

Shamatha-Vipashyana Meditation
From Jamgon Kongtrul (and Others) to Chogyam Trungpa
A Rime Shedra NYC Course
Tuesdays, January 19 to April 15, 2021, 7-9:15 pm

Class Eleven

1) Syllabus:

a) The Stages of Vipashyana Meditation

i) The three steps for each of the four stages

b) The Measure of Accomplishment – Suppleness

i) The similitude of vipashyana and proper vipashyana

ii) The applicability to analytical meditation

iii) The two types of Vipashyana:

(1) The Vipashyana focusing on the varieties of phenomena

(2) The Vipashyana focusing on the mode of being

c) The Training in Shamatha and Vipashyana Conjoined

i) The Actual Method of Training

ii) The Union of Shamatha and Vipashyana

iii) The Fruition of Shamatha and Vipashyana

2) Readings

1) Classical Readings:

a) The Measure of Accomplishment of Vipashyana, The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana, Jamgon Kongtrul, *The Treasury of Knowledge*, Translated by Kiki Ekselius and Chrissy Zerbini, one page

b) The Accomplishment of Vipashyanā, *The Practice of Tranquility and Insight*, Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, Translated by Peter Roberts, Excerpts from pp. 105-107, one page

c) Chapter 10. Unifying Method and Wisdom, *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

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

- e) The Unity of Shamatha And Vipashyana, *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, one page
- f) Vipashyana, *Cloudless Sky: The Mahamudra Path Of the Tibetan Kagyu Buddhist School*, Jamgon Kongtrul III, German Trs. by Tina Drasczyk and Alex Drasczyk; English Trs. by Richard Gravel, pp. 54-62, three pages
- g) The Non-Separability of Appearance and Reality and Shamatha and Vipashyana Combined, *King Doha: Saraha's Advice to a King*, Traleg Kyabgon, Pages 24-39, three pages

2) Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche Readings:

- a) An excerpt on the prajna of meditation from the Wisdom chapter, *Meditation in Action*, pp. 71-74, two pages
- b) An excerpt on the Buddhist path from the Introduction, *Journey Without Goal: The Tantric Wisdom of the Buddha*, pp. 4-5, two pages
- c) *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma: Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation:*
 - i) Discovering a World beyond Ego, pp. 134-137, three pages
 - ii) Three Levels of Samten, pp. 252-254, two pages
 - iii) Chapter 49. Self-Perpetuating Awareness, excerpts from pp. 367-369, one page
 - iv) Two Types of Effort, pp. 505-507, two pages
- d) Excerpts from "Beyond Present, Past, and Future Is the Fourth Moment," a lecture in "The Tibetan Buddhist Path" class, first summer session of the Naropa Institute, July 1974. Shambhala Sun, March 2006, four pages

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.

The Unity of Shamatha And Vipashyana
From *Lamp of Mahamudra: The Immaculate Lamp*
That Perfectly and Fully Illuminates the Meaning of Mahamudra,
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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.

The Prajna of Meditation

From the Wisdom chapter in *Meditation in Action*

By Chögyam Trungpa, pp. 71-74

Finally we come to *gompa*, meditation. First we had theory, then contemplation, and now meditation in the sense of *samadhi*. The first stage of *gompa* is to ask oneself, 'Who am I?' Though this is not really a question. In fact it is a statement, because 'Who am I?' contains the answer. The thing is not to start from 'I' and then want to achieve something, but to start directly with the subject. In other words one starts the real meditation without aiming for anything, without the thought, 'I want to achieve.' Since one does not know 'Who am I?' one would not start from 'I' at all, and one even begins to learn from beyond that point. What remains is simply to start on the subject, to start on what *is*, which is not really 'I am'. So one goes directly to that, directly to the '*is*'.

This may sound a bit vague and mysterious, because these terms have been used so much and by so many people; we must try then to clarify this by relating it to ourselves. The first point is not to think in terms of 'I', 'I want to achieve.' Since there is no one to do the achieving, and we haven't even grasped that yet, we should not try to prepare anything at all for the future.

