image, the object of observation of shamatha.”

15. "What is the one-pointed mind?"

"It is the realization that: ‘This image which is the focus of samadhi is cognition-only.’ Having realized that, it is mental, attention to suchness.”

16. "Bhagavan, how many kinds of vipasyana are there?"

"Maitreya, there are three kinds: that arisen from signs, that arisen from examination, and that arisen from individual investigation.”

17. What is vipashyana arisen from signs?

“It is vipasyana that mentally attends to just a conceptual image, the [159] focus of samadhi.

18. What is that arisen from examination?

“It is vipasyana that mentally attends to its object in order to understand well through wisdom just those phenomena that were not well understood with respect to this or that image.”

19. What is that arisen from individual investigation?

“It is Vipasyana that mentally attends [to its object] in order to contact great happiness through liberation regarding phenomena that have been understood well through wisdom with respect to this or that image.”

20. "How many kinds of shamatha are there?"

The Bhagavan replied, “Since shamatha engages an uninterrupted mind, it is also said to be of three kinds.

Alternately, Maitreya, shamatha is of eight kinds: the first concentration, the second, third, and fourth concentrations, the sphere of limitless space, the sphere of limitless

consciousness, the sphere of nothingness, and the sphere without coarse discriminations but not without subtle discriminations.

Alternately, there are four kinds: immeasurable love, immeasurable compassion, immeasurable joy, and immeasurable equanimity.”

21. "Bhagavan, if shamatha and vipasyana dwell on doctrines, and also do not dwell on doctrines, what is dwelling on doctrines? What is not dwelling on doctrines?"

"Maitreya, shamatha and vipasyana that relate to meaning—through engagement with the signs of the doctrine in accord, with how they have been apprehended and contemplated—dwell on doctrines. [161] Shamatha and vipasyana that relate to meaning by relying on instructions and teachings from others, without attending to doctrines in accord with how they have been apprehended and contemplated— [focusing] on discolored or putrefying corpses or on what is concordant with that, or on the impermanence of compounded phenomena, or on suffering, or on the selflessness of all phenomena, or on the peace of nirvana, or on what is concordant with that—are shamatha and vipasyana that do not dwell on doctrines.

Maitreya, I designate Bodhisattvas who follow the teaching, depending upon shamatha and vipasyana that dwell on doctrines, as having sharp faculties. I designate those who follow with faith, depending upon shamatha and vipasyana that do not dwell on doctrines, as having dull faculties.”

22. "Bhagavan, if shamatha and vipasyana observe unintegrated doctrines and also observe integrated doctrines, what is observation of unintegrated doctrines? What is observation of integrated doctrines?"

“Maitreya, if a Bodhisattva cultivates shamatha and vipasyana that observe particular doctrines of the Sutras and so forth from among the doctrines. Just as [those particular doctrines] have been apprehended and contemplated, this is the shamatha and vipasyana that observe unintegrated doctrines.

But if [a Bodhisattva] gathers these doctrines from the Sutras and so forth together, groups them comprehensively, draws them into an aggregated unit, and takes to mind the thought—[163] ‘All these doctrines flow into suchness, descend into suchness, have descended into suchness; now into enlightenment, descend into enlightenment, have descended into enlightenment; flow into nirvana, descend into nirvana, have descended into nirvana; flow into transformation of the basis, descend into transformation of the basis, have descended into transformation of the basis. All these doctrines have been expressed through the manifest expression of

innumerable and measureless virtuous doctrines’—this is shamatha and vipashyana that observe integrated doctrines.”

23. “Bhagavan, if shamatha and vipasyana observe somewhat integrated doctrines, and also observe highly integrated doctrines, and so observe immeasurably integrated doctrines. What is observation of somewhat integrated doctrines? What is observation of highly integrated doctrines? What is observation of immeasurably integrated doctrines?”

“Maitreya, know that shamatha and vipasyana mentally attending to [doctrines]—from the sutra section up to the extensive discourses, the discourses on miraculous phenomena, and the discourses that delineate—as one unit are the observation of somewhat integrated doctrines.

Know that shamatha and vipasyana mentally attending to the Sutras and so forth, as many as have been collectively apprehended and contemplated, are the observation of highly integrated doctrines.

Understand that shamatha and vipasyana mentally attending comprehensively to all the immeasurable Dharma teachings [165] of the Tathagata, to the immeasurable words and letters of the doctrine, and to immeasurable ever-increasing wisdom and inspiration are the observation of immeasurably integrated doctrines.

24. “Bhagavan, how is it that Bodhisattvas attain shamatha and vipasyana that observe integrated doctrines?”

“Maitreya, know that they attain them through five causes. In each moment of mental attention they destroy all of the bases of errant tendencies. Having abandoned various motivational factors, they attain joy in the joyousness of the Dharma. They correctly understand that the appearances of the Dharma are measureless in the ten directions and that their aspects are unlimited. They are endowed with accomplishment of the purpose and the non-imaginary signs that are partially concordant with purification arise in them. In order to attain, perfect, and accomplish the Dharmakaya, they take hold of the causes of increasing goodness, the greatest auspiciousness.”

25. “Bhagavan, on what [stage] are shamatha and vipasyana that observe integrated doctrines realized, and on what [stage] are they understood to be attained?”

The Bhagavan replied “Maitreya, know that having been realized on the first stage, the Very Joyous, they are attained on the third stage, the Luminous. Nevertheless,

Maitreya, even beginning Bodhisattvas should not neglect training in them and mentally attending to them.”

26. [167] "Bhagavan, at what point are shamatha and vipasyana conceptual and analytical samadhi? At what point do they become non-conceptual and only analytical? At what point do they become non-conceptual and non-analytical?"

“Maitreya, analytical shamatha and vipasyana that experience the clear and coarse signs of doctrines that are analyzed in just the way that they have been apprehended and investigated are samadhis that are conceptual and analytical.

The shamatha and vipasyana that are not analytical in experiencing the clear and coarse signs of these very doctrines, but are analytical in experiencing a mere subtle mindfulness of their approximate appearances, are a non-conceptual and solely analytical samadhi.

Shamatha and vipasyana that are completely analytical due to mentally attending to the experience of doctrines spontaneously and totally with respect to all their signs are a non-conceptual and non-analytical samadhi.

Moreover, Maitreya, shamatha and vipasyana that arise from investigation are a conceptual and analytical samadhi. Shamatha and vipasyana that arise from individual realization are a non-conceptual and solely analytical Samadhi. [Shamatha and vipasyana] that observe integrated doctrines are a nonconceptual, non-analytical samadhi.”

27. “Bhagavan, what is the cause of shamatha? What is the cause of thorough stabilization? What is the cause of equanimity?"

[169] "Maitreya, when the mind is excited, or when one fears that it will become excited, mental attention to sobering phenomena and to the uninterrupted mind is the cause of shamatha.”

"Maitreya, when the mind becomes dull, or when one fears that it will become dull, mental attention to pleasant phenomena and to the characteristics of the mind is the cause of thorough stabilization.

Maitreya, when those following a path that is singly dedicated to shamatha, or that is singly dedicated to vipasyana, or that is a union of those two, naturally engage their minds in a [state] unafflicted by the two afflictions [of excitement and dullness], this spontaneous mental attention is the cause of equanimity.”

28. "Bhagavan, when Bodhisattvas cultivating shamatha and vipasyana comprehend doctrine and objects, how do they comprehend doctrine? How do they comprehend objects?"

"Maitreya, they comprehend doctrine through five aspects names, words, letters, individuality, and integration.

- What are names? They are what is attributed to afflicted or purified phenomena as the designation for entities or particulars.
- What are words? They are what depends upon collections of those very names which are associated through conventional designations of objects as being afflicted or pure.
- What are letters? They are the units that are the bases [171] of these two.
- What is comprehended through their individuality? It is comprehension due to mental attention that observes unintegrated [doctrines].
- What is comprehended through their integration? It is comprehension due to mental attention that observes integrated [doctrines].

All of these are collectively known as 'comprehension of doctrine'. That is how [Bodhisattvas] comprehend doctrine."

"Bodhisattvas comprehend objects through these ten aspects:

1. Through what exists relatively;
2. Through what exists in fact;
3. Through apprehending objects;
4. Through apprehended objects;
5. Through objects that are abodes;
6. Through objects that are resources;
7. Through mistaken objects;
8. Through non-mistaken objects;
9. Through afflicted objects; and
10. Through purified objects."

"Maitreya, the totality of all the types of divisions among afflicted or purified phenomena is 'that which exists relatively'. This [totality] includes the fivefold enumeration of the aggregates, the sixfold enumeration of the internal sense spheres, the sixfold enumeration of the external sense spheres, and so forth.

Maitreya, the suchness of those same afflicted and purified phenomena is that which exists in fact. Furthermore, [suchness] has seven aspects:

1. The 'suchness of arising' is the beginninglessness and endlessness of compounded phenomena;
2. The 'suchness of character' is the selflessness of persons [173] and the selflessness of phenomena in all phenomena;
3. The 'suchness of cognition' [understands] that compounded phenomena are cognition-only;
4. The 'suchness of abiding' is what I taught as the truth of suffering;
5. The 'suchness of wrong establishment' is what I taught as the truth of the origin of suffering;
6. The 'suchness of purification' is what I taught as the truth of the cessation of suffering;
7. And the 'suchness of right establishment' is what I taught as the truth of the path."

Maitreya, due to the suchness of arising, the suchness of abiding, and the suchness of wrong establishment, all sentient beings are similar and equal.

Maitreya, due to the suchness of character and the suchness of cognition, all phenomena are similar and equal.

Maitreya, due to the suchness of purification, all enlightenments—the enlightenment of Sravakas, the enlightenment of Pratyekabuddhas, and supreme perfect enlightenment—are similar and equal.

Maitreya, due to the suchness of right establishment, wisdom conjoined with shamatha and vipasyana, that observes all that one hears as integrated doctrine, is similar and equal.

Maitreya, 'apprehending objects' are the phenomena of the five physical sense spheres, mind, thought, consciousness, and mental factors."

[175] "Maitreya, 'apprehended objects' are the six external sense spheres. Moreover, Maitreya, apprehending objects are also apprehended objects."

"Maitreya, 'objects that are abodes' are the worldly realms: realms of sentient beings that appear in various places. These include a village, one hundred villages, one thousand of these, or one hundred thousand of these; a region, one hundred of these, or one hundred thousand of these; a Jambudvipa one hundred of these, one thousand of these, or one hundred thousand of these; the four great continents, one hundred of these, one thousand of these, or one hundred thousand of these; a

universe of a thousand worlds, one hundred of these, one thousand of these, or one hundred thousand of these; a medium-sized universe of a thousand worlds, one hundred of these, one thousand of these, or one hundred thousand of these; a great universe of three thousand worlds, one hundred of these, one thousand of these, one hundred thousand of these, ten million of these, one hundred times ten million of these, one thousand times ten million of these, one hundred thousand times ten million of these, an incalculable number of these, one hundred times an incalculable number of these, one thousand times an incalculable number of these, one hundred thousand times an incalculable number of these, or a number equal to however many atomic particles there are in the dust motes in a hundred thousand times an incalculable number of the great trichilocosmos of the immeasurable, incalculable universes of the ten directions.

[177] "Maitreya, I have taught that objects that are resources are the possessions and assets that sentient beings enjoy.

Maitreya mistaken objects are mistaken discriminations, mistaken thoughts, and mistaken views, such as [conceiving] the impermanent as being permanent with respect to those objects that are apprehenders and so forth; mistaken discriminations, mistaken thoughts, and mistaken views, such as [conceiving] suffering as bliss, the impure as pure, or the selfless as having a self."

"Maitreya, know that 'non-mistaken' objects are the opposite of those and that they are antidotes to them."

"Maitreya there are three kinds of 'afflicted objects': afflictions that are the afflictions of the three realms, afflictions of actions, and afflictions of birth."

"Maitreya, 'purified objects' are whatever phenomena are in harmony with enlightenment due to separating one from those three types of affliction."

"Maitreya, know that all objects are encompassed by these ten aspects."

"Maitreya, Bodhisattvas also comprehend objects through five aspects. What are these five aspects of objects? They are: knowable things, knowable meanings, knowledge, obtaining the fruit of knowledge, and full awareness of that."

"Maitreya, you should view knowable things as being all objects of knowledge. This includes what is known as 'the [179] aggregates,' 'internal sense spheres,' 'external sense spheres,' and the like."

"Maitreya, 'knowable meanings' are correctly known by way of their various aspects. They include the conventional and the ultimate, faults and good qualities, conditions, time, the characteristics of production, abiding, and disintegration, sickness and so forth; suffering and the source of suffering and so forth; suchness, the reality limit, the Dharmadhatu, condensed [discourses], extensive [discourses], certain prophecies, differentiation, scriptural questions and answers, pronouncements, secrets, and [scriptural] teachings. Know that things concordant with these are knowable meanings."

"Maitreya, 'knowledge' refers to phenomena that are in harmony with enlightenment, including both [the ultimate and the conventional]. These [phenomena in harmony with enlightenment] include: the mindful establishments, the correct abandonings, and so forth."

"Maitreya, 'obtaining the fruit of knowledge' is: disciplining desire, anger, and bewilderment; entirely abandoning desire, anger, and bewilderment; attaining the fruits of virtuous application; and those common and uncommon, mundane and supramundane qualities of Sravakas and Tathagatas that I have taught and that should be actualized."

"Maitreya, 'full awareness' is knowledge liberated from those very things that have been actualized, and extensively [181] and consummately teaching other beings." Maitreya, know that all objects are encompassed by these five objects."

"Maitreya, Bodhisattvas also comprehend objects through four aspects. What are the four aspects of objects? They are appropriated objects of mind, objects of experience, objects of cognition, and objects of affliction and purification. Know, Maitreya, that all objects are also encompassed by these four aspects of objects."

"Maitreya, Bodhisattvas also comprehend objects through three aspects. What are the three aspects of objects? They are objects that are words, objects that are meanings, and objects that are realms."

"Maitreya, 'objects that are words' should be viewed as being collections of names and so forth."

"Maitreya, know that 'objects that are meanings' have ten aspects: the character of reality; the character of knowledge the character of abandonment; the character of actualization; the character of cultivation; the character which differentiates the aspects of those very characters of reality and so forth; the character of basis and what relates to a basis; the character of phenomena that interrupt knowledge and so

forth; the character of concordant phenomena; and the character of the harmfulness of ignorance and the like and the benefits of knowledge and the like.”

[183] "Maitreya, 'objects that are realms' are the five realms: worldly realms, the realm of sentient beings, the realm of qualities, the realm of discipline, and the realm of methods of discipline.

“Maitreya , know that all objects are also encompassed by these three aspects.”

29. "Bhagavan, what are the differences between comprehending objects through wisdom arisen from listening, comprehending objects through wisdom arisen from reflection, and, Bhagavan, comprehending objects through wisdom arisen from cultivating shamatha and vipasyana?"

The Bhagavan replied "Maitreya, through wisdom arisen from listening, Bodhisattvas abide in words; they take them literally, do not grasp their intent, and do not actualize them. They are concordant with liberation and they comprehend objects that are not liberative.”

"Maitreya, through wisdom arisen from reflection, they still adhere to words, but they do not take them literally; they grasp their intent and actualize them. They are very concordant with liberation and they comprehend objects that are not liberative.”

"Maitreya, through wisdom that arise from meditation, Bodhisattvas adhere to words and do not adhere to words; they take them literally and grasp their intent; they actualize [185] them through the images that are the focus of samadhi that accord with knowable things. They are completely concordant with liberation and they also comprehend objects that are liberative. Maitreya, these are the differences among them.”

30. "Bhagavan, what is the knowledge of Bodhisattvas cultivating shamatha and vipasyana that comprehends doctrine and that comprehends objects? What is [their] insight?

"Maitreya, although I teach knowledge and insight in many ways, I will explain them concisely: The wisdom of shamatha and vipasyana that observes integrated doctrines is knowledge. The wisdom of shamatha and vipasyana that observes unintegrated doctrines is insight.”

31. "Bhagavan, through cultivating shamatha and vipasyana, how do Bodhisattvas

remove which signs with what [kind of] mental attention?"

"Maitreya, through mental attention to suchness they remove the signs of doctrines and the signs of objects. With respect to names, by not observing the nature of names, and also by not perceiving as real the signs of their abiding, they eliminate [signs]."

"Just as it is with respect to names, so it is also with respect to all words, letters, and meanings. Maitreya, with respect to [everything] up through realms: By not observing the nature [187] of realms, and also by not perceiving as real the signs of their abiding, they eliminate [signs]."

32. "Bhagavan, are the signs of comprehending the object of suchness also eliminated?"

"Maitreya, with respect to comprehending the object of suchness, since one does not observe what is without signs, what is there to eliminate? Maitreya, comprehending the object of suchness overwhelms all signs of doctrines and objects. I do not assert that it is overwhelmed by anything."

33. "Bhagavan, the Bhagavan has said, 'One cannot examine the signs of ones own face with, for example, a pot of filthy water, a dirty mirror, or an agitated pond; one can with their opposites. Similarly, minds that do not meditate cannot know reality just as it is, whereas those that have meditated can do so.' In this context, what is mental analysis? Of what kind of suchness were you thinking?"

The Bhagavan replied "Maitreya, [in this context] there are three kinds of mental analysis: mental analysis arisen from listening, mental analysis arisen from reflection, and mental analysis arisen from meditating. I taught this, thinking of the suchness of cognition."

34. Bhagavan, how many kinds of signs do you speak of for Bodhisattvas who comprehend doctrines and comprehend objects and are engaged in eliminating signs? By what are these signs eliminated?"

[189] "Maitreya, there are ten kinds, and they are eliminated by emptiness. What are these ten? They are:

1. The various signs of syllables and words through which the meaning of doctrine is comprehended. These are eliminated by the emptiness of all phenomena.
2. The signs that are a continuum of production, destruction, abiding, and transformation through which the meaning of the suchness of abiding is

comprehended are eliminated by the emptiness of character and the emptiness of what is beginningless and endless.

3. The signs of discerning true personhood and the signs of thinking 'I am' through which one comprehends the apprehending object are eliminated by the emptiness of the internal and the emptiness of the unobservable.
 4. The signs of discerning enjoyment through which one comprehends the apprehended object are eliminated by the emptiness of the external.
 5. The signs of inner happiness and the signs of external allure through which one comprehends the objects that are resources, [such as] the services of men and women and possessions, are eliminated by the emptiness of the external and by the emptiness of self-nature.
 6. The signs of the immeasurable through which one comprehends the objects that are abodes are eliminated by the emptiness of the great.
 7. [Page 191] The internal signs of peaceful liberation dependent upon comprehending formlessness are eliminated by the emptiness of compounded phenomena.
 8. The signs of the selflessness of persons, the signs of the selflessness of phenomena, the signs of cognition-only, and the signs of the ultimate through which one comprehends the object of the suchness of character are eliminated by the emptiness of what has passed beyond the extremes, by the emptiness of non-things, by the emptiness of the own being of non-things, and by the emptiness of the ultimate.
 9. The signs of the uncompounded and the signs of the immutable through which one comprehends the object of pure suchness are eliminated by the emptiness of uncompounded phenomena and the emptiness of inclusiveness.
 10. The signs of emptiness through which one takes to mind the very emptiness that is an antidote to these signs are eliminated by the emptiness of emptiness."
35. "Bhagavan, when [Bodhisattvas] eliminate the ten kinds of signs, what are the signs that they eliminate? From what signs of bondage are they liberated?"

"Maitreya, eliminating the sign of the image, the focus of samadhi, one is liberated from the signs that are the signs of the afflictions; these [signs] are also eliminated. Maitreya, know that the emptinesses are, in actuality, antidotes to the signs. Each [emptiness] is also an antidote to any of the signs."

[193] "Maitreya, for example, although the afflictions are not established, due to proximity or close proximity with conditions, from ignorance up to old age and death, in actuality, compounded phenomena are described as being established. You should also discern [these emptinesses] in just this way."

36. "Bhagavan, what do Bodhisattvas realize in the Mahayana that merges the signs of unchanging emptiness without degenerating into arrogance about the character of emptiness?"

Then the Bhagavan replied to the Bodhisattva Maitreya, "Excellent! Maitreya, you ask the Tathagata about this issue so that Bodhisattvas will not fall away from emptiness. This is very good! Why? Maitreya, Bodhisattvas who do not fall away from emptiness also do not fall away from all of the Mahayana. Therefore, Maitreya, listen well and I will concisely explain to you the character of emptiness."

"Maitreya, the other-dependent character and the thoroughly established character are observed in all aspects to be a character free from the imputational character which is either afflicted or purified. This [character] is 'that which has been taught in the Mahayana as the character of emptiness'."