... . We should not start off by expecting any kind of reward. There should be no striving and no trying to achieve anything. One might then feel, 'Since there is no fixed purpose and there is nothing to attain, wouldn't it be rather boring? Isn't it rather like just being nowhere?' Well, that is the whole point. Generally we do things because we want to achieve something; we never do anything without first thinking, 'Because...'. 'I'm going for a holiday *because* I want to relax, I want a rest.' 'I am going to do such-and-such *because* I think it would be interesting.' So every action, every step we take, is conditioned by Ego. It is conditioned by the illusory concept of 'I', which has not even been questioned. Everything is built around that and everything begins with *because*.

So that is the whole point. Meditating without any purpose may sound boring, but the fact is we haven't sufficient courage to go into it and just give it a try. Somehow we have to be courageous. Since one is interested and one wants to go further, the best thing would be to do it perfectly and not start with too many subjects, but start with one subject and really go into it thoroughly. It may not sound interesting, it may not be exciting all the time, but excitement is not the only thing to be gained and one must also develop patience. One must be willing to take a chance and in that sense make use of will power.

One has to go forward without fear of the unknown, and if one does go a little bit further one finds it is possible to start without thinking 'because...'—without thinking 'I will achieve something', without just living in the future. One must not build fantasies

around the future and just use that as one's impetus and source of encouragement, but one should try to get the real feeling of the present moment. That is to say that meditation can only be put into effect if it is not conditioned by any of our normal ways of dealing with situations. One must practice meditation directly without expectation or judgment and without thinking in terms of the future at all. Just leap into it. Jump into it without looking back. Just start on the technique without a second thought. Techniques, of course, vary a great deal, as everything depends on the person's character. Therefore no generalized technique can be suggested.

Well, those are the methods by which wisdom, *sherab*, can be developed. Now wisdom sees so far and so deep, it sees before the past and after the future. In other words wisdom starts without making any mistakes, because it sees the situation so clearly. So for the first time we must begin to deal with situations without making the blind mistake of starting from 'I'—which doesn't even exist. And having taken that first step, we will find deeper insight and make fresh discoveries, because for the first time we will see a kind of new dimension: we will see that one can in fact be at the end result at the same time that one is travelling along the path. This can only happen when there is no / to start with, when there is no expectation. The whole practice of meditation is based on this ground. And here you can see quite clearly that meditation is not trying to escape from life, it is not trying to reach a Utopian state of mind, nor is it a question of mental gymnastics.

Meditation is just trying to see what *is*, and there is nothing mysterious about it. Therefore one has to simplify everything right down to the immediate present practice of what one is doing, without expectations, without judgments and without opinions. Nor should one have any concept of being involved in a battle against 'evil', or of fighting on the side of 'good'. At the same time one should not think in terms of being limited, in the sense of not being allowed to have thoughts or even think of 'I', because that would be confining oneself in such a small space that it would amount to an extreme form of *Sila*, or discipline.

Basically there are two stages in the practice of meditation. The first involves disciplining oneself to develop the first starting point of meditation, and here certain techniques, such as observing the breathing, are used. At the second stage one surpasses and sees the reality behind the technique of breathing, or whatever the technique may be, and one develops an approach to actual reality through the technique, a kind of feeling of becoming one with the present moment.

This may sound a little bit vague. But I think it is better to leave it that way, because as far as the details of meditation are concerned I don't think it helps to generalize. Since the techniques depend on the need of the person, they can only be discussed individually; one cannot conduct a class on meditation practice.

The Buddhist Path
An Excerpt from *Journey Without Goal:*
The Tantric Wisdom of the Buddha
By Chögyam Trungpa, Excerpt on pp. 4-5

The entire Buddhist path is based on the discovery of egolessness and the maturing of insight or knowledge that comes from egolessness. In the hinayana, we discover the nonexistence of self through the practice of meditation. Assuming a dignified sitting posture, identifying with the breath, and simply noting thoughts and feelings—basic discursiveness—we begin to make friends with ourselves in a fundamental sense.

By applying mindfulness, or bare attention, to whatever arises during meditation, we begin to see that there is no permanence or solidity to our thought process, and at some point, we begin to realize that there is no permanence or solidity to us. In Sanskrit, the meditative practice of mindfulness is called *shamatha* and in Tibetan it is *shiné (zhi-gnas)*. *Shiné* literally means the development of "peace." The meaning of peace here is precisely this sense of taming the wildness of mind so that we are alert and able to experience ourselves directly. We are not talking about peace as some kind of trance state: shamatha is the first step in waking up.

Mindfulness naturally leads to the development of awareness, which is a sense of expansion, being aware of the environment or space in which we are being mindful. Awareness brings tremendous interest in things, people, and the world altogether. We begin to develop sympathy and caring for others. The practice of awareness in Sanskrit is called *vipashyana* and in Tibetan, *lhagthong (lhagmthong)*, which literally means "clear seeing." Vipashyana is traditionally connected both with the practice of meditation and with the formal study of the teachings and postmeditation activities in general. Vipashyana provides a link between the insight that is developed in meditation practice and our everyday experience. It allows us to carry that meditative insight or awareness into our daily lives.

Through the insight that comes from vipashyana, we begin to make a further discovery of egolessness. We begin to develop a precise understanding of how mind functions and how confusion is [Page 5] generated. We are able to see how the belief in ego causes tremendous pain and suffering to ourselves and others.

From this comes the desire to renounce samsara, the wheel of confused existence—the world of ego. Renunciation is expressed as the desire to refrain from harming ourselves

and others. As well, we begin to long for the path that will liberate us from confusion. We begin to develop confidence in the Buddha as the enlightened example; in the dharma, or teachings of Buddhism, which are the path; and in the sangha, the community of practitioners who follow this path. Renunciation is utterly and absolutely necessary if we wish to practice the teachings of the Buddha. This theme runs through the entire path, from beginning to end. At the Vajrayana level, renunciation is connected with devotion to the teacher, the vajra master. Devotion to the teacher in the vajrayana demands the total surrender of ego, the complete renunciation of all clinging to self.

Because of the discovery of egolessness in shamatha and the development of interest and sympathy in vipashyana, we naturally begin to expand our sense of warmth and friendliness to others. We are less interested in "this," "I," "me," and more interested in "that." The mahayana path is based on this discovery that others are more important than ourselves. Because we have discovered egolessness, because we have discovered that *me* does not exist, we find that there is lots of room, lots of space, in which to help others. That is the basis of compassion, *karuna*. Compassion in the Buddhist tradition is not based on guilt; it is based on having greater vision, because we can afford to do so.

Discovering a World beyond Ego
From *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Vol. 2*
By Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, Edited by Judith Lief, pp. 134-137

Developing Egolessness: The Hinayana Foundation

[page 134] The mahayana, like the hinayana, is based on the development of egolessness. In general, the various levels of the path have to do with your relationship to ego and your understanding of egolessness. The mahayana realization of twofold egolessness is dependent on the hinayana in that you first need to develop the egolessness of individuality as well as the first half of the egolessness of dharmas. You might have the intention of attaining the state of twofold egolessness, and you might aspire to the benevolence and gentleness of the compassionate path, but before such things take place, it is absolutely natural that you first go back and develop individual salvation.

Individual salvation means working with yourself. It is based on the idea of renunciation, and in turn, renouncing the renunciation itself. In the hinayana, you take refuge in the Buddha, dharma, and sangha, and begin to overcome the ego of individuality. Once you have accomplished that, you are on the brink of the ego of dharmas. You begin to question why you are doing all this, and you discover the karmic chain reaction of the twelve nidanas. And as you study the nidanas, or interdependent [page 135] co-origination, you realize that you have to reverse that process in order to cut through it.

All this helps you to develop the egolessness of dharmas, but there are still little uncertainties left behind. You have managed to work on the gross level of your experience of dharmas, or things as they are, but you still perceive primarily in terms of opinion and attitude. At a gross level, your attitudes, perceptions, and opinions about the ego of dharmas have been cut through by your experience and understanding of the twelve nidanas. In relating with things as they are in their solid form, you have worked with the crude world of the twelve-nidana chain reaction process up through the ignorance level. But at a subtle level, you have not reached a full understanding of where all those things come from. The source is not yet cut through. So you are back to square two: to the source of the ego of dharmas.