37. "Bhagavan, how many kinds of samadhis of shamatha and vipasyana are included [in this teaching]?"

The Bhagavan replied: "Know that all of the many kinds of samadhis of Sravakas, Bodhisattvas, and Tathagatas that I have taught are included."

38. [195] "Bhagavan, from what causes do shamatha and vipasyana arise?"

"Maitreya, they arise from the cause of pure moral practice, and they arise from the cause of the pure view which comes from listening and reflecting."

39. "Bhagavan, will you explain the results of these?"

"Maitreya, pure mind is the result. Pure wisdom is the result. Moreover, Maitreya, know that all mundane and supramundane virtuous qualities of Sravakas, or of Bodhisattvas, or of Tathagatas are the result of shamatha and vipasyana."

40. "Bhagavan, what are the functions of shamatha and vipasyana?"

"Maitreya, they liberate from the two bonds, the hands of signs and the bonds of errant tendencies."

41. "Bhagavan, from among the five kinds of obstacles spoken of by the Bhagavan, which are obstacles to shamatha? Which are obstacles to vipasyana? Which are obstacles to both?"

“Maitreya, know that views [that overvalue] the body and resources are obstacles to shamatha. Not obtaining the instructions of the Aryas in accordance with ones wishes is an obstacle to vipasyana. Abiding in turmoil and being satisfied [197] with inferior [attainment] are obstacles to both. Because of the first of these, one does not apply oneself; because of the second, one does not complete the training.”

42. “Bhagavan, from among the five obstructions, which is an obstruction to shamatha? Which is an obstruction to vipasyana? Which is an obstruction to both of these?”

“Maitreya, excitement and contrition are obstructions to shamatha. Lethargy, sleep, and doubt are obstructions to vipasyana. Fixation on desirable experience and harmful intent are obstructions to both of these.”

43. Bhagavan, when is the path of shamatha wholly purified?”

“Maitreya, at the point when lethargy and sleep are completely conquered.”

44. “Bhagavan, when is the path of vipasyana wholly purified?”

“At the point when excitement and contrition are completely conquered.”

45. “Bhagavan, how many types of mental distractions do Bodhisattvas engaged in shamatha and vipasyana discover?”

The Bhagavan replied "Maitreya, there are five types:

1. The distraction of mental contemplation,
2. External mental distraction,
3. Internal mental distraction,
4. The distraction of signs,
5. And the distraction of errant tendencies.

"Maitreya, if Bodhisattvas forsake the mental contemplations of the Mahayana and adopt the mental contemplations [199] of Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas, this is a distraction of mental contemplation.

If they let their minds scatter to the five external desirable qualities, or to diversions, signs, conceptuality, afflictions, secondary afflictions, and external objects of observation, this is external mental distraction.”

"If they become afflicted either by laxity due to lethargy, sleep, or relishing the taste of meditative absorption, or by any of the secondary afflictions associated with

meditative absorption, this is internal mental distraction.”

"If, depending on external signs, they mentally attend to signs that are the focus of internal samadhis, this is the distraction of signs.

"If, depending on internal mental engagement, they attribute the concept 'I am' to arising feelings due to collective errant tendencies, this is the distraction of errant tendencies.”

46. "Bhagavan, what do shamatha and vipasyana counteract, from the first Bodhisattva stage up to the stage of the Tathagata?"

"Maitreya,

1. On the first stage, shamatha and vipasyana counteract the afflictions of bad transmigrations and the afflictions of actions and of birth.
2. On the second stage, they counteract the arising of errors that are very subtle infractions.
3. On the third stage, they counteract attachment to desirable experiences.
4. On the fourth stage, they counteract craving for [201] meditative absorption and craving for phenomena.
5. On the fifth stage, they counteract exclusively turning away from or moving toward either samsara or nirvana.
6. On the sixth stage, they counteract the arising of manifold signs.
7. On the seventh stage, they counteract the arising of subtle signs.
8. On the eighth stage, they counteract the search for signlessness and not having mastery over signs.
9. On the ninth stage they counteract not having mastery over teaching the doctrine in all its aspects.
10. On the tenth stage, they counteract not attaining perfect comprehension of the Dharmakaya.
11. Maitreya, on the stage of the Tathagata, shamatha and vipasyana counteract afflictive obstructions and obstructions to omniscience that are supremely subtle. Through fully conquering those [obstructions], [Tathagatas] obtain vision and knowledge that is unattached and unobstructed with respect to everything. They abide in the object of observation which is the accomplishment of purpose, the very pure Dharmakaya.”

47. "Bhagavan, after Bodhisattvas have achieved shamatha and vipasyana, how do they completely and perfectly realize unsurpassed enlightenment?"

The Bhagavan replied: "Maitreya, Bodhisattvas, having obtained samatha and vipasyana, begin with the seven types of suchness. With minds absorbed in doctrines in accordance with how they have been heard and contemplated, they inwardly attend to the suchness that is apprehended, well [203] considered, and well attained. Since they mentally attend to suchness in this way, the mind soon enters great equipoise with regard to any arising of even the most subtle signs. What need be said about the coarse [signs]?"

"Maitreya, the very subtle signs are these:

1. Signs of mental appropriation;
2. Signs of experience;
3. Signs of cognition;
4. Signs of affliction and purification;
5. Internal signs;
6. External signs;
7. Signs of both;
8. Signs involved in thinking, 'I must work for the sake of all sentient beings';
9. Signs of knowledge;
10. Signs of suchness, the [truth] of suffering, [the truth] of the source [of suffering], [the truth] of the cessation [of suffering], and [the truth] of the path;
11. Signs of compounded phenomena;
12. Signs of uncompounded phenomena;
13. Signs of permanence;
14. Signs of impermanence;
15. Signs that have a nature associated with suffering and change;
16. Signs having a nature that is unchangeable;
17. Signs unlike the characteristics of compounded phenomena;
18. Signs of their own characteristics;
19. Signs of universality, as in the context of knowing everything as 'everything';
20. Signs of the selflessness of persons;
21. And signs of the selflessness of phenomena.

In relationship to their arising, the mind enters into great equipoise.

Entering into [suchness] and abiding there often, they completely cleanse their minds of occasional obstacles, obstructions, and distractions, producing the seven aspects of knowledge which individually realize the seven [205] aspects of suchness that are known by oneself individually and internally. Such is the [Bodhisattva] path of seeing."

"By attaining this, Bodhisattvas enter into faultless reality. They are born into the lineage of the Tathagata. They attain the first stage and also experience the benefits of that stage. Because they have previously attained shamatha and vipasyana, they attain the [first] two types of objects of observation: conceptual images and non-conceptual images. By attaining the path of seeing in such a way, they attain the stage of observing the limits of phenomena.

Entering the path of meditation, they progress to higher stages. When they mentally attend to the three types of objects of observation, it is like removing a large nail with a small nail. In the same way that a nail draws out a nail, by eliminating internal signs they eliminate all the signs concordant with the afflictions. When they eliminate the signs, they also eliminate the errant tendencies.

By subduing signs and errant tendencies, [Bodhisattvas] gradually proceed higher and higher on the stages, purifying the mind like gold. They completely and perfectly realize unsurpassed enlightenment and obtain the object of observation which is the accomplishment of the purpose."

"Maitreya, when Bodhisattvas attain shamatha and vipasyana, in that way, they completely realize unsurpassed enlightenment."

48. [207] "How should a Bodhisattva practice in order to manifestly achieve the Bodhisattvas great powers?

"Maitreya, Bodhisattvas who are skillful with respect to six topics manifestly achieve the Bodhisattvas great powers. These [powers] include skill with respect to:

1. The arising of mind,
2. The abiding of mind,
3. The emergence of mind,
4. The increasing of mind,
5. The diminishing of mind,
6. And skill in means."

49. "At what point do [Bodhisattvas] become skillful with respect to the arising of mind? They are skillful with respect to the arising of mind as it really is when they know the sixteen aspects of the arising of mind. The sixteen aspects of the arising of mind are:

1. Cognition that is a foundation and a receptacle, that is the appropriating consciousness."

2. "Cognition that has various objects of observation, a conceptual mental consciousness that simultaneously apprehends objects such as form and the like; that simultaneously apprehends [both] the outer and inner object; that in a moment, an instant, or in a short time is simultaneously absorbed in many samadhis; that sees many Buddha fields and many Tathagatas. [This cognition] is solely a conceptual mental consciousness."
3. Cognition of small observable signs related to the desire realm."
4. Cognition of vast observable signs related to the form realm."
5. Cognition of limitless observable signs related to the spheres of limitless space and limitless consciousness.
6. [209] Cognition of subtle observable signs related to the sphere of nothingness.
7. Cognition of final observable signs related to the sphere of neither discrimination nor non-discrimination.
8. Cognition of signlessness, which observes the supramundane and cessation."
9. That which is involved with suffering is the state of hell beings."
10. That which is involved with diverse feelings is enacted in the desire realm."
11. That involved with joy is the first and second concentrations.
12. That which is involved with bliss is the third concentration."
13. That which is involved with neither suffering nor non-suffering, neither bliss nor non-bliss is that which is involved with the fourth concentration up to the sphere of neither discrimination nor non-discrimination."
14. That which is involved with affliction is involvement with the afflictions and the secondary afflictions."
15. That which is involved with virtue is involvement with faith and so forth."
16. That which is involved with the neutral is not involved with either [afflictions or virtues].

50. At what point do [Bodhisattvas] become skilled with respect to the [mind's] abiding? This occurs when they know the suchness of cognition just as it is."
51. "At what point do [Bodhisattvas] become skilled with respect to the minds emergence?" "This occurs when they [211] know, just as they are, the two types of bonds, the bonds of signs and the bonds of errant tendencies. Having thoroughly come to know this, they are skilled in terms of [knowing]: 'This mind emerges from that'."
52. "At what point do [Bodhisattvas] become skilled with respect to [the mind's] increasing?" "When the mind that is an antidote to signs and errant tendencies is produced and increases, they are skilled with respect to increasing, [knowing]. This is produced and increases."
53. "At what point do [Bodhisattvas] become skilled with respect to the [mind's] diminishing?" "When the mind that is afflicted with signs and errant tendencies discordant with that [skill] diminishes and decreases, they are skilled with respect to diminishing, [knowing]: It diminishes and decreases."
54. "At what point do [Bodhisattvas] become skilled in means? This occurs when they meditate on the [eight] liberations, the [eight] spheres of surpassing, and the [ten] spheres of totality. Maitreya, in this way Bodhisattvas have manifestly achieved, will manifestly achieve, and are manifestly achieving the Bodhisattvas great powers."
55. "Bhagavan, the Bhagavan has said, 'In the sphere of nirvana without a remainder of aggregates, all feelings completely cease.' Bhagavan, what are those valid feelings [that cease]?"

"Maitreya, in brief, two kinds of feelings cease awareness of the errant tendencies that are abodes and awareness of objects that are the fruits of those [tendencies]."

"Awareness [213] of the errant tendencies that are abodes should be known as being of four kinds:

1. Awareness of errant tendencies of the form realm,
2. Awareness of errant tendencies of the formless realm,
3. Awareness of errant tendencies that have come to fruition,
4. And awareness of errant tendencies that have not come to fruition.

Those that have come to fruition are whatever now exists; those that have not come

to fruition are whatever will serve as causes in the future.”

"Know that awareness of objects is also of four kinds:

1. Awareness of abodes
2. Awareness of property
3. Awareness of resources
4. And awareness of reliances.

Moreover, [awareness of objects] occurs in the sphere of nirvana that has a remainder of the aggregates. Although [this category of awareness of objects] includes awareness of what has not come to fruition, that which is discordant with the experiences of feelings that arise from contact has not completely ceased. Thus one experiences affiliated [feelings]. With the awareness of that which has come to fruition, the two kinds of feelings completely cease: Although this includes awareness, one experiences just those feelings that arise from contact. When one passes beyond sorrow altogether in the sphere of nirvana that is without a remainder of the aggregates, even that ceases. Therefore, it is said that, ‘All feelings cease in the sphere of nirvana that is without a remainder of the aggregates.’”

Having said this, the Bhagavan said to Bodhisattva Maitreya:

"Maitreya, you question the Tathagata about yoga with skill and good ascertainment beginning with the most complete [215] and pure path of yoga. This is excellent and good! I also teach this path of yoga completely and flawlessly. All those who have become perfect Buddhas in the past or will become Buddhas in the future have also taught or will teach in this way. It is fitting that sons and daughters of good lineage strive for this.

Then the Bhagavan spoke these verses:

"Whatever doctrines are designated and posited are for the great purpose of diligence in yoga. Those who rely on these doctrines and work at this yoga will attain enlightenment.

"Those who, seeking flaws, dispute these words and study all doctrines seeking liberation are, Maitreya, as far from this yoga as the sky is distant from the earth.

"Those wise ones who benefit sentient beings do not seek rewards when striving to aid beings. Those who hope for a reward will not attain supreme joy free from materialistic concerns.

"Those who, with desire, give Dharma instructions, have renounced desire, but still cling to it. These deluded ones obtain the precious, priceless Dharma, but wander in destitution.

"Therefore, vigorously abandon disputation, worldly commotion, and conceptual elaboration. In order to liberate worldly beings, including gods, make great effort in this yoga."

56. [217] Then the Bodhisattva Maitreya asked the Bhagavan: "Bhagavan, what is the name of this form of Dharma discourse that explains your thought? How should it be apprehended?"

The Bhagavan replied: "Maitreya, this is the teaching of the definitive meaning of yoga. Apprehend it as the teaching of the definitive meaning of yoga'."

When this teaching of the definitive meaning of yoga was explained, six hundred thousand living beings generated the aspiration toward completely perfect and unsurpassed enlightenment. Three hundred thousand Sravakas purified the Dharma eye that is free from dust and stainless with respect to the Dharma. One hundred and fifty thousand Sravakas liberated their minds from contamination such that they would not take rebirth. Seventy-five thousand Bodhisattvas attained the mental contemplation of the great yoga.

This completes the eighth chapter of Maitreya.

The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana

The Treasury of Knowledge by Jamgon Kongtrul

Chapter Eight: The Progressive Classification of the Training in Superior Samadhi

Part One: The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana –

The General Basis of All Samadhis

Translated by Kiki Ekselius and Chryssoula Zerbini

The Stages of Vipashyana Meditation

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 Stages of Meditation on Emptiness

From The Lankavatara Sutra

Translated by Karl Brunnholzl in *The Center of the Sunlit Sky*, pp. 300-301

The Sutra of the Arrival in Lanka

By relying on mere mind,
One does not imagine outer objects. (1)

By resting in the observed object of suchness,
One should go beyond mere mind too. (2)

Going beyond mere mind,
One must even go beyond the nonappearance [of apprehender and
apprehended]. (3)

The yogic practitioner who rests in nonappearance
Sees the great vehicle. (4)

This spontaneously present, peaceful resting
Is completely purified through aspiration prayers. (5)

Genuine identityless wisdom
Sees by way of nonappearance. (6)

The Stages of Meditation on Emptiness

From Nagarjuna's *Commentary on the Mind of Enlightenment* **In "*The Center of the Sunlit Sky*" Translated by Karl Brunnholzl, pp. 296-300**

Nagarjuna begins his *Commentary on the Mind of Enlightenment* by saying that bodhisattvas, after having generated the aspiring mind of enlightenment, should generate the ultimate mind of enlightenment through the power of meditation.

The actual progression of this meditation starts with analyzing for the lack of a real personal identity. Next, Nagarjuna turns to phenomenal identitylessness.

As the entities of apprehender and apprehended,
The appearances of consciousness
Do not exist as outer objects
That are different from consciousness.

Therefore, in the sense of having the nature of entities,
In any case, outer objects do not exist.
It is these distinct appearances of consciousness
That appear as the aspect of form.

Just as people with dull minds
See illusions, mirages,
And the cities of scent-eaters,
So do form and such appear.

The teachings on the aggregates, constituents, and so on
Are for the purpose of stopping the clinging to a self.
By settling in mere mind,
The greatly blessed ones let go of these too.

In the above four verses, Nagarjuna clearly presents the intermediate step of realizing that all appearances occur solely within one's own mind as the expressions of this mind. However, just like all other Centrists, he does not stop at that point but-as the following verses and all his other texts show-negates the real existence of the mind as well.

The teaching of the Sage that
"All of these are mere mind"
Is for the sake of removing the fear of naive beings
And not [meant] in terms of true reality.

The third step in Nagarjuna's analysis is that mind itself is also unarisen, without nature, and empty. He describes what this emptiness means and why the example of space is used to illustrate it.

It is without characteristics and unarisen,
Not existent, and free from the ways of speech.
Space, the mind of enlightenment,
And enlightenment have the characteristic of not being two.

Fourth, Nagarjuna presents the defining characteristics of the proper meditation on emptiness and identifies three ways of misunderstanding emptiness.

The emptiness that is called "nonarising,"
"Emptiness," and "identitylessness"
Is what inferior beings meditate on.
It is not the meditation on the [actual emptiness].

What has the characteristic of the stream
Of positive and negative thoughts being cut off
The Buddhas taught to be emptiness.
The other [emptinesses] *they* did not declare to be emptiness.

To abide without observing the mind
Is the characteristic of space.
Their meditation on emptiness
Is declared to be space meditation.

Fifth, Nagarjuna states that both cyclic existence (ignorance) and liberation (realization of true reality) occur within and depend on our mind. Thus, the meditation and realization of emptiness is not spacelike in the sense of a blank nothingness, but it is an open, nonreferential state of mind that is at the same time profoundly peaceful and blissful.

The seeming comes from afflictions and karma.
Karma originates from the mind.
The mind is constituted by latent tendencies.
Freedom from latent tendencies is bliss.

This blissful mind is peacefulness.
A peaceful mind will not be ignorant.
Not to be ignorant is the realization of true reality.
The realization of true reality is the attainment of liberation.

Chapter 9. Actualizing Special Insight
From *Stages of Meditation: The Stages of Meditation II* by
Kamalashila with Commentary by The Dalai Lama
Translated by Ven Geshe Lobsang Jordhen, Losang Choephel Ganchenpa, and
Jeremy Russell, Root Text Excerpted from pp. 107-158
(All headings have been added for use in Rime Shedra)

The Purpose of this Meditation

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 Actual Stages of Meditation

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 identity 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.

The Way of Meditating

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.

The Accomplishment of Vipashyana

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 meditation becomes excessive, meditate on wisdom.

Madhyamaka Pith Instructions
Madhyamakopadesha - By Atisha
*From **Straight from the Heart: Buddhist Pith Instructions***
Translated and Introduced by Karl Brunnholzl, pp. 89-91

The Mahayana's pith instructions on the center are as follows. On the level of the seeming, in terms of the perspective of those who only see what is right in front of them, all presentations of cause and effect and so on[explain] all phenomena to be real in just the way they appear. However, ultimately, or actually, when just this seeming [reality] as it appears is scrutinized and done away with through the great [Madhyamaka] reasonings, there is nothing that can be grasped, not even something as tiny as a fragment of the tip of a hair that is split a hundred times. This is what you should internalize with certainty.

Sit on a comfortable seat in the cross-legged position. As a start, [let us say that] entities are of two kinds: what possesses form and what is without form.

1. What possesses form is a collection of infinitesimal particles. When these are analyzed and broken up in terms of their directional parts, not even their minutest [part] remains and they are utterly without appearance.
2. What is without form is the mind. As for that, the past mind has [already] ceased and perished. The future mind has not [yet] arisen or originated. As for the present mind, it is very difficult to examine: it has no color and is without any shape. Since it is just like space, it is not established. In other words, it is free from unity and multiplicity, unarisen, natural luminosity. When analyzed and scrutinized with the weapons of reasoning, such as [those just mentioned], you realize that it is not established.
3. At the point when those two [what possesses form and what is without form] definitely do not exist and are not established as [having] any nature whatsoever, the very knowledge that discriminates them is not established either. For example, if you rub two sticks [against each other], fire comes forth. Through this condition, the two sticks are burned and become nonexistent. Thereafter, the fire that has burned them also subsides by itself. Likewise, once all specific characteristics and general characteristics are established as nonexistent [through discriminating prajna], this prajna itself is without appearance and luminous, not being established as any nature whatsoever. Thus, all flaws, such as dullness and agitation, are eliminated.
4. In this interval [of meditative concentration], consciousness is without any thought, does not apprehend anything, and has left behind all mindfulness and mental

engagement. For as long as the enemies or robbers of characteristics and thoughts do not arise, consciousness should rest in such a [state].