The ego of dharmas comes from fixation on the "am" of "I am." As a practitioner on the boundary between hinayana and mahayana, you have liberated the "I," but you still have not completely clarified the level of "am." You are still fixated on "am" and on where the "am" came from. The gross level of "am" has been related with, but the

primordial "am" still has not been completely clarified.

The primordial "am" comes from some kind of "I am," but not from the original "I am." That situation has already been overcome at the shravakayana level. But at that level, and even at the pratyekabuddhayana level, the ego has not been completely cut through. In fact, pratyekabuddhas regard the little ego that's left as useful and necessary in order to go further. They would probably say that if you completely cut through everything, there would be nothing left to practice with. There would be no reason to go on and no purpose to life, which is quite true. In other words, pratyekabuddhas are afraid of the prajna principle; they are both afraid of it and attracted to it.

In entering the mahayana, you are giving up and letting go. You are letting go of your fixation on individual salvation and you are letting go of your righteousness and religiosity. The last hold of the ego of dharmas is cut through. Everything is regarded as attitude, but it is not attitude that is being cut through—attitude has been cut through already. Rather, it is the "attituder" or the experiencer of attitude that is cut through, which is the second half of the ego of dharmas. When the experiencer of mind's creation has been cut through, you realize that everything is understandable [page 136] and perceivable. You have cut through twofold ego by realizing that the seemingly subtle mental grasp of "am" is really very gross.

When you begin to overcome the fixator, the philosopher, and the conceptualizer, you begin to develop an appreciation for the absence of twofold ego. Although it is not so easy, and may not have happened completely, you still feel that you have overcome something, that you have cut through. At that point, the dawn of mahayana, or the dawn of the absence of twofold ego, occurs in your mind, and you begin to feel that something is worth celebrating. It is quite cheerful; nothing is depressing. The vast action of the bodhisattva begins to develop, and you experience the dawn of mahayana as luminosity and brilliance.

Differentiating Techniques and Experience

The development of egolessness is a progressive process, not a sudden attainment. Shamatha is the basic technique. On the basis of shamatha, vipashyana is the practice that leads to the realization of the first egolessness, which is the egolessness of self, and then to the realization of one-and-a-half-fold egolessness, which is the egolessness of self and the first half of the egolessness of dharmas. Vipashyana practice culminates in prajna, the technique that brings the complete experience of twofold egolessness, or shunyata. So first there is the tool, and then there is the experience. We should be absolutely clear about that, and not confuse technique with experience. You cannot

have mahayana without vipashyana—it would be like a tree without a trunk. The whole thing is ancestral. Prajna gives birth to the shunyata experience of the buddhas, and vipashyana is the stone that sharpens the sword of prajna. You could not experience twofold egolessness just with vipashyana, because you could not do it without prajna—but if you abandon vipashyana, you don't get anywhere at all.

Prajna is a technique as much as vipashyana or shamatha: shunyata is what you get, and prajna is what you are going to get it with. Shunyata is like death, and prajna is like a deadly weapon. That may sound rather morbid, but in terms of overcoming ego, I am sure you will understand what I mean. Prajna can be regarded as a microscope, and shunyata as what is on the slide. That is why the *Heart Sutra* places an emphasis on prajna, but little emphasis on shunyata. Shunyata is discovered in the phrase, "No eye, no ear, no nose," and so on, but prajna is actually more important. [page 137] Sharpening and cleaning your instrument is more important than what you see with it. You cannot cut with shunyata, as if it were a weapon. That would be absurd, because shunyata happens after the fact. Since prajna is the instrument with which you discover shunyata, shunyata is regarded as the child of *prajnaparamita*, of the perfection of wisdom.

Three Levels of Samten

**From *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume Two,*
*The Bodhisattva Path of Wisdom and Compassion***
By Chögyam Trungpa, Compiled and Edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 252-254

In addition to two categories of samten, there are three levels: dwelling in the dharma of seeing, accumulating goodness, and enthusiasm in working for others.

Dwelling in the Dharma of Seeing

The first level of samten is dwelling in the dharma of seeing. It is the practice of shamatha. Your perception and your state of mind are working along with the ayatanas and dhatus, so you are constantly projecting outward. You are not trying to contradict the ayatanas, but you are maintaining yourself within the ayatanas, so you are able to remain in the state of shamatha quite leisurely. Your mind becomes peaceful and your body relaxed. That seems to be the essence of shamatha practice.

The relaxation that comes with shamatha is called shinjang. You are thoroughly processed. Your mind is processed by the peace and one-pointedness of mindfulness practice, and your body is processed by assuming certain postures. Eventually the posture of sitting meditation practice becomes a soothing and natural exercise; it is natural relaxation. It is as if both mind and body were put into a washing machine and then into a dryer. But it is a dry-cleaning process rather than a wet-cleaning process. You do not have to go through the wetness of passion, just the dryness of prajna. So shinjang is the Buddhist version of dry-cleaning our whole being. It is achieved through shamatha practice, which is the first level of samten.

Accumulating Goodness

The second level of samten is accumulating goodness or virtue. Having fully and thoroughly achieved shamatha mindfulness, you begin to develop vipashyana awareness. Mindfulness is a very localized situation, but with awareness, you actually can discriminate dharmas. At the same time, you develop a further appreciation of concentration. In the state of awareness, you can appreciate the possibility of seeing the world properly and fully. You can see how your ayatanas and dhatus function or operate, and you can see how the world works. This is what is known as vipashyana.

[page 253] According to the Buddhist tradition, virtue can be defined as clear perception. Clear perception is not involved with ego. If you have ego, you cannot have clear perception; your perceptions will still be clouded. When you no longer have any obstacles or cloudiness, you experience clarity, and you are able to practice immaculately. Because you are able to practice immaculately and purely, you can also

help others beautifully—and because you can help others, you yourself become trained at the same time. And because of that, you can attain enlightenment and help others attain enlightenment.

Enthusiasm in Working for Others

The third level of samten is enthusiasm in working for others. You are not purely interested in peace and insight, or shamatha and vipashyana alone, but you develop agitation in your state of mind. That agitation is to work for sentient beings. From the mahayana point of view, when you develop shamatha, you are developing shunyata, and when you develop vipashyana, you are developing compassion. So you have a sense of compassion and shunyata already.

At the third level of samten, you gain further energy to combine shamatha and vipashyana, to join emptiness with compassion. So the discipline of working for sentient beings begins to evolve. But nobody is going to get an award for saving all sentient beings, that's for sure, because nobody can keep up with it. That is the saving grace. It is like working as a doctor: if you are a doctor, how many people are you going to cure? Are you going to cure the whole world, or are you going to cure people one by one? You just keep working every day. Do you expect that everybody is going to be healthy, that one day the whole world will just say, "I'm healthy"? You wouldn't expect that—but you still keep working.

With samten, or meditation, you cannot be moved by wandering thoughts. Your attention is good, and your desire to do things becomes very real. Exertion encourages some sort of feistiness, and the practice of samten establishes that feistiness as grounded and real. "We mean business," so to speak. Working for sentient beings is finally becoming fully and thoroughly established as the ground of your whole being. Your state of mind is completely and fully soaked in it. At this level, working for sentient beings becomes the activity of shunyata and compassion.

The other paramitas are very good in their own way, but they could be very jumpy. With dhyana, because your span of attention becomes much [page 254] more vast and definite, you do not have to be constantly jumpy. You have learned how to concentrate, how to attend to one theme for a long time, and that affects how you can practice compassion and how you can work for others. If you want to help someone, you spend lots of time with them, you cultivate them, and you never get frustrated. Your span of attention becomes so vast, so good, and so willing, that this person can shit on you, piss on you, kick you, try all sorts of ways to provoke you, but you are never moved. You are just like a mountain. Since your span of attention cannot be interrupted, you can listen to someone and work with them for many years. You do not look for shortcuts. Your real commitment to that person is an act of compassion—and because you are also practicing exertion, you enjoy what you are doing.