When wishing to rise [from the meditation], slowly open the cross-legged position and stand up. Then, with an illusionlike [frame of] mind, perform as many positive actions with body, speech, and mind as possible. By practicing with devotion, for a long time, and uninterruptedly, those with the proper fortune will see reality in this very lifetime. All phenomena are revealed as effortlessly and spontaneously present of their own accord, just as the middle of space. Through [the wisdom] that is attained subsequent to the [meditative equipoise described], all phenomena are known as illusions and the like. From the time of having manifested the vajralike meditative concentration onwards, these [bodhisattvas] do not even have a [phase of] subsequent attainment, but rest in meditative equipoise at all times.

Absolute Bodhicitta: Samatha and Vipashyana
To Dispel the Misery of the World Whispered Teachings of the
Bodhisattvas by Ga Rabjampa Kunga Yeshe
Translated by Rigpa Translations, pp. 139-152

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 subtlemost 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 from 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.*

Insight and Dismantling Illusion

Wake Up to Your Life: Discovering the Buddhist Path of Attention

By Ken McLeod, Excerpts from Chapter 9, pages 353-367

Insight and Dying

Insight practice has two essential components: dying to the world of beliefs, and pointing-out instructions. In the story of the lama at the beginning of this chapter, the direct experience of night with no darkness caused him to die to the world of his beliefs. The explanation of the earth tilted on its axis and orbiting the sun was, in a way, a pointing-out instruction, pointing out how things are seen in a scientific context.

First you die. Then you see. You can't see before you die because patterns cloud seeing. Insight practice is, by its nature, frustrating, challenging, and frightening.

A man looks for the hat he is wearing. He knows he has a hat, but he can't remember where he put it. A friend says, "It's on your head." "No," he says, "I put it down somewhere." His friend comes up to him, but he pushes his friend away, saying, "Just let me look for it." This is the first stage of dying: denial.

He searches the room, opening closets and drawers, overturning furniture, even looking under the rug. Frustrated by his inability to find his hat, he grows more and more irritated. This is the second stage of dying: anger.

He looks everywhere, but he still cannot find it. He starts talking to himself. "From now on, I'll always put it in the closet. I'll keep everything tidy and neat." This is the third stage of dying: bargaining.

Eventually he collapses in despair. He does not know what to do. He gives up, sits down, and stares into space. This is the fourth stage: depression.

His friend asks, "Do you want my help?" "Yes," he says, "I don't know where it is." This is the fifth stage: acceptance.

Then his friend taps him on the head and says, "What's this?" This is the pointing-out instruction. "My hat, my hat! I found my hat!" he cries. "Why didn't you tell me before?"

We don't die willingly. The more invested we are in the worlds projected by patterns, the stronger the denial, anger, and bargaining, and the despair of depression. Insight

practice is inherently frustrating because you are looking to see where, at first, you are unable to see—beyond the world of the patterns.

Another way to look at insight practice is to see that the process has three stages: shock, disorganization, and reorganization.

The first stage starts when you see beyond illusion. You experience a shock. You react by denying that you saw what you saw, saying, in effect, “That makes no sense. I’ll just forget about that.” Unfortunately, or fortunately, your experience of seeing is not so easily denied. It is too vivid, too real, to ignore. Now you become angry because the illusion in which you have lived has been shattered. You know you can’t go back, but you don’t want to go forward. You are still attached to the world of patterns. You feel anxious, and the anxiety gradually matures into grief. You now know that you have to go forward. You experience the pain of separating from what you understood, just as the lama in the example experienced pain at the loss of his worldview.

You then enter a period of disorganization. You withdraw, become apathetic, lose your energy for life, become restless, and routinely reject new possibilities or directions. You surrender to the changes taking place but do nothing to move forward. A major risk at this stage is that you remain in a state of disorganization. You hold on to an aspect of the old world. Parents who have lost a child in an accident or to violence, for example, have great difficulty in letting go. They may keep the child’s bedroom just as it was. Their views and expectations of life have been shattered, and, understandably, they cling to a few of the shards. They may stay in the stage of disorganization for a long time.

The third stage of insight is reorganization. You experience a shift, and you let the old world go, even the shards. You accept the world that you see with your new eyes. What was previously seen as being absolute and real is now seen differently. The old structures, beliefs, and behaviors no longer hold, and you enter a new life.

Practice Guidelines

Initially, insight practice is very confusing. You feel as if you are staring into nothing, and you have no idea what you are doing. You probably have felt the same way in other practices, but insight practice amplifies these feelings considerably. In my retreat training, the whole group of us spent a peaceful and enjoyable month cultivating attention in preparation for insight. Then we received instructions for insight, and we all felt as if bombs had gone off inside us.

A month, by the way, is not a long preparation period. Rangjung Dorje, a Tibetan master, was required to cultivate stable attention day and night for three years before his teacher gave him instruction in insight. Stable attention is very important. Most difficulties in insight come from not having stable, strong attention.

For insight practice, make your formal practice sessions at least forty-five minutes. Spend the first five to ten minutes resting with the breath, letting the surface level of activity and tension dissipate.

Then spend another ten minutes doing the energy transformation practice described in the instructions. Because insight is about seeing beyond the limitations of patterns, you need a level of energy in attention higher than the level of energy in the patterns. The energy transformation practice raises the level of energy in your attention. Where resting with the breath stabilizes attention, energy transformation practice strengthens it.

Then spend twenty to thirty minutes working at insight. A cardinal rule for insight practice is “Work from a base of stable, clear attention.” When you look at the nature of experience or the nature of mind, you will fall into confusion again and again. Thoughts and feelings will erupt in you, or you will fall into thick, dull states of mind. You will feel as if you can’t meditate at all.

You can’t do insight if your mind is either full of thoughts or thick and dull. You might as well try to see your reflection in a pond ruffled by a strong wind or in a pond filled with mud.

Reestablish stable, clear attention by letting go of looking and returning attention to the breath. Then go back to the looking.

Looking involves three steps: exhausting experience, cutting the root, and resting in seeing. Each of the meditation exercises is divided into three sections in order to make clear what is being exhausted, how to direct attention to cut the root, and how to rest. The insight practices given here use questions about the nature of mind such as “What is mind?” You may come up with logical or philosophical answers, but, for the purpose of developing insight, such answers are worse than useless. They reinforce your reliance on intellectual processes. Awareness, not the intellect, sees the nature of mind. You cannot think your way to it.

Use the question to direct attention to mind or experience. Hold the question. Attention forms and begins to penetrate habituated structures of thought and experience. Reactive patterns are triggered. Thoughts, feelings, and confusion arise. Hold the

question in the face of the reactive mechanisms. Attention gradually penetrates the patterns, and you are able to look more deeply and for longer periods. Seeing often arises as soon as the patterns are penetrated. If it does not, then you need to cut the root of experience. How do you know whether you have experienced seeing? Generally, you will know, but you should have your experience examined by your teacher.

Cutting the root means turning attention to what is holding the question. In holding the question, you dissolve the clouding influence of the patterns. The question holds your attention, and reactive patterns are unable to function. Still, the pattern of subject-object fixation remains and prevents you from experiencing mind nature. Turn the attention back on what is looking, what is holding the question. Redirecting the attention breaks the subject-object fixation, and seeing can now arise.

At a certain point, the question and the looking dissolve into nothing. You feel as if the looking just fell to pieces. Now you see. Rest right there. Rest in the seeing. Don't make any more effort. Initially the seeing will last for only a short time, perhaps only a second or two.

Return to holding the question and cutting the root. If you become confused by dullness or busyness, stop making efforts at holding the question, and reestablish a base of attention. Insight practice is best done for short periods of great intensity.

For the last five to ten minutes, just relax and rest. Sit with your mind open and clear. Let the energy and effort disperse. Then go about your day.

Practice transforming energy for short periods throughout your day. At the same time, regard all experience, inside and outside, as a dream. Whenever you can, stop and look at what you are experiencing, posing the question, "What is this?" The effort keeps the practice alive in you and interrupts habituated functioning.

Throughout the practice of insight, regular interaction with a teacher is very important. The pitfalls are numerous. Very still or very clear states of mind are easily mistaken for experiences of seeing mind nature. Inconsequential experiences are commonly taken as important insights. You can also become fixated on certain states of mind and lose the intention to see. A capable and experienced teacher is often the only safeguard against these pitfalls.

In insight, you are trying to see what you cannot see. A teacher shows you how and where to look. Because you have to die to how you currently look at things, you need someone to hold the possibility of moving through death. To die, you have to let go, so

you need someone who inspires the trust and confidence you need to stand in the fear and to let go.

Insight practice is based entirely on the arising of direct experience. You are not instilling an understanding, as in many of the previous meditations. Some people progress very quickly in insight and then turn to the practice of presence (see chapter 10). Others work long and hard before they see mind nature. If you are unable to connect with insight practice, then you need to work on the earlier meditations in greater depth. Once you have a direct experience of mind nature, you also return to the earlier meditations but in a different way, as described in the next chapter.

Insight: The Main Practice

Appearances Are Mind—Life Is but a Dream

Exhaust the Experience

Take a simple object—a book, a flower, or a stone—and look at it. What is your experience? You say, “I see a book.” True, but what do you experience? *Book* is a label you apply to your experience. What is your experience? A red rectangle. True, but again you are labeling your experience. The book may appear as a rectangle, a square, or a parallelogram depending on where you are positioned. The color likewise depends on available light, how it filters into the room, and whether you are wearing sunglasses. Again, what is your experience? Seeing is also a label. What is that?

Every time you answer the question, note the labeling and return to your experience. Keep looking past the labels to the actual experience of seeing the book—an appearance of shape, form, and color.

Where does this bare experience of shape, form, and color take place? Does it take place in the book? Probably not, because you are having the experience. Does it take place in you? Well, no, the shape, form, and color seem to appear outside you. In between? That doesn’t seem right, either. Keep looking at the experience, asking again and again, “What is it?”

You can do this meditation with sound—a dripping tap, the noise of traffic, or music. Clear polyphonic music (such as Bach’s *Brandenburg Concertos*) listened to with headphones is very effective.

Where is the sound? Use the question to direct attention. Reasoning, deduction, and inference are all distracting thoughts. Look with your mind to see where the sound is. With a good headset, you have the impression that some instruments are to your left and others to your right. Where is the sound, actually? Where is it experienced? Keep asking questions to direct your attention to the experience itself. What is it?

You come to a place where there are no words. With the book, you come to place where the appearance of red shape arises, not in you, not outside you, just there. With the music, you come to a place where sound, music, is just there.

Practice cutting through labeling until you can hold attention in sensory experience itself.

Cut the Root

Now pose the question “What is experiencing this?” Keep the experience, the color and shape of the book, and the seeing in attention and look at what is experiencing it. If you start thinking or wondering about what experiences, you have fallen out of attention. Relax, go back to the pure experience, and again ask, “What is experiencing this?” At some point you experience a strange shift. The usual framework of subject-object perception collapses for a moment. You *see* that what arises as experience is your mind! You are clear, awake, and present, and perhaps a little awed and puzzled. The shift is to a different seeing, in which appearances, that is, what arises in experience, and mind, that is, experiencing itself, are not separate.

Rest

Rest in this seeing. At first, it will last for only a moment. When it fades, don't try to recover it. Instead, repeat the whole process. Look at the object, go through all the labels until the experience of the object arises as pure experience, cut the root by asking, “What is experiencing this?” and, again, rest in the seeing.

When your seeing shifts, rest in seeing. Don't do anything more. If you keep asking questions at this point, you spin meaninglessly in confusion, like a dog chasing its own tail.

Gradually, you will rest for longer periods in seeing, shattering the illusion that subject and object are independent and separate.

Recall the instruction “Regard everything as a dream.” Now, perhaps, the instruction makes more sense. Appearances arise in experience. What arises in experience is not

separate from what experiences, which we call “your mind,” just as in a dream, what arises in the dream is not separate from the mind that is dreaming.

Mind Is Empty—Examine the Nature of Unborn Awareness

Exhaust the Experience

Rest with your mind open and clear. Let your mind rest, and look at the resting mind. What is the resting mind? You start thinking, “What is mind?—Well, it’s the source of experience, it’s what I am, it controls everything.” Such thoughts are distractions that take you away from looking. Just ask the question, “What is this, the mind that rests?” and look. Look and rest in the looking. You see nothing. You fall into confusion, and you wonder if you are doing the practice correctly. Your mind becomes thick and dull. Wake up! Go back to the clear, open, resting mind. Reestablish a base of attention. Then ask again, “What is this resting mind?” Look, and rest in the looking.

How is the resting mind? Does it have a color, shape, or form? Does it have a location? You may well think such questions make no sense, but look anyway. Even though we know intellectually that mind doesn’t have shape or color, we still hold emotionally to the notion that mind is a thing. The question directs your attention to mind, and though you see no thing, the looking is what is important. Keep looking.

Now look at an object, a flower or a book. Look at your mind as sensory experience arises. Does anything change? What changes? How is the mind that experiences a flower different from the mind at rest? Again you see nothing. No matter, keep looking.

Let a thought or a feeling float up. Now your mind is moving. What is the moving mind? What moves? The same reactions of speculation and bewilderment arise. Let them go, return to a base of attention, let another thought or feeling float up, pose the question, and look again.

Cut the Root

Awareness operates in both the resting mind and the moving mind. You know when your mind is resting, you know when your mind is moving. You know when you are experiencing a flower and when you are not.

What knows? Look at that. Again you fall into thinking or confusion. Many ideas will occur to you: nothing is born, nothing dies; everything is empty; there is no one home. Don’t confuse these ideas with direct understanding.

Again establish a base of attention, and then start the whole process over again.

Look again and again at what is aware. You don't see anything. Keep looking. Whenever any idea of the mind being this or that arises, look again. You don't see anything. Keep looking.

At some point, you again feel a shift and you *see* nothing.

Rest

Rest in the seeing. Practice this stage until you can rest awake and clear in seeing nothing. This stage is particularly frustrating because you keep coming back to no thing. You want to say, "Okay, I get the point," but that's not good enough. You have to keep coming back and looking until everything in you is exhausted, all the old habituations, all the desires for a definite reality, all the subtle ways you cling to a sense of self.

Emptiness Is Natural Presence—Let Go of Understanding, Too

Exhaust the Experience

Mind nature has three qualities. It is empty, clear, and unceasing. Look at each of these and their relationship with one another.

The emptiness of mind is the "being nothing there" quality. You look at mind and see nothing, so you say, "Mind is empty." What says, "Mind is empty"? Look at that.

The clarity of mind is the ability to be aware. Mind is not just blank emptiness, like the space inside a box. You are aware, so you say, "I'm aware." Look at what is aware. What is that?

Experience-awareness arises unceasingly. It is always arising, whether as the thick torpor of sleep, the brilliant awake mind of insight, the confusion of reaction, the richness of emotional and sensory experience, the intricacy of the intellect, or the quiet and peace of an evening at home. What experiences everything? Look at that.

Look at the clarity and emptiness. Are they the same or different? What about the clarity and unceasing, the emptiness and unceasing?

Cut the Root

As you practice, ideas will arise: “mind is empty” or “in emptiness nothing is harmful or helpful” or “mind is total clarity.” Look right at the idea, concept, or thought, and cut it with attention.

Cut through any concept of even the qualities of mind nature as existing in their own right. Cut through any concept that you have such and such understanding. Both tendencies reestablish the subjectobject framework and pull you back into habituation.

Rest

As before, as soon as you have cut, rest. Relax and open, allowing the quality of presence to unfold in you, as a flower unfolds in the warm rays of the sun.

Natural Presence Is Natural Freedom— Rest in the Nature of Things

This is the culmination of practice, the practice of presence—resting in the nature of things.

Exhaust the Experience

When you sit down to meditate, let everything go. Don't fall into distraction. Don't try to make anything happen. Don't try to cultivate anything. Relax and rest, vivid, awake, and open.

Cut the Root

Whenever you fall into distraction or the vivid clarity fades, relax and look directly at what experienced the disturbance. Whatever arises—whether thoughts, reactive emotions such as anger or greed, higher emotions such as equanimity or compassion, meditation experiences such as bliss, clarity, or non-thought, even visions or hallucinations—just recognize it and rest in clarity.

Rest

Rest in the state of just recognizing the nature of whatever arises. When left to itself, ordinary mind is utterly empty, vividly clear, and totally open. When left to itself, experience just arises and subsides on its own.

The Insights of Vipashyana

From *King Doha: Saraha's Advice to a King*

By Traleg Kyabgon, Pages 24-39

Based on that, we are then introduced to the Mahamudra path of vipashyana, which means insight. In Mahamudra practice this is done through what we call "introduction of the nature of the mind." This has several steps:

1. Seeing all Appearances as Mind

First, we try to think that everything we experience, even in terms of the so-called "objective material world," is dependent on the mind. We have to think of the mind as being an extremely powerful instrument. In this way, the mind is not seen as something that simply receives information, but as a creative agent which actually constructs the world that we live in.

Sometimes people think these teachings are saying that everything is literally created by the mind but I don't think we have to go that far. It might be sufficient that we think we can only have the experience of anything, including physical entities and the natural world itself, through and from our mind.

We cannot step outside the mind and have an objective perspective on the world. We cannot go outside our mind and ask, "Is my mind reflecting the objective world correctly or not?" Any kind of world we experience can only be experienced in relation to how our own mind is structured. Therefore the first insight, the first introduction that one is given is called "to see all appearances as the mind."

When the word "appearances" is used in this kind of literature, it does not simply mean the sensory appearances or what sense data affords us in terms of what we are experiencing. It does not just mean visual, auditory, or olfactory appearances, and so on, but also what is internal. Our thoughts, emotions, feelings, and sensations are thus also described as appearances in this kind of literature.

When the literature states, "appearances are not separate from the mind," we try to understand that. Various kinds of exercises are given in this regard, such as using one's sensory impressions and trying to see a tree or a house or a human being and staying with that without any kind of conceptual gloss so that one is just being with that experience. Then one realizes that it is very difficult to separate the sense object

perceived and the sensing subject, the subjective mind: it is not easy to draw a clear-cut demarcation line.

In order to see that everything that arises in the mind is also "appearances," we deliberately give rise to contrasting emotions even if we are not feeling strong emotions. This shows us how the mind can actually create our mood. We can make ourselves feel quite low and unhappy. or we can make ourselves feel uplifted and joyful. An example could be that we think about something that will make us sad, imagining we have lost something that we really cherish, love, or something that was really precious to us. We imagine that we have lost that, and we feel that sense of loss acutely. We then follow that with a contrasting emotion. We think about something that would make us feel really happy, something that would make us really joyous—something that we desire and want to chase after. Then we think that we have attained or received whatever it is that we desire and give rise to the appropriate feeling and emotion. We feel that, and then observe the contrast between the two emotions.

Through this also, we begin to gain some insight into our mind in terms of appearances being mind. Without any change in what we consider to be external, the mind can make things up. This directly impacts on how we are feeling, on the thoughts going through our mind and the sort of mood we have managed to put ourselves into.

In that way, we realize that even though we always think that our moods and so forth are totally dependent on things external to us, nevertheless when we pay attention to the mind itself, we begin to see how it is actually contributing to these experiences. While we think it is the other people who make us angry or sad or happy or whatever, and that external circumstances and situations lead us to go through all kinds of emotional upheavals, it is not just in what we consider external.

To a large part, even *what* we see is also determined by the mind. It depends on our habits, our character, our personality, our mood at a given time, our belief systems, and the value we attach to what we are experiencing. All these things go towards seeing the world in a particular, individually-tailored way. Far from being in direct contact with an objective world, we are directly responsible for creating this world that we are in contact with.

That is the first step, the first insight that one tries to develop through vipashyana meditation. By contemplating this kind of thing, there is the added benefit of allowing us to know that we are not victims of circumstances. It is not just the external circumstances and situations that are responsible for our level of enjoyment or lack of it in life, but it is we who actually decide: it is in our own hands. So seeing appearances as

mind is a very important first step; it is the first stage of vipashyana, introducing appearance as mind.

2. Seeing Mind's Nature as Emptiness

Next, we go into the mind itself and look at this mind that has the capacity to produce strong emotions and feelings. We look at the mind that develops strong opinions and very dogmatic views on various issues along with all the biases and prejudices that go with these. If we look at the mind itself, we realize that the mind is actually not something we can grasp at; it is not easy to get a handle on the mind.

So with the second introduction, the mind is introduced as having the nature of emptiness. "The nature of the mind is emptiness," as it is said, is then the second insight. The mind's nature is empty because when we look into the nature of the mind, it is not something; we do not manage to get a grip on it, so it is elusive. That elusiveness, itself, reveals its true nature. That is a positive insight; it is not a mere absence of things.

Seeing the mind's true nature in that way frees us from all kinds of mental constrictions. Because of our unceasing thoughts, our mind becomes very tight, very bound, rigid. When we really look into that mind in itself, it is not something that reveals itself as having tangible form, and that in itself is liberating.