Excerpts from Chapter 49. Self-Perpetuating Awareness
The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma:
Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation
By Chögyam Trungpa, compiled and edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 367-369

Burning Conceptual Mind

[page 368] In his synopsis of vipashyana experience, Jamgön Kongtrül writes about seeing the phenomenal world as empty space. He says that the phenomenal world is empty—it does not have any form, any qualities, any perceptions, any anything at all. Out of that nonexistence, and because of it, we are able to shape forms, objects, colors, and conceptualizations of all kinds. Fixed concepts, shapes, and colors arise, but they are like firewood. That firewood is an aspect of one's intelligence, or discriminating awareness; and the fire is the discipline that burns the fabric of discriminating mind. That is, through the experience of vipashyana, apparent phenomena are seen as fuel. Such firewood should be burned so that there is no difference between the phenomenal world and its occupants—they are one. When the fuel of fixed concepts is burned up by the fire of discipline, we have nothing to hang on to. And having discovered nothing to hold on to, we find that the whole thing dissipates. That is the total experience of vipashyana.

Total Experience

Vipashyana experience is total experience that goes beyond techniques and beyond mindfulness. Vipashyana awareness expands and opens constantly. We could call it active space, self-perpetuating space, or self-perpetuating awareness. Through vipashyana, you have a different way of being, in that you are more open to life both psychologically and physically. Everything should be included in the process of awareness. Such self-perpetuating awareness is possible. It is not so much that you can do it, but there is the possibility that you can see it. When the firewood has burned up, the original fire and wood no longer exist. They have dissolved into open space, which is very real to us and very personal.

Two Types of Effort
The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma:
Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation
By Chögyam Trungpa, Edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 505-507

[page 505] In joining together shamatha and vipashyana, the scriptures talk about two types of effort: the practice of surrendering and the practice of continuity. The Sanskrit word *virya* (Tib.: tsöndrö) means "effort," "diligence," or "working hard." The practice of surrendering, or devotional *virya*, is called *küjor—kü* meaning "respect," or "devotion," and *yorwa* meaning "application" or "practice," so *küjor* means the "practice of devotion." The practice of continuity, or ongoing *virya*, is *tagjor*. *Tag* means "continuity," and *yorwa* again means "practice," so *tagjor* means "the practice of continuity." With *tagjor*, your practice is ongoing. You have engaged with [page 506] the practice, and your practice is diligent and devoted—and you are willing to go along with that for the rest of your life.

The two *viryas* balance one another. Devotional *virya* could become impulsive, and ongoing *virya* could be without devotion or inspiration, just dragging along. So we need both devotional *virya* and ongoing *virya*. The two *viryas* seem to be important. They are the basic core of the shamatha-vipashyana marriage—and shamatha-vipashyana is recommended as the vanguard of the mahayana practice of shunyata. Shamatha-vipashyana is the way you step out of the path of accumulation onto the path of unification, the second of the five paths. The combination of shamatha with vipashyana is the leverage.

In shamatha-vipashyana practice, when you sit you have an awareness of your surroundings. Your sense perceptions have been taken into account in developing vipashyana awareness, and you also have the shamatha practice of deliberateness, of getting into things directly. Bringing together those two types of practice is said by the Kagyü lineage father Gampopa to be one of the most enlightening and promising techniques ever developed in the dharma.

In the Burmese Theravada tradition, the late Burmese meditation master Mahasi Sayadaw was a great revolutionary in the meditation field. He reintroduced meditation practice into the Theravada world with a particular emphasis on the combination of shamatha-vipashyana. It is an important point that having already accomplished shamatha and vipashyana independent of each other, we can combine them together by application of the two types of *virya*. This approach is highly recommended by all kinds of great teachers.

When we combine shamatha and vipashyana, we feel the verge of the breath, or the touch of the breath going out, rather than being heavy-handedly involved in it. At the same time, there is a feeling of completeness around us everywhere, in all directions, an environmental feeling. We sense that when the breathing dissolves, it is an expanding process—dissolving at this point, dissolving at that point, and further points, and further, further points. That dissolving is taking place in the whole universe, and you are, in a sense, nowhere. Finally, you lose the reference point as to who is breathing and where the breathing is dissolving. But that sense of complete desolation cannot take place unless the precision and accuracy of the breathing is happening at the same time. The accuracy of shamatha happens to be independent of the particular department that perpetuates [page 507] the sense of reference point. But even if there is no point of reference with shamatha, as the breathing goes out, it is real and complete breathing going out.