The mind's creative nature lies in the fact that it does not have a fixed nature as such, yet manifests in so many ways. If mind had a fixed nature, then its creativity would be very limited. It would only be able to manifest in a fixed number of forms because it would not be in its nature to manifest in other ways. But the mind's nature is not fixed and is instead empty, as we say in the lineage prayer, *chiyang mayin chiryang charwa la* (Tib.), "It is not anything in itself. yet it appears, manifests, in so many different forms." That then is the second introduction.

3. Seeing Emptiness as Spontaneously-Established Phenomena

By seeing mind's own nature as emptiness and then seeing everything else—all the appearances—as having emptiness as their nature rather than a fixed nature, then one sees that everything is *lhundrup* in Tibetan, which means "spontaneously-established." Spontaneously-established is a very clumsy expression, but it means that we think of things less in terms of causes and conditions, as we normally would with respect to phenomena, and more in terms of manifesting spontaneously.

Normally, we look at things and try to find explanations in terms of causality, asking for example, "Why did something or other happen?" and concluding, "because of something else." But having understood something about emptiness and seeing emptiness itself as being the nature of everything, then one is not looking at things purely in causal terms but as manifesting spontaneously.

When varieties of things come together, then things change form, things manifest differently; the display of the phenomena, as we say, occurs. It is as if there is dynamism, vitality, in how the phenomenal world is seen. It is no longer seen in terms of "thingness."

Our normal way of perceiving things is to think they have a certain substance and, on top of that, particular attributes, such as shape, size, color, and so forth. We thus think in terms of things having certain essences and this is the essentialist view. But by thinking in terms of spontaneously-established phenomena, we are thinking of things in a different way.

Things appear and disappear at a very rapid pace, and because everything is happening at such a fast pace, we do not view things as static. It is more that different things are positioned in a certain way and then they mutually interact with each other, causing further different things to come into being. In any case, this is called "spontaneously-established" phenomena, and emptiness is then seen as part of spontaneously-established phenomena, which is the next insight.

4. Seeing Spontaneously-Established Phenomena as Self-Liberated

Since we are seeing all the appearances, external and internal, sensory and non-sensory, from a non-essentialist, non-substantialist point of view, and in terms of vibrant dynamism, we see them as self-liberated.

They are right in their own way; there is nothing wrong with them. There is no problem with anything that is going on. From this point of view, vibrant phenomena are not seen as illusory or something of that nature, but perceived for what they are. As it is said in the teachings, one realizes that nothing has to be added and nothing needs to be taken out of that reality, which is also a very important Mahamudra concept that is often used.

One does not need to add anything, nor does one need to take anything out to make things better. Everything that happens is happening just as it should. If we have that

insight, then there is no room for bondage so, therefore, everything is self-liberated. As soon as things arise, they dissipate; they appear, disappear, appear and disappear.

The idea then is that if the Mahamudra practitioner is transformed, all these mental imprints leave only very faint traces. There are no karmic imprints to bear; one is not bogged down by one's karmic inheritance and history. Karmic imprints are hardly created because such an individual is not caught up in fixation. Whatever appears disappears, because everything is liberated.

As we know, in Buddhism, a lot of our misery comes from mental fixation: we hang onto things; we latch onto or seize things, our experiences, and so forth. Then, due to our confusion, we do not see that the experiences themselves can never remain the same and are always in a state of dynamism. A stasis is then created which does not leave room for development and creativity. We get bogged down by our karmic imprints and this, as the tradition states, leads to impure perceptions, *ma dakpai nangwa* (Tib.). But if we see *lhundrup*, if we see that things are in a state of dynamism and vibrancy, then that leads to *dakpai nangwa* or *daknang* for short, which means "pure perception."

It is thus not the perception itself that is to be blamed, but how we perceive things. It is about whether we perceive things with a very tenacious sense of fixation and clinginess or whether we see things differently, in terms of vibrancy and as being in a state of constant creative movement. That perception is called "pure perception". That is the final insight that one gains in terms of vipashyana meditation.

In Mahamudra vipashyana meditation, this series of insights is specifically mentioned. The insights are mentioned in the order described: first seeing appearances as mind; then the mind as empty; then emptiness as spontaneously-established phenomena; then seeing spontaneously-established phenomena as self-liberated.

We have now covered a brief overview of the insights of vipashyana.

The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana
The Treasury of Knowledge by Jamgon Kongtrul
Chapter Eight: The Progressive Classification of the Training in Superior Samadhi
Part One: The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana –
The General Basis of All Samadhis
Translated by Kiki Ekselius and Chrissy Zerbini

The Measure of Accomplishment of Vipashyana

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.

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.

The Accomplishment of Vipāśyanā

The Practice of Tranquility and Insight by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche

Translated by Peter Roberts, Excerpts from pp. 105-107

Previously, being “well trained” was described as a characteristic of the accomplishment of śamatha. The accomplishment of vipāśyanā is also the state of being “completely trained.” One may be able to meditate but later not do so well because one loses one’s clarity, or one’s mind becomes dull, or one loses one’s wish to meditate. But when one has reached the state of the suppleness of being well trained, then the mind naturally engages in vipāśyanā and this vipāśyanā brings clarity and understanding. So until one has accomplished the suppleness of being well trained, one has not attained true vipāśyanā. The text says that the nature of this vipāśyanā and the way it is created has already been explained in the śamatha section. In terms of the abhidharma one can say being “well trained” is a mental event and therefore all beings possess it all the time. But what differs between beings is its extent. Some beings naturally engage in negative actions and some naturally engage in good actions.

But since we haven’t been meditating from beginningless time, we are not “well trained” in our meditation. We don’t have this natural tendency, so we have to habituate ourselves to it as we did for śamatha practice. The “well-trained” vipāśyanā will gradually develop by beginning with very little and then gradually increase. Samādhi, understanding, mindfulness, and awareness are all mental events that are naturally present, but must be increased. So first we develop śamatha meditation and then we develop vipāśyanā. The development of the “well-trained” vipāśyanā is described in the *Explanation of the View sūtra*, which says that there are two kinds of realization. There is the realization of the entire multiplicity of phenomena, which is understanding the relative aspect of phenomena. This is the understanding of impermanence, the five aggregates, and the twelve links of dependent origination. To develop this we have to have a perfectly trained mind.

Second, there is the realization of the true nature of phenomena and to have this, one also needs a perfectly trained mind. If one doesn’t have a completely trained mind, then one will not have these two realizations or genuine vipāśyanā. So the development of the completely trained mind is the sign of the accomplishment of vipāśyanā.

To summarize, there is the state of being “well trained” in which one is able to do vipāśyanā meditation without any difficulty or hardship; it is very pleasant and easy to do. So when doing vipāśyanā meditation, there is no mental or physical difficulty. This is the sign of the accomplishment of vipāśyanā meditation.

Chapter 10. Unifying Method and Wisdom
From *Stages of Meditation: The Stages of Meditation II* by
Kamalashila with Commentary by The Dalai Lama
Translated by Ven Geshe Lobsang Jordhen, Losang Choephel Ganchenpa, and
Jeremy Russell, Root Text Excerpted from pp. 107-158
(All headings have been added for use in Rime Shedra)

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.”

How to Meditate with Shamatha and Vipashyana United
From *The Royal Seal of Mahamudra, Volume One*
A Guidebook for the Realization of Coemergence
Khamtrul Ngawang Kunga Tenzin, Trs. by Gerardo Abboud, pp. 267-269

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 prajna 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.

[Page 268] 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 nondistractedness. This should be known by beginners. Nonmeditation is on the side of shamatha and relaxation, so dullness arises when it is excessive. Nondistractedness 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:

[Page 269] 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 [page 270] 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 Unity of Shamatha And Vipashyana
From *Lamp of Mahamudra: The Immaculate Lamp*
That Perfectly and Fully Illuminates the Meaning of Mahamudra,
***The Essence of All Phenomena,* by Tsele Natsok Rangdrol**
Translated by Erik Perna Kunsang, pp. 22-24

Shamatha is generally held to mean abiding in the state of bliss, clarity, and nonthought after conceptual thinking has naturally subsided. Vipashyana means to see nakedly and vividly the essence of mind, which is self-cognizant, objectless, and free from exaggeration and denigration. In another way, shamatha is said to be the absence of thought activity, and vipashyana is recognizing the essence of thought. Numerous other such statements exist, but, in actuality, whatever manifests or is experienced does not transcend the inseparability of shamatha and vipashyana. Stillness and thinking both are nothing but the display of the mind alone; to recognize your essence at the time of either stillness or thinking is itself the nature of vipashyana.

Shamatha is not to become involved in solidified clinging to any of the external appearances of the six collections, while vipashyana is the unobstructed manifestation of perception. Thus within perception the unity of shamatha and vipashyana is complete.

Vividly recognizing the essence of the thought as it suddenly occurs is shamatha. Directly liberating it within natural mind, free from concepts, is vipashyana. Thus within conceptual thinking shamatha and vipashyana are also a unity.

Furthermore, looking into the essence without solidly following after a disturbing emotion, even when it arises intensely, is shamatha. The empty and cognizant nakedness within which the observing awareness and the observed disturbing emotion have no separate existence is vipashyana. Thus the unity of shamatha and vipashyana is complete within disturbing emotions as well.

Vipashyana
From *Cloudless Sky: The Mahamudra Path*
Of the Tibetan Kagyu Buddhist School
By Jamgon Kongtrul III
German Trs. by Tina Drasczyk and Alex Drasczyk;
English Trs. by Richard Gravel, pp. 54-62

What does vipashyana, or seeing the unseeable, refer to? According to the teachings, vipashyana is "the wisdom which discriminates all phenomena," the insight that arises as the fruition of shamatha meditation. This does not mean, however, that vipashyana insight arises by itself out of the shamatha meditation of remaining in calmness.

In shamatha, one focuses the mind one-pointedly on something, whereas in vipashyana one experiences the actual nature of things. So vipashyana involves meditating on and investigating the nature of phenomena, or the fact that they have no real existence. Thus it can be said that shamatha is meditation by focusing, whereas vipashyana is meditation by analyzing. There are various ways of applying shamatha and vipashyana. For instance, one can first practice shamatha and then, once one has achieved mental calmness, proceed with vipashyana. Or else one can practice shamatha and vipashyana in alternation: first one practices shamatha meditation for a while, then one concentrates on developing vipashyana insight, after which one goes back to shamatha and then again back to vipashyana, and so on. Combining shamatha and vipashyana, calm-abiding and investigation, is an extremely effective method of practice.

If, for instance, one is concentrating on the coming and going of the breath during shamatha meditation, mental calmness means focusing totally on the breathing without letting the mind wander. Practicing vipashyana would mean that after a while one not only focuses on the breath alone but also examines and achieves insight into the nature of the breath. After one has turned one's mind for a while to the nature of the breath, then one concentrates again one-pointedly on the breathing. This is one way of alternating between shamatha and vipashyana practice. Although we speak about shamatha and vipashyana as two distinct types of meditation that can be practiced either sequentially or in alternation, the actual point is to join the two. If one practices only shamatha or vipashyana, then the unity of shamatha-vipashyana meditation will never arise.

What does it mean to practice shamatha and vipashyana together? Shamatha involves letting the mind rest on an object in a state of concentration. Both mind and object lack

ultimate reality. This true nature is present at all times, not only when one achieves insight into it through vipashyana meditation. Maintaining this awareness or insight in shamatha meditation-that is, not separating one-pointedness from awareness-is the unity of shamatha and vipashyana.

When a feeling or thought arises, what does it mean to unite "calmness, movement, and awareness" through shamatha and vipashyana? Let us take the arising of anger as an example. First one notices that anger has arisen and acknowledges it. This corresponds to shamatha or mental calmness, that is, mindfulness which allows one to notice that a feeling has arisen. Based on this, one examines the feeling or thought by means of vipashyana. Calmness, movement, and awareness are the three phases that one examines. Calmness corresponds to the question: "where does the feeling or thought dwell?," movement to the question: "where does the feeling or thought go to?," and awareness to the question: "what is present between the arising and the subsiding of the thought or feeling?" This form of investigation brings one to the realization that the feeling has no real existence.

There is a widespread belief that shamatha and vipashyana are only practiced at the beginning of the path, as a sort of preliminary training prior to actual meditation. This is totally false, since both shamatha and vipashyana are practiced throughout the entire Buddhist path with all its different aspects. Thus shamatha can be found in the development of bodhichitta, the mind of enlightenment, as well as in the visualizations of the utpattikrama or development phase of vajrayana. These are nothing but a form of shamatha, even though different methods and concepts are being used. The same can be said for the six yogas of Naropa which involve, among other things, holding one's prana and meditating on the nadis and bindus. All these different forms of meditation are ways of practicing shamatha; they are based solely on mental calmness and cannot be practiced without it.

It is the same with vipashyana. On the shravaka path, vipashyana involves meditating on egolessness. On the bodhisattva path, it relates to meditating on emptiness and dependent origination as well as keeping in mind the fact that phenomena have no true existence. In the vajrayana, vipashyana is practiced in the sampannakrama or completion phase of meditation. There is no such thing as a Buddhist path that does not apply shamatha and vipashyana. This is why they are so important.

If one practices shamatha and vipashyana properly, then there is no confusion and no discursive thoughts to be given up. When one looks at the nature of concepts, they disappear and dissolve into themselves, being by their very nature devoid of actual existence. Thus the application of specific antidotes against confusion becomes

irrelevant. By simply letting the mind rest in its own nature, confusion dissolves spontaneously into itself with no need to apply antidotes.

When one realizes the ultimate nature of mind, there are no longer any moments that fall outside the sphere of meditation. However, the only way to achieve this realization is through meditation. One is free from the struggle to give up afflictive emotions or to "attain" wisdom. At this point, meditation as such no longer exists, because there is no longer any separation between meditator, meditation, and an object of meditation.

For beginners who have not yet overcome mental fixation meditation is necessary. As long as concepts are still present it is essential to practice meditation, otherwise the experiences of joy, clarity, and nonconceptualization will never arise. These experiences are called the "adornment of insight" because it is meditation that allows the insight into the nature of all phenomena to gradually arise.

Shamatha meditation involves letting the mind dwell in its own nature; vipashyana is nondual insight into ultimate reality. By practicing the unity of shamatha and vipashyana one progressively achieves the four yogas.

Culmination of Vipashyana
From *King Doha: Saraha's Advice to a King*
By Traleg Kyabgon, Pages 24-39

The Non-Separability of Appearance and Reality

The concept of spontaneously-established phenomena is very important because, in Mahamudra, the real insight lies in understanding the non-separability of emptiness and appearance, or reality and appearance. In our mistaken state we think of appearance and reality as being separate. We also think reality is completely real, whereas appearance is not real and reality hides behind it, or something of that nature. We learn from these teachings this is not the case, that appearance does not hide reality.

To see the nature of the appearance is to see reality. It is thus not the case that we are deluded because we perceive appearances, but we are deluded because we do not perceive the nature of appearances. If we perceive the nature of appearances, then we will also perceive reality so, as pointed out in the teachings, to see appearance and reality to be non-divisible or inseparable is to see things in a non-dualistic fashion.

If we separate appearance and reality, however, we are not free of duality. If we think appearance is something bad and reality is something good, then we are still trapped in dualistic perception. We are thinking of appearance and reality as separate: reality as something we perceive with our wisdom eye or mind and appearance as perceived with our dualistic deluded mind. To see the non-separability is the profound insight one gains through practice of vipashyana. As the lineage prayer states:

chiyang mayin chiryang charwala
mangak rölpa charwai gomchenla
khordé yerme tokpar jin-gyi lop

This means "while not being anything in themselves, varieties of things appear, and these appearances are uninterrupted." They are uninterrupted and *rölpa* (Tib.), sometimes translated into English as "play of the mind." We then get the expression "uninterrupted play of the mind." The expression *rölpa charwa* also has the connotation of enjoyment.

Putting it all together, it includes the notion of being able to fully enjoy the display of phenomena. Realizing the nature of the mind or realizing the nature of the reality does not lead to nonenjoyment of the appearances; instead, it actually leads to enjoyment of

appearances. The concept of *rölpa* is also connected with one other word referred to earlier, and that is the notion of *tsal*, "creative power."

We see everything we experience as *rölpa*, as some kind of phenomenal display we can actually enjoy without fixation. Whatever we experience in terms of inner appearances, we see as manifestation of the mind's own creative energy, as *tsal*.

Without having to block the thoughts and emotions and so forth arising in the mind, without fixation we see everything as mind's own creative energy. And, by doing so, we experience bliss. Whether we are experiencing outer or inner phenomena, outer or inner appearances, we have the experience of bliss.

Normally what happens is that out of habit, when we see, smell, taste, or touch something, we get fixated on whatever sensory engagement occurs. Also, in terms of our inner experiences, the same thing happens. If we have a thought popping into our mind, we can't let that thought pass, we have to do something about it. We have to think about it, and thinking about thinking is what we do a lot of the time. We think one thought, and then we think about what we have thought, and then we think about what we have thought in terms of what we have thought, and so on.

Bliss comes not because nothing is arising in the mind or one is not paying attention to the phenomenal display, but when whatever one experiences does not give rise to fixation. Then there is bliss, *dechen* (Tib.), but *dechen gyunché mé* (Tib.) is also spoken of. *Gyunché* means "interruption" and *mé* means "not;" so *dechen gyunché mé* means "uninterrupted bliss." You can enjoy what you are seeing, smelling, tasting, and touching and you can enjoy what is going through your mind because none of these things give rise to fixation.

Because you are not grasping at them, your experiences remain fluid, vibrant, and vital and they are not arrested. You are not trying to capture these things with your over-conceptualization, as we say, with *vikalpa* (Skt.), which means "conceptual, discursive thoughts." The word for this in Tibetan is *namtok*. The other word used is *prapancha* (Skt.) and *tröpa* in Tibetan, which means "conceptual elaboration." If we are caught in these things, then our fixation strengthens and our mind becomes static and loses its pliancy, as we would say in Buddhism. In other words, the mind becomes less workable; it becomes rigid. Conversely, as fixation begins to loosen then everything we experience is more enjoyable.

Shamatha and Vipashyana Combined

If we do our practice in this way so that we are not thinking of either shamatha or vipashyana alone, but combining shamatha with vipashyana practice, we have the stability of shamatha as well as the clarity of vipashyana. These different kinds of meditation have separate functions. As practitioners, with shamatha we learn how to stabilize the mind, and with vipashyana we begin to sharpen our mind so that some kind of cognitive transformation takes place in us.

It is possible to meditate simply by dealing with thoughts and emotions. We can practice meditation in such a way as to be able to reduce negative feelings and encourage more positive feelings. We can learn to have more positive emotions and reduce the negative forms of emotion. From a Buddhist point of view, if we have not practiced vipashyana and tried to see things differently from how we normally look at things, then, because we are not seeing things correctly, we will not be transformed. In order to gain enlightenment we need to have insight, and insight means we have to see things differently.

That is the key, and we need to keep that in mind. Otherwise, as we continue to practice our meditation, doing shamatha and vipashyana and so on—especially if we are not doing vipashyana correctly—then even if we have meditative experiences, these can lead to what is called "going astray" or deviating from the Path Mahamudra. These kinds of instructions also feature prominently in Mahamudra teachings.

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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.

Chapter 10. Unifying Method and Wisdom
From *Stages of Meditation: The Stages of Meditation II* by
Kamalashila with Commentary by by The Dalai Lama
Translated by Ven Geshe Lobsang Jordhen, Losang Choephel Ganchenpa, and
Jeremy Russell, Root Text Excerpted from pp. 107-158
(All headings have been added for use in Rime Shedra)

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.”

How to Meditate with Shamatha and Vipashyana United
From *The Royal Seal of Mahamudra, Volume One*
A Guidebook for the Realization of Coemergence
Khamtrul Ngawang Kunga Tenzin, Trs. by Gerardo Abboud, pp. 267-269

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 prajna 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.

[Page 268] 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 nondistractedness. This should be known by beginners. Nonmeditation is on the side of shamatha and relaxation, so dullness arises when it is excessive. Nondistractedness 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:

[Page 269] 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 [page 270] 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.

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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 unmistakable 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.

Removing Doubts About How to Sustain Meditation on the View
From *Moonbeams: An Eloquent Elucidation of the Way*
to Cultivate Mahāmudrā, the Definitive Meaning
By Tashi Namgyal, Translated by Elizabeth Callahan, pp. 87-95

A) The Distinctions between Analytical Meditation and Resting Meditation

[Page 87] Some think that the meditation of panditas is only analytical meditation and that the meditation of kusalis is only resting meditation. Similarly, others think that the only thing scholars do is analyze in the context of study and reflection based on the scriptural systems and all kusalis do is rest in equipoise referring to esoteric instructions. That is not how it is. Scholars need the resting meditation of remaining in equipoise with the object of meditation, and kusalis need the analytical meditation that cuts through misinterpretations [superimpositions] and denials in the context of the view. Those who don't use both analysis and resting will have difficulty discovering the true object of meditation because the view that is sought through critical investigation alone is an intellectually created view and the view that only involves resting stays at the level of a mental experience.

We may wonder, How are analytical meditation and resting meditation defined? What are their differences? The terms “analytical” and “resting” are designated from the perspective of what they emphasize. “Analytical [page 88] meditation” refers to the meditative process that uses inferential cognition as its path and primarily determines the view by relying on critical investigation using scriptures and reasonings. “Resting meditation” refers to the meditative process that uses direct cognition as its path and primarily determines the view through remaining in equipoise with suchness. The former is the meditation process that is based on the texts of the noble Asanga and the protector Nāgārjuna in which analysis of scripture and reasonings is emphasized. The latter is the meditation process transmitted from the Great Brahman [Saraha], lord Śavaripa, and others in which remaining in equipoise with the actual abiding state predominates. The view that is discovered through either approach must be the same in terms of the abiding state, emptiness, as Götsangpa teaches:

The analytical meditation of panditas and the resting meditation of kusalis have the same final destination, but the kusali approach is faster.

It is only just possible to realize the correct view by relying on the critical investigation of scriptures and reasonings because such critical investigation is conceptual analysis that involves terms and referents, and Dharmakīrti has explained that that cannot determine

[the view] as a direct cognition. There are numerous accounts about how the majority of great panditas and siddhas belonging to the two great chariot-systems were liberated through relying on esoteric instructions such as those found in Secret Mantra. In particular, there are stories of many great panditas, including Nāropa and Maitrīpa, who were unable to achieve liberation through listening and reflection that relied upon scriptures and reasonings but were liberated through the esoteric instructions on the ultimate essence. It seems that most mahāsiddhas of India and Tibet have been liberated solely by relying upon esoteric instructions.

That being so, those who say that, generally, the view cannot be realized without relying on scriptures and reasonings and that, specifically, the true view cannot be realized without relying on the Madhyamaka reasonings of the father Nāgārjuna and his son [Āryadeva] are simply espousing their own idiosyncratic [ideas]. They are quite wrong. Were they right, it would mean that the true view was not realized prior to Nāgārjuna's and his son [Āryadeva's] composition of their treatises included in the Collection of Reasonings and that most buddhas, bodhisattvas, and Indian and Tibetan siddhas did not realize the true view.

[page 89] Furthermore, broadly speaking, if [we look at this] from the perspective of the use of the terms “analysis” and “resting,” meditations that involve critical investigation must be considered analytical meditation, and meditations during which we settle into the natural state and rest must be resting meditation. Other meanings of the words “analysis” and “resting” would be difficult to explain [or justify]. That being so, all meditations involving intelligent critical investigation—beginning with the meditation on the difficulties of acquiring the pleasures and opportunities [of a precious human life] and the meditation on impermanence up through determining the two absences of self-entity—must be analytical meditation. All types of resting evenly on the object of meditation that is the subject of analysis, with one-pointed mindfulness and alertness, must be resting meditation.

On the other hand, some think that when they analyze they are unable to rest because they must analyze conceptually, and that when they rest they cannot analyze because they must settle nonconceptually. They regard analysis and resting to be incompatible. They are wrong for many reasons. The first *Stages of Meditation* explains that prajñā examines within a state of śamatha and that the prajñā of equipoise analyzes. Vasubandhu's *Explanation of the “Ornament for the Mahāyāna Sūtras”* says that there is vipaśyanā with both conceptuality and analysis, vipaśyanā with no conceptuality but with analysis, and vipaśyanā with neither of those two. Also, vipaśyanā analysis is often used to ensure that the state of resting does not slip away. For example, during śamatha the arousing of alertness is an examination within the resting state.

B) The Roles of Analytical and Resting Meditations in Śamatha and Vipāśyanā

Certain people [Tsongkhapa and his followers] assert that only resting meditation is done in śamatha practice because alternating between analysis and resting makes it impossible to perfect śamatha. And they say that if vipāśyanā practice does not include analysis with discerning prajñā it vanishes. Such ideas are very wrong. If the former were the case, some of the objects of meditation in śamatha—such as those for purifying behavior and purifying the mental afflictions—would be unsuitable, and it would be inappropriate to arouse discerning prajñā and forceful alertness during śamatha practice. If the latter were the case, the vipāśyanā described as the pacification of discernments at the end of the analysis done by discerning prajñā would be illogical, and the teachings on [page 90] nonconceptual vipāśyanā and unmoving vipāśyanā, found in the texts on the stages of meditation, would be invalid.

Furthermore, those who advocate such [positions] then have to say that there is no śamatha during analysis and no vipāśyanā during resting, because they assert that analysis is exclusively conceptual analysis and śamatha is solely nonconceptual, and because they assert that during resting meditation vipāśyanā vanishes and there is no discerning prajñā. If you say those things, there are huge [absurd] consequences: the unification of śamatha and vipāśyanā would be impossible, and there can be no common locus for direct nonconceptual cognition and vipāśyanā.

Then we may ask, What are the roles [of analysis and resting in śamatha and vipāśyanā]? In the context of śamatha, resting meditation predominates, in keeping with the practice tradition of the nine ways of resting the mind. It is taught, however, that it is necessary to do analytical meditation once samādhi has improved, as the first *Stages of Meditation* explains:

When your concentration has improved, then you should focus in detail with specific objects such as the skandhas and dhātus.

There are also many types of analytical meditations recommended in the context of śamatha, such as meditating on ugliness as the antidote for desire, on kindness as the antidote for anger, and dependent origination as the remedy for bewilderment.

In the context of vipāśyanā, analytical meditation predominates in keeping with the three or four stages of vipāśyanā. However, at the end of the analysis done by discerning prajna, discernments are pacified and nothing is seen. Since vipāśyanā does not vanish and that is the true object seen in vipāśyanā, at that point we must use

resting meditation. The *Sūtra of the Questions of Kāśyapa* states:

Fire springs up from the rubbing of two sticks,
and its presence then consumes those two.
Similarly, once the faculty of prajñā arises [from discernment]
its presence consumes those two [prajñā and discernment].

The *Entrance to the Middle Way* says:

Ordinary beings are bound by their concepts.
Yogins and yoginīs without concepts are free.
[page 91] Thus, the wise teach the reversing of concepts
to be the result of analysis.

Once we have achieved the unification of śamatha and vipaśyanā, we should primarily do resting meditation, though on occasion it will be necessary to alternate that with analytical meditation. The relevant scriptural sources will be provided below.

Nevertheless, it is explained that, as beginners, when we experience agitation from an excess of analytical meditation and vipaśyanā, we should cultivate śamatha and, when we feel sluggishness from too much resting meditation and śamatha, we should cultivate vipaśyanā. When we can rest with equal amounts of śamatha and vipaśyanā, we should cultivate equanimity without active application. The first *Stages of Meditation* explains:

If you do not dispel mental dullness, extreme dullness will prevent vipaśyanā and cause your mind to be like a blind person. Since that is the case, when dullness occurs you must dispel it.

When cultivating vipaśyanā, prajñā may become dominant. At that point, because that is all there is [meaning your śamatha is weak], your mind will waver like a candle flame in a windy location and, consequently, you will be unable to see suchness clearly. Since that is the case, when it happens, cultivate śamatha. When śamatha becomes dominate, cultivate prajñā.

It also says:

When you are able to rest equally in both, remain without any active application as long as that does not strain your body or mind.

Once śamatha and vipaśyanā mix and are unified, it's not necessary to repeatedly alternate between analysis and resting while the one-pointed mind remains in equipoise. It is said in *Unraveling the Intent*:

“At what point do śamatha and vipaśyanā mix and become evenly unified?”
[The Bhagavān] replied: “When there is attentiveness to the one-pointed mind.”

[page 92] It also says:

What is the one-pointed mind? It understands that representations for the sphere of samadhi are simply cognition. Having understood that, it is attentiveness to thusness.

Ācārya Jñānagarbha's commentary on that text explains:

The path of śamatha is not different from the path of vipaśyanā because [śamatha] observes the mind that is the object of vipaśyanā. On the path of śamatha, since only the mind that is the object of vipaśyanā is observed, the object observed and the observer are [identical] in being of the nature of the mind. Therefore, [śamatha and vipaśyanā] are not different.

C) The Roles of Analysis and Resting in Meditating on the View

Certain people explain that when we are sustaining the view, first we must forcefully generate an apprehension of the emptiness of reality by analyzing with scriptures and reasonings, and then practice a little bit of resting meditation on that. If we were to practice resting meditation for a long time, it would simply become śamatha and any vipaśyanā would vanish. Therefore, they say that we must analyze as before and meditate while alternating analysis and resting in that way.

That is very illogical. Later I will explain the reasons why, if we have any kind of apprehension of the emptiness of reality that arises based on analysis using scriptures and reasonings, we won't get beyond grasping at emptiness and, consequently, will not develop the correct view for vipaśyanā. That being the case, practicing resting meditation on that [apprehension of emptiness] is not correct meditation.

If, in their approach, analysis and resting are [always] alternated, then even though those who rest evenly in the view will be unable to master it because they say that it is impossible to perfect śamatha when analysis and resting are alternated, and those

reasonings that apply to resting evenly in śamatha are equally applicable to resting evenly in the view.

It would become illogical to do resting meditation at the end of analysis [page 93] because, since they say that vipaśyanā vanishes when we rest, resting meditation on a view in which vipaśyanā has disappeared would not be a correct meditation.

It is also illogical that once we give rise to the view in which śamatha and vipaśyanā are unified, if we do not repeatedly analyze it, it reverts to being just śamatha. When the view in which śamatha and vipaśyanā are unified has arisen, one-pointed resting meditation on just that [view] contains both śamatha and vipaśyanā completely. That is the unification of śamatha and vipaśyanā.

It is not feasible that after having done resting meditation on the view we must again repeatedly analyze. Analysis using scriptures and reasonings does not go beyond being a conceptual process involving terms and referents and, since that is ignorant conceptuality, it is explained as being an object to be abandoned for nonconceptual wisdom. Although the *Sūtra of the Questions of Kāśyapa* and the *Stages of Meditation* teach that nonconceptual wisdom arises from discerning prajñā, they only say that that prajñā is essential at first when determining the view—they do not say that we must repeatedly examine and analyze to sustain the view. For the most part, certainty that [results from] rational analysis does not go beyond being inferential rational cognition arising from reflection, and it is not nonconceptual unmistaken cognition.

It is also untenable to equate the meditation of resting in the view with śamatha because the two are significantly different. Śamatha is simply to sustain the stream of mindfulness that does not consider anything other than its object of meditation. Resting right within the view is to ascertain the emptiness of inherent nature and then sustain the stream of freedom from elaborations that is concordant with that [emptiness].

Then, we may ask, What are the roles of analysis and resting in sustaining the view? First, while investigating the view, the prajñā arising from listening and reflection cuts through misinterpretations concerning specifically and generally characterized [phenomena]. For inducing certainty this is crucial, like showing a horse the racetrack. However, for investigating the correct view, the discerning prajñā arisen from meditation is of the utmost importance. When we look and analyze with that [prajñā], without relying on inference, we are able to directly comprehend that all phenomena lack any nature or essence, and that very discernment will be experienced as disappearing and not existing with any essence. That is the actual view.

[page 94] Looking and analyzing in that way is analysis with the prajñā of equipoise in which the stream of mindfulness during resting meditation is not lost. It is not analysis involving the conceptual process of terms and referents, as is explained in the first *Stages of Meditation*:

Once you have stabilized your mind on an object of meditation with śamatha, if you examine with prajna, the light of true wisdom will manifest. At that time the dawning [of wisdom's] light will be like that which dispels darkness.

Those two [śamatha and prajñā], like eyes and light, are mutually compatible [conditions] for the dawning of true wisdom. They are not internally incompatible as light and darkness are.

Samādhi is not of the nature of darkness. What is it? It is characterized as being the one-pointed mind. Since it is said, "When you rest evenly in that, know what is true just as it is," [samādhi] is completely compatible with prajñā, not incompatible.

That being so, when the prajñā of equipoise examines, its nonobservance of phenomena is the genuine nonobservation. Such characteristics of a yogin's or yoginī's śamatha phase are spontaneously existent because there is nothing to be seen outside of that.

After discernment is self-pacified, there is naturally an absence of seeing any phenomena whatsoever. That is seeing the true nature. The same text states:

[It is said in the sūtras:]

What does seeing the ultimate [mean]? It is the absence of seeing any phenomenon.

With that absence of seeing in mind, [the Buddha] said, "There is no seeing." That is not the no seeing that is the result of not being attentive or the incompleteness of conditions, such as is the case with someone who has their eyes shut or who is blind.

And:

[page 95] When the prajñā of equipoise examines, its nonobservance of phenomena is the genuine nonobservation.

For those reasons, when we are investigating the view, at first we definitely must engage in analytical meditation using our discerning prajñā within meditative equipoise. Once we have discovered the view, if at any point our intellectual process of apprehending characteristics makes our state of mind unworkable, we should then do whatever analytical meditation is appropriate. When we have incontrovertible certainty in the view, we should do resting meditation right within the view on all occasions that create familiarization with the view. There is no need to alternate with analytical meditation. The relevant scriptural sources will be provided below.

The Analytic Meditation of a Pandit
From *Vivid Awareness: The Mind Instructions of Khenpo Gangshar*
By Khenchen Thrangu
Translated and Edited by David Karma Choephel

Looking at The Mind

[94] The mind is the root of everything, but what is it like? Does the mind exist or not? Is it something, or nothing? Often we examine things like this with logical inference as in middle-way philosophy, but these instructions teach a different way to examine and analyze the mind. In the middle way, we examine it through logic and inference: we think that something must be so or not so. It is as if we were circling the mind from afar. Here, in the mind instructions, we do not examine the mind from afar with logical analysis. We instead look directly at it and take direct perception as the path. If there is a mind that exists, where is it? Is it in our head? Is it in our body? Is it something that is outside our body? We need to actually search for it, just looking, without using logic. We should not ask, what is it like and what proves it? In this way, the analytic meditation of a pandita differs from middle-way logic.

In the middle way, there are different types of reasoning, including logic that analyzes causes, logic that analyzes results, and analyses of the essence of phenomena, but the primary logic of the middle way is the logic of analyzing interdependence. This was the main line of reasoning taught by the noble Nagarjuna in his *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*. In the context of this logic, interdependence does not refer to the twelve links of interdependence. Instead, what it means is that any one thing arises in dependence upon something else. This is something we can examine logically. As Nagarjuna says:

[95] Because there is no dharma at all
That is not interdependent,
Therefore there is no dharma at all
That is not emptiness.

There is nothing other than interdependence, and since there is only interdependence, there are no things that are not empty.

....

[96] We look to see where our mind is and what it is like. When we do this we see that the mind is naturally empty of any essence. The mind seems to be something, but when we look for it, we cannot find it either inside or outside our bodies. We should not merely analyze it; we must look at it directly and experience it. When we experience it, we do not need to prove that it is emptiness through reasoning, we simply have the feeling that it is emptiness.

The meditation practices of the middle way and the analytic meditation of the pandita both

come to the same fundamental point, but they do so by different methods. In the middle way, one does this by engaging one's understanding and examining external phenomena conceptually. This can bring us to the understanding that everything is emptiness, but meditating on that does not really lead to actual experience. In the meditations of the pandita and the kusulu, however, we do not look at external things conceptually but instead look inward at our own internal experience.

....

[97] Similarly, when we meditate we don't merely think that everything is emptiness. Rather, we look and see what the mind is like. Where is it? Where does it dwell? Where does it go? What is its essence? When we look carefully, we can have an experience where we feel that the nature of mind really is like that. It really is empty. That is why we do the analytic meditation of the pandita.

Looking for the Mind in the Body

Khenpo Gangshar begins the actual instructions on how to do the analytic meditation of a pandita by saying:

You should now examine where this mind dwells: from the top of the hair on your head to the nails on your toes; from the outer layer of skin, the flesh in between, to the bones, five organs, and six vessels within.

We have a mind that seems strong and powerful. We think that there is a mind, and that it is the root of all appearances—but where is it? How does it exist? We think that our sixth, mental consciousness, our mind that can think of anything at all and has the essence of greed, aversion, and delusion is something that exists somewhere. We need to look carefully to see where it is.

....

[98] When Khenpo Gangshar gave these instructions, he often taught them to Tibetans, but he also sometimes taught them to Chinese. When he asked them where the mind was, they would give different answers. The Chinese at that time had received some scientific education and would answer that the mind is in the brain or the head. Tibetans, however, would say it is in the heart because that is the center of the body. Although they would feel this and say this, neither is true. It is not really in either place because if you look for exactly where it is, you cannot find it. It is not really in the head or the brain. Perhaps since thoughts occur through the support of the channels within the brain, the brain may be a basis for the mind, but the brain is not the mind itself. It is material. When a person dies, the brain is still there, but the mind is not. Thus the mind is not in the brain. Similarly, it is not really in the heart, because it seems as if it were present in the whole body and not concentrated in the center.

We have both mind and thoughts. In the abhidharma, mind, or cognition, is considered the aggregate of consciousness, but thoughts are categorized under the aggregate of formations.

Within the aggregate [99] of formations, there are fifty-one different formations. In our Buddhist instructions, we generally say that such thoughts are in the brain.

....

So the mind is not necessarily in either the brain or the heart. As Khenpo Gangshar says, when you feel something or think about something, the mind jumps there. If you have a sensation in your head, your mind leaps there. When you touch the soles of your feet, the mind jumps there. If you wiggle your finger, then at that point the mind seems to be in the finger, but if you do something else, the mind goes elsewhere. The mind seems to be throughout the body, but exactly *where* is uncertain—it does not dwell in any fixed location. The mind seems to go wherever you experience a sensation, so you cannot say with certainty that it is in either the head or the heart. This is looking inside the body.

Investigating Where the Mind Dwells

We cannot find any place inside the body where the mind dwells, so we might think that the mind dwells in external objects—the forms we see, sounds we hear, scents we smell, and so forth. So we need to look and see whether the mind actually resides in them. Does the [100] mind somehow exit the body and reside in the object? When we examine this, although we see and hear things, we cannot find that the mind dwells in external objects. As Khenpo Gangshar says:

It has no fixed place. It dwells neither inside outer objects nor inside the body, nor in the empty space in between. You must become certain that it has no dwelling place.

....

[102] The emptiness of our mind means that we cannot find the mind anywhere at all, and this is also what the sutras teach. It is similar with the middle way: we could use logic and reasoning to prove that the mind is emptiness, but when we look at it, we realize that the lack of anything to find is what the middle way means by emptiness. For this reason, the mind is empty. This is what we discover when we look at it from the perspective of emptiness.

When we say that appearances are mind and the mind is empty, this means that it is as if the mind did not exist. We are not merely proving it through scriptural citations or logic. We actually have to experience it: we have to look at it. We have to see: What is it like? When we look, what do we see? We cannot see or find anything. That is what it means to say the mind is empty.

But the emptiness is spontaneously present. We cannot really say the mind is nothing. It is not as if the mind cannot see or feel anything; it is not as if it cannot do anything. It is not just a blank nothingness. There is the potential for all sorts of appearances to arise. There is the capacity for qualities and wisdom to arise. This is what we call the spontaneous presence of emptiness. It is what Khenpo Gangshar calls the "ever-conscious and ever-aware king." The mind is able to know anything, see anything, feel anything, and experience anything. It can

know and be aware of anything—it is as strong and powerful as a king.

This mind that understands, remembers the past, and thinks is unceasing. It never stops. It is present, even though we cannot find it. Does this mean it is something? It does not, because it is empty—we cannot find it. But that does not mean that it is nothing, a blank void. It can understand anything. It can think, engage in conversation, and do anything. It is unceasing. If we did not have a mind, our body would be little more than a corpse. But it is not like that. We can do [103] things with this body. It is as if the mind did exist. Its essence is not something, but it is not nothing either. We look and look, search and search, and can't find anything, but there is something that knows and is aware. There is something that can see, hear, and know anything, and that is unceasing, so you cannot say that it does not exist at all.

....

We also say that this spontaneous presence is self-liberated. Normally we are confused by the appearances we perceive, but when we realize the spontaneous presence of emptiness, we are no longer confused by appearances. We naturally realize that they dwell within the nature of emptiness and there is no longer anything about them that can bind us to either samsara or conceptual thoughts.