The sense of reference point is connected to the psychosomatic body, which is the source of security. If you lose that reference point, you may feel that you have at last freed yourself from the world of desire, and your psychosomatic sickness has no control over you anymore. But you still have a long way to go. You have not yet touched shunyata. Although it may be subtle, there is still a sense of self. Although the heaviest part of the neurosis has been removed, there is still a feeling of duality. For the practitioner, the sense of self abides in the teachings and the practice itself. That is the only security there is: trusting in the truth of the teachings. With practice, there is definitely a change, because you experience the desolation of things being not all that solid and definite. Your belief in physical existence is being pulled apart, but you still believe in the discontinuity. There is the abstract belief that what pulls you apart is a form of security. There is still some kind of trust that you are going to continue, and you have a practice to work with. So although you lose your body, you can still practice. In shamatha-vipashyana, mind and space mix together. That mixing of mind and space comes from the two types of virya. The virya of devotion, küjor, leans toward the practice of precision, of bending one's fantasies to the simple breath. It is the shamatha aspect. The virya of continuity, or tagjor, is related with vipashyana. In shamatha-vipashyana, you need küjor and tagjor happening together simultaneously.

Beyond Present, Past, and Future Is the Fourth Moment
By Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Ed. Carolyn Rose Gimian
Excerpts from a lecture in “The Tibetan Buddhist Path” class taught by
Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche during the first summer session of the Naropa
Institute, in July 1974. Shambhala Sun, March 2006

The shamatha experience, the slow process of mindfulness that takes place on the beginner’s level, allows us to be available to ourselves. Before we become missionaries or social workers, whether in the conventional sense or on the level of bodhisattvas and tantric practitioners, we have to work with ourselves and pull ourselves together. The first step towards being a social worker or a preacher is to make sure that you don’t become a nuisance to others. The starting point is the shamatha practice of meditation, in which we begin to catch ourselves being a nuisance to ourselves. We find all kinds of thought problems, emotional hang-ups, and physical problems with meditation—problems of all kinds.

We find that we are being a nuisance to ourselves, let alone being a nuisance to others. We get angry with ourselves, saying: “I could do better than this. What’s wrong with me? I seem to be getting worse. I’m going backwards.” We’re angry at the whole world, including ourselves. Everything we see is an insult. The universe becomes the expression of total insult. One has to relate with that. If you are going to exert your power and energy to walk on the path, you have to work with yourself.

The first step is to make friends with yourself. That is almost the motto of shamatha experience. Making friends with yourself means accepting and acknowledging yourself. You work with your subconscious gossip, fantasies, dreams—everything. And everything that you learn about yourself you bring back to the technique, to the awareness of the breathing, which was taught by the Buddha.

Having made friends with yourself, you feel a sense of relief and excitement. At the same time, you should be careful not to get overly excited about your accomplishment. You are still a schoolboy or a schoolgirl. If last night’s homework was good, that doesn’t mean that you are done with school altogether. You have to come back to class, you have to work with your teacher, you have to do more homework, precisely because you were successful. You have more work to do.

Next is the experience of vipashyana, which is a sense of fundamental awareness. Such awareness acknowledges the boundaries of non-awareness, the boundaries of wandering mind. You begin to realize the boundary and the contrast. Your awareness is

taking place and your confusion, your mindlessness, is also taking place. You realize that, but you don't make a big deal about it. You accept the whole situation as part of the basic awareness.

Not only are you aware of your breath, your posture, and your thought process, but you are fundamentally mindful and aware. There is a sense of totality. You are aware of the room; you are aware of the rug; you are aware of your meditation cushion; you are aware of what color hair you have; you are aware of what you did earlier that day. You are constantly aware of such things. Beyond that there is nonverbal, nonconceptual awareness that doesn't talk in terms of facts and figures. You have a fundamental, somewhat abstract level of awareness and of being. There is a sense that "This is taking place. Something is happening right here." A sense of being—experience without words, without terms, without concepts, without visualization—takes place. It is unnameable. We can't call it "consciousness" exactly, because consciousness implies that you are evaluating or conscious of sensory inputs. We can't even really call it "awareness," which could be misunderstood. It's not simply awareness. It's a state of being. Being what? One never knows. It is just being without any qualification. Are you being Jack? Are you being Jill? Are you being Smith? One never knows.