Should we think the mind is empty and meditate on that? That is not what we should do. You might think that the mind that can think and remembers anything is unceasing, so we need to meditate on that. But that is not necessary, either. Instead, we simply need to look at the mind and see it as it is: essentially empty, but unceasingly thinking and aware. This is the characteristic of the mind. We do [104] not need to meditate thinking that nothingness is something, or that something is nothing. Instead, we just need to know its essence. This should not just be a mental understanding; it is important that we know the nature of the mind as it is.

The Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje, described this in his "Aspiration Prayer of Mahamudra":

Not something, even the victors cannot see it.
Not nothing, it is the ground of all samsara and nirvana.
This is not a contradiction; it is unity, the middle way.
May we realize the mind's nature, beyond extremes.

When we look to see where the essence of our mind is, there is nothing we can see or locate. There is no color, no shape, and nothing to find. It is not something. There's nothing there. It is not that the mind is too small and we cannot see it. It is not that it is too pure for us to see. It is not that it is too far away for us to see. It is not because we are just ignorant and do not know how to look. It is not any of these: even the victors—the wise and omniscient buddhas—cannot see or find anything about the nature of the mind that can be established as a thing. The mind is not something that exists in any way. Just as there is nothing we can see, there is nothing the buddhas can see either. This is because the nature of mind is emptiness.

....

[105] ...[W]hen we look at the nature of the mind, not being something and not being nothing are not contradictory. Our mind is clear and can know things. But at the same time if we look to see where it is, we cannot find it anywhere. Therefore it is not something, but it is still knowing, so it cannot be nothing either. These two points are not contradictory; they go together. Even though it does not exist, the mind knows, sees, and understands—it is the all-knowing, all-aware king. Still, we cannot find it. These two are brought together and unified; this is the great middle way.

....

A Summary of the Analytic Meditation of a Pandita

[107] We all strive to find happiness and avoid suffering. In order to find happiness and avoid suffering, we need to be careful about karma, cause, and effect. Karma, cause, and effect function through our bodies, speech, and minds, but the most important of these is our mind. So we need to know the nature of this mind thoroughly. We need to look to see where it is. We need to recognize the nature of the mind as it is, without altering it. Just resting in meditation within that is enough. This is how we come to understand the way the mind is.

The explanation up to this point completes the preliminary teachings of the analytical meditation of a pandita.

Of the two main parts of the instructions, the first, the analytic meditation of a pandita, has been completed. When we examine where the mind comes from, where it dwells, and where it goes to, we see that the mind cannot be established as a truly existing thing. But it is also not nothing at all. Many Buddhist philosophical texts give examples of things that do not exist in any way, shape, or form, such as rabbit horns or flowers that grow in the sky, but the mind-essence is not like that. Its essence of being clear wisdom is unceasing and this is [108] something that we can actually experience. We do the analytic meditation of the pandita in order to recognize this.

If you look on the surface, it seems as if this is probably analyzing through logic and inference. But it is not that. Actually, it is looking to see where the mind is and experiencing it through direct perception. But how do we look at it?

The texts on valid perception teach four different types of direct perception. The first is direct sensory perception, such as when we actually see with our eyes, actually hear with our ears, actually smell a scent with our noses, actually taste a flavor with our tongues, or actually feel a touch with our bodies. The actual experience of an external object through the five sense faculties is what we call direct sensory perception. Is the analytic meditation of the pandita direct sensory perception? It is not.

The second is direct mental perception. There is a slight occurrence of a nonconceptual mental consciousness that forms a link between the sensory consciousnesses and the conceptual mental consciousness. Is this it? This is also not it. Both direct sensory and direct mental perception are directed outward at external objects. They do not look inward at the internal

mind.

Is the analytic meditation of the pandita self-aware direct perception? It is not. Self-awareness as described in the texts on validity means that the mind is not hidden from itself. It does not look out at the external object; it looks at the inner mind. But between the unconfused nature and the confused perceptions, it looks at confused perceptions. It is knowing what we see. When we hear something, it is knowing that we hear. When we think about something, knowing that we think about it is what we call the self-aware direct perception. This is not the analytic meditation of the pandita either.

Well then, when we do the analytic meditation of a pandita and examine our mind to see where it comes from, where it dwells, and where it goes, what sort of direct perception do we use? We use direct yogic perception. Through our samadhi and the intelligence born of meditation, we actually experience the way the mind is: neither something nor nothing. We do not contrive it through inference, through thinking "It is empty." Instead, we experience it directly. It is [109] our own mind, and when we look at the essence of our own mind, if it were something, there would be a thing we could find. But we don't find anything. Well then, is it nothing at all, like space? It is not. Clear awareness is unceasing, and actually directly experiencing this essence is the result of the analytic meditation of the pandita.

This talk of the four types of direct perception generally comes up in intellectual discussion on the topic of validity. However, when we combine that with our meditation, we see that our insight is not direct sensory perception, not self-aware direct perception, and not inference. It is direct yogic perception. The nature of the mind is something we have to directly experience in meditation; we should not let it be stained by inference. If we were to think about it through inference, that would not be the right samadhi on the nature of the mind. So the discussion of direct yogic perception may be rather intellectual, but it is also very helpful for our meditation.

Appendix I

The Treasury of Knowledge

Book 8: The Progressive Classification of the Training in Superior Samadhi

Section 8.1: The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha And Vipashyana, The General Basis of All Samadhis

I) The necessity of practicing samadhi

II) Identifying the samadhi to be practiced

III) The detailed explanation

A) The essential nature of shamatha and vipashyana

B) Etymology

C) The necessity of both

D) The progressive order

E) The training in each particular practice

1) Detailed explanation of each practice

(a) Shamatha

i The prerequisites for shamatha

ii The progressive classification

iii The way to meditate

- Posture

- The methods for setting the mind

- ◆ The objects of observation

- ◆ The progression of the actual meditation

- a. Setting the mind with a concrete support

- b. Setting the mind without concrete support

- c. Setting the mind in the essential nature

- Identifying the experiences arising from meditation

- ◆ Brief explanation

- ◆ Detailed explanation

- a. The tradition of the great treatises

- i. The eight antidotes to the five faults

- ii. The six powers, the four mental engagements and the nine mental abidings

- b. The tradition of oral instructions

iv The measure of accomplishment of shamatha and its benefits

- The way shamatha is accomplished and the signs of correct mental engagement
- The necessity of accomplishing shamatha

(b) Vipashyana

- i The prerequisites for vipashyana
- ii The particular types of vipashyana
- iii The classification according to the essential nature
- iv The way to meditate
- v The measure of accomplishment

(c) The training in shamatha and vipashyana conjoined

- i The actual method of training
- ii The union of shamatha and vipashyana
- iii The fruition

2) A general summary of the categories

(a) Brief listing of the categories

- i The different categories of shamatha
- ii The different categories of vipashyana

(b) The accomplishment of shamatha and vipashyana by means of analytical and stabilizing meditation

(c) Supplementary explanation of the three stages of concentration

**Esoteric Instructions on The Noble Perfection of Wisdom
By Āryadeva the Brahmin**

**From *Chod: The Sacred Teachings on Severance*
Volume 14 of The Treasury of Precious Instructions:
Essential Teachings of The Eight Practice Lineages of Tibet
Compiled by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Taye
Translated by Sarah Harding, Pages 4-11**

**The Sanskrit title is *Āryaprajñāpāramitā Upadeśa*.
The Tibetan is '*Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i man ngag*.'**

Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.

The sun and moon of your realization conquer ignorance and misconceptions,
and the moisture of your compassion matures living beings.
Lion of Speech who perfectly completes the two purposes,
I bow to you in sincere devotion with body, speech, and mind.

The essence of the subject matter is the meaning of
nondual perfection of wisdom without root,
freed from referential extremes of nihilism and eternalism.
I will explain as best I can in order to benefit beings.

Rest the three bases to be prepared directly on the word.
Recognize uncontrived, unspoiled awareness:
mind that is the root of both samsara and nirvana,
yet is not established by any causes or conditions;
unborn single cut, intrinsic emptiness.

Such realization is like cutting the root of the tree trunk:
the branches of discursive thoughts will never grow again.
Give as vast offerings to the guru and Jewels
actual and emanated appearances in your mind.
After doing prostrations and offerings,
devotedly take refuge and arouse the awakening mind.

Guard like your eyes the precepts you have taken. {3}
Do not abandon the bodhisattva precepts

even at the cost of your life.
Strive to uphold the training.

Abandon the ten nonvirtues, such as killing,
and encourage others to do so as well.
Express approval of what is consistent
with abandoning killing and the others.
Merely abandoning the ten nonvirtues,
you will not discover the supreme path.

Practice the six perfections yourself.
and encourage others to do so as well.
Express approval of what is
consistent with all six perfections.

Turn away from the arising of arrogance
that results from the conduct of virtuous action
such as the six perfections.

If you do not realize that ultimate
nondual perfection is free of extremes
such as virtue/negativity, acceptance/rejection, and hope/fear,
even if you practice conditioned virtue,
you will not become liberated in this very life.

Therefore, do not reference even an atom
in all phenomena, positive or negative,
conditioned or unconditioned.

Nonetheless, wisdom that is not founded
on method will not become manifest. {4}
It is similar to the harvesting of crops
that will not grow without cultivation.

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?

The meaning of the perfection of wisdom—
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.

Meditate on recollecting the Buddha,
naturally clear of thoughts and memories,
free of all mental engagement.

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

The most sublime method
is to blend 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.

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

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

The meaning of the unborn taught by the guru—
practice it during the four daily activities.

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?

When the empty nature of phenomena is realized, {5}
the sign or characteristic is that externally
all objects of the five sense doors—
form, sound, smell, taste, and touch—
are fully illuminated as emptiness.
Inwardly, the coarse afflictive emotions
and subtle dualistic fixation, although they arise,
are self-liberated in nonduality, beyond concern.

With that realization, abiding and arising are liberated
in the nature of phenomena,
like reaching an island of gold.

When a person's root life force is severed,
there is no need to purposefully sever
the eyes and other five sense doors.
Similarly, when the mind itself is severed at the root,
all phenomena are realized to be empty.

Since it severs the root of mind itself
and severs the five toxic emotions,
extremes of view, meditational formations,
conduct anxiety, and hopes and fears;
since it severs all inflation,
it is called *severance* by semantic explanation.

Attachment to real things with passion and aggression
is the tangible devil, so how should one sever that?

Superior, average, or inferior experiencers
rest in the state of no-thought,
meditate with attention on that,
or ascertain it through examination and analysis.

For instance, like a thick forest,
a strong person,
and a sharp axe.

The apparitions of gods and demons that cause inflation
are called the intangible devil.

Set pestilence upon pestilence, directly in the flesh.
Stick the hot needle precisely there.
Go for refuge in the Three Jewels.
Put the morning star under thumb.
Reject closeness and distance toward gods and demons.
Corner the great pestilence.

In Severance, the evidence of having severed is freedom from fear.
Evidence of termination is that apparitions subside by themselves.
Evidence of turning away is fleeing in fear and terror.
Don't turn away; be like a door frame.
Don't flee, even in fear and terror.
Suppress them like a spike,
bend them down, and apply effort.
That is the supreme esoteric instruction.

Worldly gods and demons cannot bear
your meditation on nondual perfections {6}
and cause various kinds of apparitions:
manifesting, overwhelming, dreamt, and so on.

Those with superior meditative experience
rest in the nondual meaning of it all.
The average practitioners focus on that and meditate.
The inferior offer their body aggregate as food.

Afterward, an experience of direct awareness
free of any mental support will arise.

When you go to a haunted place, if gods and demons
manifest overwhelming presence, separate awareness from matter.
This body is matter, like stone;
no harm can come to it.

Mind is not an actual thing; it is like the sky.
Who harms it and who is harmed?
Thinking that, rest without despair or worry
in the nature of phenomena.

Even if you think that the gods and demons
have snatched your material body and left,
without moving from your previous place,
do not despair over anything at all.

Whatever discursive thoughts arise are devils.
They come from your own mind.
In mind, not even an atom is established
of a place from which to arise, to abide, or to go.
Buddhahood does not come after being liberated.
It is impossible to wander in samsara due to delusion.

Virtue, negativity; and all karmic action are totally pure,
pure since forever, liberated since forever, awakened since forever.
One deviates by not avoiding negativity.
[Page 10] Attachment to tenets is an obscuration.
Nondual self-liberation is the abiding nature.

Take refuge from within the nature of phenomena.
Arouse the aspiration and supplicate.
If obstacles arise for you,
go to a haunted place and meditate on the nondual.

In order to help other sentient beings, with compassion as your preliminary,
know the emptiness of everything: yourself, the patient, the evil spirit, and the disease.
Pat [the diseased area] and meditate in emptiness.
Face the reclining [patient] toward you.

If thereby [the disease] is not yet pacified,
go for refuge and arouse the awakening mind in a haunted place.
Pass over [the patient] three times and meditate beyond extremes.
With a mandala, bless the sticks and stones and confer them.

Hold the gods above to their oaths; {7}
subdue with splendor the nāgas below.
Tasks assigned to nāgas will all be accomplished.

Gods, from their abodes, will be your allies.
Nāgas without exception are bound into service.
Gurus, yidams, dākinīs, and dharma protectors
will watch over you as their child.

Once you have severed the tangible devils,
appearance will not rise up as your enemy.
Once you have severed the intangible devils,
male and female yakṣhas will be held under oath.

That and other such benefits
that are immeasurable will occur.

The source text Esoteric Instructions on the Noble Perfection of Wisdom called The Grand Poem by Āryadeva the Brahmin is finished. The Indian pandita Dampa Rinpoche translated this himself. Zhama Lotsā received it among the ferns of Dingri and edited it.

How to Combine the View and Meditation
Different Modes of Inquiry in Vipáśyanā
From *Boundless Wisdom: A Mahāmudrā Practice Manual*
By Shamar Rinpoche, pp. 74-91

Broadly speaking, there are two distinct approaches to Buddhist meditation. In Sanskrit, they are called the *pandita* tradition of analytical meditation and the *kuśali* tradition of settling meditation. A *pandita* is a learned scholar. Panditas, being intellectually oriented, are inclined to meditate analytically. Kuśali meditators, on the other hand, are interested in direct, experience-based meditation. Unconcerned with worldly interests, they pay little attention to social standards and behavior. Practicing non-analytical, directly abiding meditation to the exclusion of all else, they renounce worldly life and stay in retreat. Milarepa is an example of a kuśali meditator. The kuśali tradition originates principally from the Mahāmudrā lineage of Saraha, the incomparable Indian master of the second century CE. He taught through spiritual songs, a number of which have already been translated into English. It was through his disciple Nagarjuna, and then through successive lineage holders, that the spirit of this tradition was upheld over the centuries, right up to the present day.

Many practitioners belonging to the Nyingma and Kagyü traditions followed the kuśali tradition. They showed little interest in the analytical approach of the panditas. They were very often criticized for that. The panditas hold that without a solid conceptual foundation, a meditator has as much chance of success as someone climbing a mountain without a pair of hands. They say that such a meditator may also be compared to a blind person who hopes to arrive safely at his or her destination. They sometimes quote these analogies to make the point that without a proper foundation in analytical research, direct meditation is doomed to fail.

Of course, criticism can go both ways. The panditas are often criticized for reducing meditation solely to intellectual analysis. For instance, if you were to deduce that the mind is empty of existence and then base your meditation on such a concept, the outcome could only be disappointing. The reason is that the concept of an empty mind is itself a fabrication of the dualistic mind. It is not the mind's true nature. Meditating on a mentally created, dualistic concept is in no way the same thing as meditating on the non-dual mind itself. It will not lead to ultimate enlightenment.

Dagpo Tashi Namgyal, (c. 1512-1587), an important Kagyüti and Sakya master and author of *Moonlight of Mahāmudrā*, researched these two opposing views meticulously. He

concluded that the kuśali settling meditation should ultimately be the practice of choice. He also advised, however, that it should be preceded by some analytical meditation. Without it, there is the risk that you will not get the point of the practice and simply cultivate a state of dullness. After you have done analytical meditation, you should proceed with settling meditation to access the truly liberating type of vipaśyanā. Analytical meditation is very effective for arriving at the conclusion that sense objects are inherently empty. This is not difficult to comprehend.

The important point in the context of Mahāmudrā practice, however, is not to prove the non-existence of an outer object by means of an analytical deduction. The important point is to understand the true nature of mind. In this regard, analytical meditation is helpful only to a limited extent. You may usefully engage in it as long as you do not end up mistaking mentally fabricated findings for mind's true nature. Mind's true nature can only be known through direct experience. That is what kuśali meditation of directly abiding or settling meditation is. Therefore, analytical meditation serves well in the initial stages, but only kuśali meditation can take us all the way to full enlightenment.

How should you combine analytical meditation with directly abiding meditation? One effective way to begin analyzing the nature of mind is to look at it objectively over the passage of time. By dividing the mind artificially into the three times of past, present, and future, you can clearly see how the past no longer exists, the present does not remain, and the future is yet to come. At the same time, you can also see how the past, present, and future interconnect in a flowing continuity. To have such an understanding is to have a glimpse of the nature of mind. In Tibetan, it is described as seeing the true nature of mind. On really seeing the mind as a continuum of awareness, there is no further need for analytical meditation. Based on that observation, you settle the mind directly and uninterruptedly in this experience. That is the kuśali meditation. In this way, analytical and settling meditations may be skillfully combined. The two seemingly opposing views can thus be reconciled.

Concluding Observations

The experience of the true nature of mind is non-conceptual. Free from all preconceived ideas, it is purely a direct experience. Ordinarily, we first perceive an object and then immediately identify it. For example, after we have seen a cup, we identify and name it. The very first instance of seeing is pure experience, before we get involved with conceptualization. So, even though there is a moment of pure experience in all perception, we usually miss it because it passes so quickly. Seeing the nature of mind is just such an experience. Before identifying, before naming, before engaging in conceptualization: *That* is pure seeing. Such a direct experience of the mind is called

realization. Through abiding uninterruptedly and without distraction in this realization, the mind becomes progressively clearer and more stable. As time goes on, it manifests itself as pure wisdom.

As you ponder the meaning of emptiness, you may either think of the emptiness of the outer world or you may reflect inwardly on the emptiness of mind. Emptiness, both external and internal, is beyond all labeling, definition, and conceptualization. It eludes all descriptions. However, the reality of emptiness cannot be denied. If every phenomenon in samsāra were solidly existent and permanently abiding, normal events that occur every day could never come to pass. Only an impermanent illusion can come into being. If anything were to exist permanently it would remain static and would never change.

Therefore, theoretically, if samsāra were not illusory and empty, and if everything in samsāra existed independently and statically, then each and everything that exists would serve as an insurmountable impediment to all change, including changes that lead to ultimate enlightenment. The simple truth is that if today would never end, tomorrow would never come. Likewise, if samsāra never ends, buddhahood can never be. Because things are empty, everything can happen. If things were not empty, nothing could happen. In this way, it is by virtue of emptiness that it is possible to practice the Buddhist path and achieve all the resulting qualities.

As everything is illusory and empty, it follows that causes and consequences do not truly exist either. Learning this, you may reasonably wonder how the law of karma can be satisfactorily explained. Sentient beings, ignorant of the true nature of the mind, are deluded. They firmly believe that all passing events in life truly exist. Causality--cause and effect--goes along with these delusions. In a dream, for example, everything appears to be vividly existent. Nothing is seen as illusory or empty. Causes and consequences closely interact until you awaken. Dreaming, however, is possible only because you are asleep. While you are sleeping, you can have different dreams. But these dreams are not real. Otherwise, they would still be there when you wake up. If you reflect on this, you will see that the appearance and functioning of things in cause-effect relationships and their being unreal at the same time is not contradictory. It is just like when we sleep. When we are dreaming, the fact that it is merely a dream is not contradictory. Things can only appear because they are empty, and they are empty because they appear.

As long as the mind is deluded, illusions, which are products of causes' links to their effects, are present. Even though the body, perceptions, and the suffering that goes along with them are illusions, to a deluded mind they truly exist. Within samsāra,

universes large and small come into being. Whether these universes are full of suffering or full of joy, they are all illusory. The mind can be compared to a mirror, and all these illusions are passing reflections in that mirror. Bodhisattvas, based on their knowledge that these illusions and their causes are intrinsically empty, skillfully put this understanding to good use. They are thus able to support suffering sentient beings who seek to free themselves from samsāric delusions and attain ultimate enlightenment. Bodhisattvas have the pure intent to benefit all sentient beings. They know that all phenomena that appear to be existent are like illusions, and that every illusion is subject to the law of karma. In other words, bodhisattvas know that actions will always yield their results. They therefore perform innumerable illusory deeds of merit in order to karmically produce illusory beneficial consequences. First vowing to benefit all suffering beings, they persevere tirelessly in the six paramita practices, so that their noble aspirations may ultimately be fulfilled.

The Four *Jhānas* & Their Factors
Insight Meditation South Bay www.imsb.org

<i>Jhānas</i>	Factors abandoned	Factors acquired or intensified	Notes
The first <i>jhāna</i>	Five hindrances: 1. Sloth and torpor 2. Doubt 3. Ill will / aversion 4. Restlessness 5. Greed / sensual desire	Five <i>Jhāna</i> factors: 1. Applied thought 2. Sustained thought 3. Rapture 4. Happiness 5. One-pointedness of the mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five hindrances are opposed to the five <i>jhāna</i> factors. • Characterized by rapture and happiness born of seclusion • Commentarial teachings and just a few <i>suttas</i> specifically list one-pointedness as a feature of first <i>jhāna</i>; many <i>suttas</i> omit explicit reference to the factor one-pointedness.
The second <i>jhāna</i>	1. Applied thought 2. Sustained thought	1. Rapture 2. Happiness 3. One-pointedness of the mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disappearance of applied and sustained thought • Characterized by delight and happiness born of concentration
The third <i>jhāna</i>	Rapture	1. Subtle happiness 2. One-pointedness of the mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapture fades, revealing a quiet, subtle, and pervasive happiness. • Characterized by the subtle enjoyment of a mind that is mindful and equanimous
The fourth <i>jhāna</i>	Happiness	1. One-pointedness of the mind 2. Equanimity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happiness is replaced by equanimity. The mind is profoundly stable, still, and equanimous. • Mindfulness is purified by equanimity.

Four immaterial *jhānas* are commonly listed after the four *jhānas*

- 1) The base of infinite space
- 2) The base of infinite consciousness
- 3) The base of nothingness
- 4) The base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception

The Jhanas and their Factors
From *Practicing the Jhanas: Traditional Concentration Meditation*
As Presented by the Venerable Pa Auk Sayadaw
By Stephen Snyder and Tina Rasmussen

Jhāna Factors

The jhāna factors are by-products of concentration. Usually, we must undertake an intensive period of practice (such as a retreat) for them to arise with sufficient strength to be noticeable. Sometimes people get confused, thinking that the jhāna factors equate to pleasant emotions, as experienced in everyday life. This is a misperception. In actuality, the jhāna factors are specific conditions that arise as a result of the mind unifying through purification and the “building of the muscle” of concentration that develops as we turn away from the hindrances, hour after hour. This is why it can be said that, in a way, the jhāna factors replace the hindrances.

The five jhāna factors are:

1. applied attention (vitakka)
2. sustained attention (vicāra)
3. joy (pīti)
4. bliss (sukha)
5. one-pointedness (ekaggatā)

Vitakka: Vitakka (which is translated as “applied attention”) is the initial movement of attention to the meditative object. For example, when you find your attention has wandered from the breath crossing the ānāpāna spot, gently direct it back. Each time your attention wanders, nonjudgmentally return it to the object. Initially, your sole “job,” if you will, is to apply attention to the object. With many repetitions and a strengthening of concentration, the object eventually becomes more and more stable and you will have less need to continually reapply your attention. Until this happens, though, you must be diligent and consistent (without being heavy-handed) in applying attention to your object.

Vicāra: Vicāra is translated as “sustained attention.” As your attention stays with the object, its coherence develops through the uninterrupted continuity. When your attention does not wander from the object for thirty minutes, vicāra becomes even stronger and is more noticeable.

In daily life, you attempt to focus on the object primarily during formal sitting practice for however long you sit. But you can also return to it lightly throughout the day—while working, at the grocery store, or before falling asleep in bed at night. Whether on retreat or meditating at home, while you are doing concentration practice, your attention should never waver from the object. It is a kind of love affair with the object, which initially is the breath as it crosses the ānāpāna spot.

Although it isn't usually possible in daily practice as a householder, on retreat you should apply your attention to the object and sustain it constantly throughout the day. Vicāra strengthens by maintaining attention on the breath crossing the ānāpāna spot while in meditation posture as well as when walking, eating, showering, and moving around. While doing the ānāpānasati meditation practice, before, during, and after each and every inhalation, pause, exhalation, and pause, your attention is on the breath as it crosses the ānāpāna spot. You never, never, never take your attention off the breath crossing the ānāpāna spot. Every activity is done while simultaneously placing attention on the object. At some point, vicāra can become so strong that the awareness “snaps” onto the object and rarely, if ever, leaves it.

Think of the metaphor of balancing a spoon on the end of your nose. Throughout every activity of the day and night, you are trying to keep the spoon balanced on your nose. Should the spoon slip off, you place it back on your nose and keep your attention exactly on the spot where the spoon touches your skin. When you can apply your attention to the object and sustain it on the object, the jhāna factors arise naturally.

Pīti: Pīti (which is translated as “joy”) is a joy that is without specific situational cause, because it results from the cohering of the mind. We have found the term joy in this case to be a little difficult for some students to differentiate from other pleasant or happy feelings they may experience in everyday life. Pīti, as experienced, feels like happiness in the body, although it is actually a mentally induced state. Sometimes it is referred to as “rapture.” Because pīti can be so intense in the body, it can actually cause restlessness in some people. This grosser aspect of pīti becomes beneficial as meditators progress through the jhānas because it allows nonattachment to pleasant experiences to gradually emerge.

Sukha: Sukha means “bliss,” but bliss is a tricky word because it has so many meanings and implications. Sukha is best understood as a mentally sensed bliss that is also felt subtly in the body. While pīti could be experienced as bodily happiness, sukha can be experienced more like gentle contentment. Sukha is more settled and refined in its feeling than pīti. Pīti is more excitable in its feeling and somewhat more gross. Again, both are produced mentally.

Ekaggatā: Ekaggatā is described as “one-pointedness of mind.” This mental state is experienced as a focusing of attention and intention, as a collecting and unifying of meditative energy. There is an experience of uninterrupted unification with the meditative object. Think of a flashlight whose beam of light can be adjusted wider or narrower. When the beam of light is narrowed to the visual width of a pencil and the functioning of a laser, this would be analogous to ekaggatā in concentration practice. The attention is highly coherent, increasingly like a laser beam.

In the first jhāna, the above five jhāna factors are present. However, as the meditator progresses to the fourth jhāna, the factor of upekkhā (equanimity) arises in addition, to replace the feeling of sukha (bliss). This is because a “feeling” mental state is present in all the jhānas, up through and including the eighth jhāna. In the fourth through the eighth jhānas, when ekaggatā (one-pointedness) becomes predominant, the grosser feeling-tones of pīti and sukha drop and are replaced with the more refined factor of upekkhā. Upekkhā feels like a peacefulness—that all is right and well, independent of circumstances.

As concentration develops, the jhāna factors naturally arise on their own. You cannot stay with the object while simultaneously checking to see whether the jhāna factors are present. Repeatedly checking the jhāna factors splits your attention and weakens concentration, so you will not have enough meditative energy for the jhāna factors to develop. During daily practice, the jhāna factors can sometimes arise weakly, but usually a dedicated retreat is required for them to arise strongly.

The jhāna factors arise as concentration deepens. When the jhāna factors are present, the nimitta (or the light that appears when concentration deepens) becomes closer to arising.

The Venerable Pa Auk Sayadaw emphasizes that the student never takes a jhāna factor as an object of meditation to progress toward absorption / jhāna. The jhāna factors should be regarded as the force that mysteriously opens the student to jhāna, not the object of concentration practice. To progress toward the first jhāna during ānāpānasati meditation, awareness of your breath crossing the ānāpāna spot is always your object of concentration. To focus on any other object is to erode concentration and decrease the likelihood of the first jhāna arising. Concentration wanes every time your attention moves off the object.

Some modern teachings encourage meditators to take jhāna factors as the object. Even in the suttas, with certain translations and the apparent vagueness of the instructions, it can sound as though the suttas refer to taking jhāna factors as an object. Common knowledge of absorptions in the Buddha’s day may have minimized the need for him to

give detailed instructions on jhānas, as people of his time were likely to be quite familiar with the instructions. However, if you review the Visuddhimagga, which presents much more detailed instructions, it clearly states that the meditator should continue with the primary object to maintain the integrity of the concentration all the way into absorption. The Venerable Pa Auk Sayadaw also explicitly instructs us not to turn away from the breath as it crosses the ānāpāna spot at any time during ānāpānasati meditation. Although you may check the jhāna factors to determine which jhāna is present, this should be done only briefly.

In our experience, using the jhāna factors as an object is very, very pleasant but leads only to an intense momentary or access concentration, which are the stages of concentration prior to absorption. (Concentration is described later in this chapter.) This is because as meditators progress through the four jhānas, they need to change the primary object several times in rapid succession and within a short amount of time. Concentration, by definition, is a unification of attention. The most effective way to unify attention is to stay with one object throughout a particular practice.

As mentioned earlier, once the jhāna factors have arisen with sufficient strength, they can be used to counteract the hindrances. The first step is to meet each hindrance with kind compassion rather than judgment. Then you can apply the jhāna factor to the specific hindrance. For example, if restlessness is arising routinely enough to be a distraction, you can begin specifically cultivating bliss. Bliss is the antidote to restlessness. The Buddha discussed starving the hindrances and feeding the factors of awakening in the Ahara Sutta.

Each jhāna factor neutralizes a specific hindrance, as follows:

1. Applied attention (vitakka) calms sense desire.
2. Sustained attention (vicāra) pacifies ill will / aversion.
3. Joy (pīti) vanquishes sloth and torpor.
4. Bliss (sukha) eliminates restlessness and remorse.
5. One-pointedness (ekaggatā) overcomes doubt.

Types of Concentration: Momentary, Access, and Absorption

As the samatha practice is fundamentally a concentration meditation, we should take some time to more deeply understand what the word concentration means in this context. In English, we already use the word concentration in many other senses, which can itself be a bit of a problem. As young people, many of us were told, “Concentrate on your homework,” or something similar, which implies a kind of expending effort or straining. Or, while driving, we may feel that in heavy traffic we must “concentrate” to

avoid getting into an accident. Most of our modern applications of the word imply a striving energy.

We encourage you to put aside these connotations of the word concentration in doing this practice. Instead, begin to view concentration as a natural faculty inherent to the mind, which is drawn out through these incredible practices of Buddhist meditation. We see concentration as a natural by-product of focusing on one object to the exclusion of everything else. In this context, then, concentration can be defined as the “unification of mind.” You don’t need to “do” it to make it happen. All you need to “do” is apply your attention to your object, over and over, hour after hour, and concentration will naturally arise. It is like growing a flower. If you plant the seed, water it, and provide adequate sunshine, standing over it and exhorting it to grow won’t accelerate its growth. It will grow all by itself. Once it starts growing, you can apply skillful means to encourage it (what we have called “building the muscle” of concentration).

Meditators encounter three types of concentration in the samatha practice:

1. Momentary Concentration
2. Access Concentration
3. Absorption Concentration

It is important to understand each of these types of concentration, how they differ, and how they relate to one another.

Momentary Concentration

Momentary concentration is the most difficult to understand, because there are two types. The first develops in vipassanā practices in which the object changes frequently. In contrast to samatha practices in which the object is constant, in vipassanā the object is, in a way, changing or “moving.” As such, one could say that the ultimate object of vipassanā meditation is the present moment and what is being perceived in the present moment (hence, the relationship to “momentary” concentration). Insight-oriented momentary concentration practices are widely used and can be found in meditation such as vipassanā (as it is commonly practiced in North America and Europe) as well as in the Tibetan dzogchen rigpa practice and the Zen shikantaza practice. The Venerable Pa Auk Sayadaw presents the four elements meditation, which is a momentary concentration practice, as the entry point into the vipassanā practices. We describe this practice in chapter 8.

The second type of momentary concentration arises during samatha practice. The Venerable Pa Auk Sayadaw sometimes refers to this type of momentary concentration as “preparatory” concentration, because it prepares the meditator for and precedes

access concentration (the second type of concentration). In samatha practice, the meditation object is consistent rather than changing. Having a consistent object leads to serenity and purification of mind.

Access Concentration

Meditators can eventually attain access concentration using either type of momentary concentration practice—samatha or vipassanā. However, samatha practices are more likely to lead to access concentration because of their more stable nature. Access concentration is characterized by the significant reduction or complete dropping of the five hindrances and the arising and strengthening of the jhāna factors. For most people, a period of intensive practice is required to reach access concentration. In access concentration, the meditative experience becomes smoother, easier, and more pleasant because of this lessening of hindrances and the arising of the powerful and blissful sensations of the jhāna factors. This allows meditators to meditate longer and progress more easily in the practice. It becomes a positive, self-reinforcing loop.

It is easy to confuse momentary concentration with access concentration. One difference is that with access concentration, the meditator's continuity with the object is much longer and more stable over time. Another difference is that with access concentration, the object is much more energized and "bright."

Most of the practices outlined in this book are samatha practices specifically designed to settle the mind and develop laserlike awareness, leading eventually to full absorption into the jhānas. Examples of samatha practices designed to develop access and absorption concentration are ānāpānasati meditation (as presented by the Venerable Pa Auk Sayadaw), the kasiṇas, thirty-two-body-parts meditation, skeleton meditation, and the bramavihāras (sublime abidings).

As access concentration develops, but prior to full absorption, it is also easy to confuse access with absorption concentration. In access concentration, the jhāna factors are present but insufficiently strong for full absorption into jhāna. (The differences between access and absorption are described below.)

Even after a meditator has experienced full jhāna absorption and begins to move through the practice progression, access concentration continues to be used. With progression to each successive jhāna, the meditator first experiences access concentration as the awareness orients to the new experiences and increases in stability.

Absorption Concentration

The words *jhāna* and absorption are synonymous. In absorption concentration, awareness is pulled into the *jhāna* with a “snap.” The beginning meditator cannot “will” the absorption to happen or “make” it happen. Full absorption arises only when the concentration is strong and ripe after many days, weeks, months, or even years of unwavering focus on a specific meditative object. Only later, as a meditator becomes more experienced with full *jhāna* absorption and more skilled with the progression of *jhānas* and the five “*jhāna* masteries,” is it possible to enter a *jhāna* at will. The five *jhāna* masteries are specific attainments that meditators complete in each *jhāna*, as demonstrations of mastery, before they can progress to the next *jhāna*. They are described in chapter 5.

In absorption, in addition to the strong presence of the appropriate *jhāna* factors, the awareness is extremely secluded and focused, and ongoing concentration is more easily maintained. Awareness fully penetrates and is suffused by the *jhāna* factors. The *Visuddhimagga* highlights the difference between access and absorption concentration using the analogy of walking. Access concentration is like a toddler learning to walk. The child can take a few steps but repeatedly falls down. In contrast, absorption concentration is like an adult who is able to stand and walk for an entire day without falling down.⁷ A modern metaphor would be of a top spinning. In access concentration, the top needs constant attention, wobbles frequently, and falls down. In absorption, the top spins in a centered way on its own.

There may be misconceptions about the experience of full absorption in *jhāna*. First, there is awareness while in *jhāna*. It is not a zombie state, trance, or period of unconsciousness. However, there is no sense of “me” while in *jhāna*. The only awareness while in full absorption is of the object. If meditators have awareness of data from the five senses, it is because they are temporarily out of absorption. The five senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell) do not arise while in absorption *jhāna*. In addition, there is no thought or decision making while fully absorbed in *jhāna*. Beginning meditators who find that they are thinking or noticing input from the sense doors should view this as a slight imperfection of *jhāna* rather than full *jhāna* absorption. Meditators can also “pop out” of *jhāna* unintentionally because concentration wanes and the *jhāna* factors lessen. It is best not to worry about initial imperfections, which are bound to happen as beginners are developing mastery of the *jhānas*. As concentration increases, these imperfections wane and stability increases.

Awareness in the *jhānas* is incredibly pristine, purifying, and indescribable. It is distinctly different from access concentration. Because access concentration can be so pleasant and nonordinary, however, people sometimes mistake access concentration for absorption, when it is not. This is one reason why it is important to receive guidance

from a qualified teacher who knows the difference between access concentration and absorption concentration.⁸

Absorption concentration is an incredibly powerful tool for purification, refinement of awareness, and access to realms far beyond normal, everyday comprehension. In addition, this intense focus can be an incredibly powerful tool to apply to the vipassanā practice. Meditation powered by the supercharged energy of the jhānas, or even a strong access concentration, can provide a vehicle to insight beyond normal perception that may not be possible with momentary concentration alone.

We should note that, because awareness is so refined in full absorption, sensory input that would seem minimal in ordinary consciousness can feel extremely jarring when emerging from jhāna. This experience is intensified further when a meditator has completed weeks or months of deep absorption practice and reenters worldly life.

Material Jhānas One through Four and Related Practices

We will now explore the four material jhānas, jhāna mastery, thirty-two-body-parts meditation, skeleton meditation, and each of the kasiṇas used with the four material jhānas. Specifically, we will discuss what we have found to be the best methods for practicing these meditations to the point of mastery.

Absorption—First Jhāna

Jhāna appears only when the conditions for it are ripe. As a beginning jhāna practitioner, you cannot force the awareness into full absorption or make it happen. You must be vigilant while relaxing into the process—balancing proactive and receptive effort. Either your awareness is pulled into the jhāna spontaneously, or you can use a resolve when you enter a jhāna. Do not become discouraged as you focus on the ānāpāna nimitta, allowing concentration to build, but also do not become overly zealous and use the resolves repeatedly to the point that your concentration wanes from expending too much mental energy on repeating the resolves.

“You,” as you usually know yourself, do not enter jhāna. Writing about this experience is therefore awkward, because we may use the word you when the experience actually moves consciousness away from perceptions of identifying with the five aggregates and toward what we call the “thinning of the me.” In this practice, the veils layered and known as the “normal you” have been temporarily peeling away. A thinner, gauzelike sense of self is what is absorbed into jhāna.

While you are in jhāna, there is an awareness of “being” in jhāna. It is not an unconscious state. You are aware only of the meditation object. In full absorption, there is no awareness of time, the body, or the physical senses. However, due to the depth of concentration, the beginning meditator’s mind may be able to quickly shift from absorption to access concentration. Fortunately, it is also possible to quickly shift back into jhāna absorption, knowing this to be a minor imperfection of jhāna. In this case, you may have a slight awareness of time, the body, or physical senses. As the practice matures, this awareness will drop and only awareness of the meditation object will remain.

The absorption continues until the jhāna factors weaken or the time resolve is reached. After jhāna has ended, there remains a deeply felt peace. In our experience, the purified personal sense of consciousness merges into unobstructed, impersonal, universal consciousness. The process of jhāna feels as though an ongoing purification has occurred. Each meditative period in jhāna removes further impurities in the mind stream.

We will not be describing the actual experience of any jhāna for two reasons. First, people using this book as a guide may tend to try to duplicate what we experienced. Second, each meditator’s localized consciousness is slightly different. As this localized consciousness enters jhāna and is purified through jhāna, the experience is unique for each person.

The Four Material Jhānas and Associated Jhāna Factors

With each progressive jhāna, various jhāna factors drop as the mind purifies and awareness becomes more focused and concentrated.

The progression is as follows:

1. first jhāna—vitakka, vicāra, pīti, sukha, and ekaggatā
2. second jhāna—pīti, sukha, and ekaggatā
3. third jhāna—sukha and ekaggatā
4. fourth jhāna—ekaggatā and upekkhā

Second Jhāna

Following attainment of the five jhāna masteries in the first jhāna, the teacher instructs the student to proceed to second jhāna. Having attained the five masteries of first jhāna, we found that we were instinctively oriented toward second jhāna. The second jhāna has pīti, sukha, and ekaggatā as its jhāna factors. It does not have vitakka or vicāra, as they have dropped away.

Return to the ānāpāna nimitta in meditation. If the nimitta is not present, continue focusing on the breath crossing the ānāpāna spot until ānāpāna nimitta again arises. Usually, if you have entered first jhāna, the ānāpāna nimitta is readily available, presuming outer and inner talk remain silent and the attention on the object is ongoing. Shortly after you start with your attention on the breath crossing the ānāpāna spot, the ānāpāna nimitta appears strong and clearly present. Then, cultivate the first five jhāna factors (vitakka, vicāra, pīti, sukha, and ekaggatā) and enter first jhāna. Always enter first jhāna before proceeding to second jhāna. In this stage of practice, at no time do you jump over any jhāna (meaning you do not start with third jhāna without having proceeded through first jhāna and second jhāna). On the first attempt, do first jhāna for an extended period until it is stable and then make a resolve for second jhāna. Later, you can spend only a few minutes in first jhāna and then go on to second jhāna.