This may sound rather vague, but it is not as vague as all that. There is a very strong energy. A very powerful thing is taking place. There is a shock, the electricity of being pulled back into the present constantly: here, here, here. It's happening. It's really taking place.

There is an interesting dichotomy here: on the one hand, we don't know what it's all about. On the other hand, there is enormous precision and understanding. Such directness is taking place. That is the state of vipashyana, a state of realization or insight. You begin to see inside your mind on the level of nonverbal awareness. Nonverbal cognitive mind is functioning. You may say, "Now I hear the traffic. Now I hear the cuckoo clock. Now I hear my wristwatch ticking. Now I hear my wife yelling at me." But you also have to say: "I hear but I don't hear at the same time." Such totality is taking place. A very precise something or other is happening. That is the state of vipashyana. It is nonverbal and nonconceptual and very electric. It is neither ecstasy nor a state of dullness. Rather, a state of "hereness" is taking place, which is described in the Tibetan Buddhist literature as *nowness*.

Nowness is sometimes referred to as the fourth moment. That may sound more mystical than what is meant. You have the past, present, and future, which are the three moments. Then you have something else taking place, which is called the fourth moment. The fourth moment is not a far-out or extraordinary experience as such. It is a

state of experience that doesn't even belong to now. It doesn't belong to what might be, either. It belongs to a non-category—which provides another sense of category. Thus it is called the fourth moment. That is the state of vipashyana, or the state of non-ego. The Tibetan term for this is lhakthong dagme tokpe sherap, which means “the knowledge of egoless insight.” It is a very real experience in which nothing can be misunderstood. It is such an overwhelming experience. The experience comes at you. You experience it precisely and in great detail.

.... That is what is happening in vipashyana experience. Experience becomes so real and precise that it transcends any reference point of the doctrine that you are practicing. Whether you are practicing Buddhism or Hinduism, you are practicing life. In fact, ironically, you begin to find that you can't escape. You find that life is practicing you. It becomes very real and very obvious.

Experiencing the fourth moment is an important point in the process of spiritual development. You actually realize that you are on the path, and everything in your life begins to haunt you. Sometimes the haunting process takes the form of pleasurable confirmation. Sometimes it is painful and threatening. There is the feeling of some kind of ghost haunting you all the time. You can't get rid of it; you can't even call the Catholics to exorcise it. That state of insight and state of being simultaneously haunted is the experience of the fourth moment.

You might feel that you are sitting and camping on the razor's edge, making campfires quite happily, yet knowing that you are on the razor's edge. You can't quite settle down and relax and build your campfire, yet one still does so.

That state of hauntedness is the state of ego, actually. Somebody in your family, some part of your being, is beginning to complain that they are getting uncomfortable messages. In other words, the vipashyana awareness of the fourth moment cannot materialize unless there is a slight tinge of being haunted by your own ego. The hauntedness and the sense of insight work together. That is what creates experience.

.... The present is the third moment. It has a sense of presence. You might say, “I can feel your presence.” Or, “I can feel the presence of the light when it's turned on. Now there is no darkness.” The present provides a sense of security: you know where you are. You keep your flashlight in your pocket. If you encounter darkness, you take out your flashlight and shine the light to show you where you are going. You feel enormous relief, created by that little spot of light in front of you. You don't see the whole environment, but you feel the sense of presence and the present. The fourth moment is a state of totality. Basic awareness is taking place which doesn't need any particular reassurance

as such. It is happening. It is there. You feel the totality. You perceive not only the beam of light from the flashlight, but you see the space around you at the same time. The fourth moment is a much larger version of the third moment.

Without the experience of the fourth moment, there isn't enough intelligence taking place. You are just accepting things naively, and that naivete may become the basis for spiritual materialism. Naivete is believing in something that doesn't exist, which means that it becomes a sense of ignorance or stupidity. You turn on the cold shower, and you hope everything is going to be okay. You try to make sure that everything will be predictable and okay and then you just give in. You are not prepared for any reminders. Then this little twist of hot water takes place. Whenever there is a reminder, it is part of the fourth moment. If there is a reminder, everything becomes very real. If you don't have a reminder, then you are just at the mercy of chaos, samsara. That is why the sitting practice of meditation is so important. It boils down to that.