When you enter second jhāna, two of the jhāna factors of first jhāna (vitakka and vicāra) drop away. The jhāna factors that are unnecessary for successively higher jhānas drop upon entering the higher jhāna. Again, when you are ready, a resolve is made, and, if concentration is strong and the time is ripe, awareness is drawn into second jhāna. Interestingly, each jhāna has a feel, a flavor, or an intuitive taste that is different from the other jhānas. With time and practice, you may learn to experientially distinguish which jhāna is present. You should quickly review the bhavanga after exiting jhāna to determine which jhāna factors were present in that jhāna. This confirms which jhāna was entered.

Again, at our retreat, the Venerable Pa Auk Sayadaw required jhāna mastery of the second jhāna. This means spending three continuous hours in the second jhāna during one period of meditation. In other words, the mastery requirement cannot be satisfied by, say, being in second jhāna for one hour during one meditation period and for two hours during another meditation period and adding them together. Jhāna stability, meaning fulfilling the five jhāna masteries, is required to fully experience each jhāna and to have the purification and jhāna energy to proceed with stability to the next higher jhāna. Once the five jhāna masteries are achieved in the second jhāna, you are directed to the third jhāna.

Third Jhāna

The third jhāna has only sukha and ekaggatā as its jhāna factors. Continue focusing on the ānāpāna nimitta. If the ānāpāna nimitta is not available, focus on the breath crossing the ānāpāna spot until the nimitta appears and merges with the spot. Proceed to once again enter and exit the first and second jhānas as before. The time spent in the first and second jhānas is brief. As soon as you feel the stability and bright, clear energy of

the first jhāna, exit first jhāna. Upon full absorption into second jhāna, vitakka and vicāra drop, as they are unnecessary for second jhāna.

Pīti is a mental state that produces a corresponding bodily sensation of happiness, almost an excitement. As before, when opening to third jhāna, the jhāna factors of second jhāna feel unnecessary, almost a burden. Sukha as a deep feeling of bliss is very appropriate when developing the third-jhāna factors. Ekaggatā is unified, focused awareness. The meditative attention and awareness unify. No extra effort is exerted. Awareness is drawn into third jhāna with the jhāna factors of sukha and ekaggatā. The third jhāna feels more refined and pure than the second jhāna.

Each successively higher jhāna is easier to maintain, as it is further from ordinary consciousness, so the senses are less easily distracted. We found each jhāna to be independently wonderful. Although each jhāna was very satisfying, once the five jhāna masteries were achieved, there was an obvious movement, almost an attraction, toward the next higher jhāna.

Fourth Jhāna

Once the five jhāna masteries have been reached with the third jhāna, proceed to fourth jhāna. Begin by discarding and turning away from sukha, as it is no longer necessary for the fourth jhāna. Sukha is replaced from the fourth jhāna through the four immaterial jhānas by upekkhā (equanimity). Or, as concentration focuses into one-pointedness and equanimity, sukha can begin to wane on its own. Fourth jhāna has ekaggatā (one-pointedness) and upekkhā (equanimity) as its jhāna factors. Upekkhā replaces sukha as a more refined and less gross mentally produced feeling-state, which will be present throughout the rest of the jhānas. Focus on the ānāpāna nimitta and enter first jhāna with its five jhāna factors (vitakka, vicāra, pīti, sukha, and ekaggatā). After a few minutes in the stability of first jhāna, exit first jhāna and enter second jhāna, with the factors of second jhāna (pīti, sukha, and ekaggatā). When stability in the second jhāna is reached for a few minutes, exit second jhāna and use the nimitta to enter third jhāna. The third-jhāna factors (sukha and ekaggatā) are present prior to entering third jhāna. The first time fourth jhāna is attempted, you may stay in third jhāna for an extended period to ensure stability. Over time, a brief stay is all that is needed to confirm the stability and energy of the third jhāna, as with the prior two jhānas. Exit third jhāna and feel the inclination toward ekaggatā and upekkhā.

Ekaggatā and upekkhā feel very full, grounded, and satisfying without having a quality of excitement as in the second and third jhānas. Stephen recalls anticipating that he would find the dropping of sukha to be difficult because of its pleasurable quality. When moving toward fourth jhāna, though, sukha feels unnecessary. The one-pointedness

(ekaggatā) and equanimity (upekkhā) are very complete. It is very difficult to be distracted when meditating with ekaggatā and upekkhā.

When these two jhāna factors are strong and the nimitta is powerful, awareness is drawn into fourth jhāna. The shift from third jhāna to fourth jhāna is significant. Moving from first jhāna to second jhāna or from second jhāna to third jhāna represents a slight change in jhāna factors. Experientially, these first three material jhānas feel more similar to one another. You must be willing to set aside all the joyous and blissful bodily sensations produced by the mental states of pīti and sukha in the first three jhānas to focus on ekaggatā and upekkhā in the fourth jhāna. While some people may presume that the fourth jhāna is more challenging because the bliss is much more subtle and impersonal, it is available by trusting the teachings and not just seeking pleasurable experiences. Being willing to develop ekaggatā and upekkhā to the exclusion of the other jhāna factors is natural after mastering third jhāna.

By the time a meditator is close to entering fourth jhāna, the normal breath has become very, very shallow and subtle. The Visuddhimagga states that the breath stops in the fourth jhāna.² Experientially, it feels as though it has stopped. What is important is not to be concerned about this issue. Any attention to whether there is, in fact, breath diverts the meditative concentration, making fourth jhāna unavailable. Specifically, there can be a bodily felt sense of fright when meditating with the nimitta as fourth jhāna ripens. This is because the body senses there is insufficient oxygen to live. Resist the urge to take a deep breath to pacify this fright. A deep breath at this time disrupts the development of ekaggatā and upekkhā, and fourth jhāna drifts further away. The fear of having insufficient breath does, in fact, pass. Allow it to do so.

Check the jhāna factors in access concentration and make the resolve for fourth jhāna. Alternatively, when ripe, the deep concentration draws the awareness into fourth jhāna. Proceed as before to obtain five jhāna masteries for fourth jhāna

Immaterial Jhānas Five through Eight and Related Practices

For awareness to be absorbed into an immaterial jhāna is among the most delicate of Buddhist practices and subtle meditations. The realms traversed are breathtaking in their vastness and sheer depth of being: infinite space, unbounded consciousness, nothing-ness, and that which is beyond. This is the terrain presented here. The objects of meditation in these immaterial realms are too insubstantial for imagination. Fortunately, they can be experienced directly.

The four immaterial jhānas are:

1. the base of boundless space (the fifth jhāna)

2. the base of boundless consciousness (the sixth jhāna)
3. the base of nothingness (the seventh jhāna)
4. the base of neither perception nor nonperception (the eighth jhāna)

In some texts, these meditations are not referred to as “jhānas” because they are thought not to be true absorptions. Rather, it is thought that they are actual, objective, nonmaterial (formless) realms that are accessed by awareness through the gateway of the meditative object. The laserlike concentration developed in the lower jhānas and kasiṇas becomes the “key” to opening these gateways to the immaterial realms. Our experience was that they do indeed experientially feel more like immaterial realms than like meditative absorptions. However, because there is a progression of practice and for ease of language, we will refer to them primarily as immaterial jhānas and only occasionally as immaterial states or realms.

If you are able to attain the five jhāna masteries for each of the first four material jhānas using each of the ten kasiṇas as an object, the teacher may next direct you to the immaterial jhānas. When we taught with the Venerable Pa Auk Sayadaw on a retreat at the Forest Refuge, we learned that he sometimes directs students to the four elements meditation after they complete the first through fourth jhānas. He does not instruct everyone to go on to the upper jhānas. The direction on which way to proceed is based on a combination of the student’s meditative ability and capacity, the student’s intention in practice, and the remaining retreat time available. Attainment of the fourth jhāna provides a solid level of concentration with which to undertake the vipassanā practice. However, the Sayadaw instructed us that undertaking vipassanā with the power of all eight jhānas was most desirable in order to achieve the greatest depth and thoroughness of insight.

Base of Boundless Space (The Fifth Jhāna)

Proceeding from the base meditative object of either the ānāpāna nimitta or the white kasiṇa, take earth kasiṇa as a meditative object. If earth kasiṇa is difficult to see as an object for first jhāna, return to white kasiṇa practice. Take white kasiṇa as a meditative object and cultivate the jhāna factors for first jhāna (vitakka, vicāra, pīti, sukha, and ekaggatā). Proceed through the first, second, third, and fourth jhānas using white kasiṇa as an object, remaining in each until you reach stability and attain the five jhāna masteries. At this point, stability in the lower four jhānas is likely to be established in thirty minutes or less.

When earth kasiṇa can be taken as a meditative object and the jhāna factors are cultivated, enter first jhāna. When stability is reached in first jhāna using earth kasiṇa as an object, move to second jhāna (with the jhāna factors of pīti, sukha, and ekaggatā)

with earth kasiṇa as the meditative object. When second jhāna stabilizes, continue to third jhāna (with sukha and ekaggatā as the jhāna factors). When third jhāna has stabilized, move to fourth jhāna (with the jhāna factors of ekaggatā and upekkhā). Enter and experience stability in the fourth jhāna using earth kasiṇa as an object.

While in access concentration near fourth jhāna, using earth kasiṇa as an object, direct your awareness to the space the expanded earth kasiṇa occupies. This is sometimes accomplished by seeing either minute holes in the earth kasiṇa or an edge of the earth kasiṇa—a seam where space and the earth kasiṇa meet. Stephen found applying attention to the edge of the earth kasiṇa easier. Tina found the holes method easier. By focusing on either the small holes in the kasiṇa or the edge of the kasiṇa, direct your meditative attention to the space the earth kasiṇa occupies, by seeing either the holes or the seam where the kasiṇa and space meet. By focusing on the space the kasiṇa occupies and withdrawing attention from the earth kasiṇa, the earth kasiṇa is “removed.”

The manner in which the earth kasiṇa leaves the space is not something to which you pay any attention. Have confidence that when space is effectively taken as a meditative object, the earth kasiṇa is not present. The important aspect at this point of the meditation is that earth kasiṇa is removed, leaving the space it formerly occupied. Next, direct the subtle awareness of space to its full vastness. This entire, all-encompassing space holds the infinite universe, including you.

When the jhāna factors of ekaggatā and upekkhā are strong and the bright jhāna energy is sufficiently concentrated, awareness focuses on a small spot in the unending expanded space. There is a spot that for some reason draws the attention quite naturally and easily. This small spot in the field of space then becomes the meditative object.

With sufficient time meditating on the “attention spot” in the field of unending space, awareness is drawn into full absorption in the base of boundless space (the fifth jhāna). The base of boundless space is the source of unending, unbounded, unlimited space in an immaterial realm. The experience of absorption into the base of boundless space is quite exquisite and qualitatively far more refined than the fourth jhāna of space kasiṇa. This is the space in which all objects in the material realm appear. Perhaps we can conceptually liken it to the canvas of life on which each brushstroke of life appears. It is a very profound experience.

As with the other jhānas, achieve the five masteries of this jhāna before moving to the base of boundless consciousness (the sixth jhāna) as a meditative object. Jhāna mastery includes one meditation period of three continuous hours of uninterrupted absorption

in the base of boundless space. This is likely to take several attempts before the time mastery is achieved. The immaterial jhānas are a purer energy than the material jhānas. The refinement and purification of mind in the upper jhānas is a very intense experience. Until this purification is complete at the level of the base of boundless space, you will not be able to access the base of boundless consciousness. When the five jhāna masteries have been attained in the base of boundless space, you can proceed to attempt access to the base of boundless consciousness.

Base of Boundless Consciousness (The Sixth Jhāna)

Proceeding from the base object of either the ānāpāna nimitta or the white kasiṇa, take earth kasiṇa as a meditative object and enter the first, second, third, and fourth jhānas using earth kasiṇa as an object. Expand earth kasiṇa as before to encompass the entire world. At this point, the jhāna factors of ekaggatā and upekkhā are present, as is true in the fourth jhāna and all the immaterial jhānas.

As before, direct the meditative attention to the space the earth kasiṇa occupies, either by seeing tiny holes in the earth kasiṇa or by focusing on the edge of the earth kasiṇa where it meets space. Remove the earth kasiṇa, and the new object of the base of boundless space arises.

Once again taking boundless space as a meditative object, meditate upon the awareness of unending space, in its full boundlessness and vastness. Next, allow the meditative attention to be drawn to a particular small spot in boundless space. When meditative concentration, upekkhā, and ekaggatā are of sufficient strength, awareness becomes fully absorbed into the base of boundless space (the fifth jhāna).

Direct attention to the consciousness that holds boundless space as its object. An object such as the consciousness of boundless space is very difficult to speak about or imagine as a concept. Once the absorption into the base of boundless space (the fifth jhāna) has occurred, taking the consciousness of boundless space as a meditative object is subtle, yet apparent and somehow possible.

Naturally, the universal awareness that holds unending space as its object is a very subtle object itself, while also being very refined. When a meditator is at this point in the jhāna practice, the consciousness of the base of boundless space can indeed be taken as an object.

Take the consciousness that holds the base of boundless space as an object. The consciousness holding this object is by its nature infinite. As before in the fifth jhāna, this consciousness holding boundless space is stabilized during meditation. The jhāna

factors of ekaggatā and upekkhā are held until they are of the necessary strength. Once the consciousness holding boundless, unending space is known as the meditative object, and ekaggatā and upekkhā are strong, the attention can hold the entirety of this consciousness. Concentration and one-pointedness deepen and stabilize on this extremely subtle meditative object.

When ripe, awareness is drawn into full absorption in the base of boundless consciousness (the sixth jhāna). This boundless, unending consciousness contains the infinite space that, ultimately, contains all materiality. This is the consciousness of the totality. Everything is contained within the one consciousness here, and this one consciousness pervades everywhere endlessly. It is an undivided wholeness. The purification of mind facilitated by full absorption into the base of boundless consciousness that holds all space is profound.

As with the prior jhānas, the five jhāna masteries must be attained in the base of boundless consciousness before it is completed. Once you have completed all five masteries in the sixth jhāna, including a single three-hour uninterrupted absorption in the base of boundless consciousness, proceed to the base of nothingness

Base of Nothingness (The Seventh Jhāna)

The object for the base of nothingness is the absence of the consciousness of boundless space. So, in effect, the new object is the absence of the object used for the sixth jhāna. Go through the first four jhānas using earth kasiṇa. If earth kasiṇa is difficult to take as a meditative object, begin with white kasiṇa and follow the proper steps to establish each of the first four jhānas using white kasiṇa as an object. Remain in each of the first four jhānas using white kasiṇa as an object until stable.

If you can easily see earth kasiṇa with eyes closed, then proceed accordingly through the first four jhānas using earth kasiṇa as an object. Remain in the four lower jhānas in earth kasiṇa only long enough to establish stability, perhaps five to ten minutes each. Then reestablish the base of boundless space by removing the earth kasiṇa and entering absorption here. Again, take the consciousness of the fifth jhāna, the base of boundless space, as an object and allow full absorption into the sixth jhāna to arise.

Stay in the sixth jhāna long enough to reach stability. Stability in the immaterial jhānas takes longer than in the lower four jhānas, as the upper jhānas are much more refined. When you are stable in the base of boundless consciousness, take up the base of nothingness by focusing on the absence of the consciousness of boundless space. Two mind moments do not arise simultaneously. When the consciousness of the base of boundless space is present, the base of boundless consciousness is absent. And, when

the base of boundless consciousness is present, then the consciousness of the base of boundless space is absent. That absence of consciousness of the base of boundless space is used as the object for the seventh jhāna.

The nothingness of this immaterial state, the seventh jhāna, is complete, unending emptiness. Emptiness is a rich fullness of no identity and no thing. It is “no-thing-ness.” Usually, with forms (such as thoughts, people, and objects), there are many ways that we mark the forms with identity. We can have a certain feeling about or relationship to a particular form. In the base of nothingness, all sense of any form or structure, as well as any markers of identity, are gone. This is a dramatic shift. The base of boundless consciousness is a fullness that contains the immensity of infinite space, which ultimately holds all materiality. In contrast, the base of nothingness is the utter void, the “dazzling darkness.”

This is not an unpleasant jhāna. There is a sense of pristine purity, of freedom, here. Despite being no-thing-ness, there is a sense of presence—a deep, still, pervasive peace. It is the experience of no-thing from which all materiality (consciousness and space) can arise and be supported.

When the absence of the consciousness of the fifth jhāna of boundless space can be held, it becomes the meditative object. This may require many attempts, as the object is so fine it can easily slip away. This is an object that is delicately held, like holding gauze up to the sky. When ready, the object becomes stable and attention focuses on a particular spot within this nothingness. The spot is not actually within nothingness; it is within the heart base. This is a technical specification that the beginning meditator need not understand. However, the perception of a specific location in primordial nothingness allows awareness to attentively rest and eventually be absorbed.

Once awareness is deeply concentrated on the absence of the consciousness of boundless space, and the jhāna factors of ekaggatā and upekkhā are strongly present, awareness is drawn into full absorption in this immaterial state. As with the prior jhānas, continue with this jhāna until the five jhāna masteries have been achieved, including a single three-hour uninterrupted absorption in this jhāna.

With each of the immaterial jhānas, a tremendous amount of purification occurs. The meditator’s mind stream is directly entering and being suffused by the no-thing-ness from which boundless consciousness arises. For awareness to be fully absorbed in these realms, beyond access concentration, is indescribable. These are sublime realms unimaginable to the thinking mind. Until these immaterial states are deeply known experientially, the student must take their existence on faith in the Buddha and the jhāna teachers.

After attaining the five jhāna masteries in the base of nothingness, you are ready for the next immaterial jhāna: the base of neither perception nor nonperception.

Base of Neither Perception nor Nonperception (The Eighth Jhāna)

Take earth kasiṇa as the meditative object. If earth kasiṇa is difficult to begin with as a meditative object, start with white kasiṇa. Develop white kasiṇa as before through the first four jhānas using white kasiṇa as an object, until stable in each jhāna.

When you can take earth kasiṇa as a meditative object, develop first jhāna. When stable in first jhāna, develop and enter second jhāna using earth kasiṇa as an object. As stability is obtained in second jhāna, third jhāna is developed and stabilized, and then fourth jhāna. After achieving stability in fourth jhāna using earth kasiṇa, go through the process of removing earth kasiṇa as the object. Again, focus on either minute holes in the earth kasiṇa or the edge of the earth kasiṇa.

As before, remove earth kasiṇa and take the space that earth kasiṇa formerly occupied as a meditative object. When the jhāna factors of ekaggatā and upekkhā are strong, shift attention to a small spot in boundless space and focus on this as the object until awareness is drawn into the base of boundless space.

The consciousness holding the base of boundless space will become stable as a meditative object, and the jhāna factors of ekaggatā and upekkhā will become strong. When ripe, awareness is drawn into full absorption in the sixth jhāna, the base of boundless consciousness. Upon exiting the sixth jhāna, take the absence of the consciousness of the base of boundless space as the meditative object.

Hold the absence of the consciousness of the base of boundless space as a meditative object, until the jhāna factors of ekaggatā and upekkhā become strong. When concentration is ripe, the base of nothingness draws awareness into full absorption in the seventh jhāna. Upon exiting the seventh jhāna, proceed toward the eighth jhāna—the base of neither perception nor nonperception.

Now take the consciousness of the base of nothingness as the meditative object. Shift attention away from the base of nothingness and focus on the consciousness holding nothingness. This “consciousness of nothing” is the container in which nothingness is held. This is an even finer gauzelike object. To hold an object as subtle and fine as this, the sense of “me” must be almost completely transparent. Taking the consciousness of the base of nothingness as a meditative object is like holding a spiderweb to the sky. It is a very delicate, exquisitely fragile object of awareness. Only a purified, jhāna-energized awareness can hold the object of the base of neither perception nor nonperception.

Take the consciousness of the base of nothingness as a meditative object. With time, the jhāna factors of ekaggatā and upekkhā become strong. With prolonged meditation, awareness is eventually drawn into full absorption in the base of neither perception nor nonperception, the eighth jhāna.

This jhāna cannot begin to be imagined or conceptualized. While being outside perception and nonperception, this realm contains both and neither—at the same time! It is a direct experience of nondual awareness. There is neither perception nor nonperception in this immaterial realm. This immaterial state is beyond a sense of mentality; the normal, thinking mind absolutely cannot grasp it. Thinking cannot be present here, not even in access concentration. If it arises, the base of neither perception nor nonperception wafts away, like a wisp of smoke.

The first time each of us experienced this realm, it was unimaginably spectacular. For Tina, it was so intense that she could tolerate only a few minutes the first few times before awareness settled and there was a complete surrender to its purification and subtlety. Stephen was knocked out of the jhāna after about one and a half hours. His awareness could not have remained in the base of neither perception nor nonperception one second longer at that time. This was less than was needed for jhāna mastery. Yet even the first experience of this jhāna was akin to being completely reborn as a new, innocent, pure being.