

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 Thirteen

1) Syllabus:

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

2) Readings from Class Twelve:

- a) *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Vol. 2, The Bodhisattva Path of Wisdom and Compassion, eight pages:*
 - i) *A taste of Enlightenment, pp. 6-7*
 - ii) *Two Aspects of Love: Maitri and Karuna, pp. 15-17*
 - iii) *Cultivating Wholesomeness, pp. 51-53*
 - iv) *Basic Training, pp. 55-56*
 - v) *The Paramitas and Shamatha-Vipashyana, pp. 230*
 - vi) *Shamatha-Vipashyana and the Order of the Paramitas, pp. 239*
 - vii) *The Hinayana Version of Ego Taming, pp. 348*
- b) *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Vol. 3: The Tantric Path of Indestructible Wakefulness, nine pages:*
 - i) *Cognition and Deeper Perception, pp. 315-316*
 - ii) *Shamatha-Vipashyana as Indivisible Emptiness and Luminosity, pp. 291-292*
 - iii) *Transforming Kleshas through Shamatha-Vipashyana, pp. 331*
 - iv) *Ngondro and Shamatha-Vipashyana, pp. 356-357; p. 361; p. 365*
 - v) *Stability, Luminosity and Joy, pp. 400—403*

vi) The Importance of Shamatha Practice for All Four Yogas, pp. 612-613

3) Classical Readings for Class Thirteen:

- a) The Accomplishment of Shamatha and Vipashyana, The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana, Jamgon Kongtrul, *The Treasury of Knowledge*, Translated by Kiki Ekselius and Chryssoula Zerbini, two pages
- b) Removing Doubts About How to Sustain Meditation on the View, *Moonbeams: An Eloquent Elucidation of the Way to Cultivate Mahāmudrā, the Definitive Meaning*, Tashi Namgyal, Trs. Elizabeth Callahan, pp. 87-95, eight pages
- c) The Analytic Meditation of a Pandit, *Vivid Awareness: The Mind Instructions of Khenpo Gangshar*, Khenchen Thrangu, Trs. David Karma Choephel, excerpts from pp. 94-109, six pages

4) Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche Readings for Class Thirteen:

- a) *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Vol. 1, The Path of Individual Liberation:*
 - i) Three Stages of Vipashyana, pp. 349-351, four pages
 - ii) Mixing Mind with Space, pp. 281-283, two pages
- b) Meditation Without Technique or Goal, *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Vol. 2, The Bodhisattva Path of Wisdom and Compassion;*, pp. 131-133, two pages
- c) The Way of Maha Ati, Chögyam Trungpa and Rigdzin Shikpo, *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa, Volume One, Pages 461-465, five 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 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.

Three Stages of Vipashyana
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. 349-351

Traditional texts describe three stages that are very important to understand in connection with vipashyana: *chipa nyerchö*, or “acting like an infant”; *ro-nyam* or “equal taste”; and *teshin mikpa*, or “seeing things as they are.”

Acting like an Infant

The first stage is called *chipa nyerchö*. *Chipa* means “infant,” *chö* means “acting,” and *nyer* means “being closer to it”; so *chipa nyerchö* means the “acting like an infant” level of meditation experience. *Chipa nyerchö* is the first glimpse of vipashyana. It is like teaching an infant to walk. *Chipa nyerchö* develops from very intense shamatha practice, which brings up what are called “visions of emptiness.”

When you suddenly stop speeding and you become absolutely still, you get a kind of backfire of speed within the stillness. Because you are so confused between stillness and speed, you create visions, or hallucinations, which do not have any substance. The Japanese Zen people call such hallucinations *makyo*. Such nonexistent hallucinations have no root or background. Things shift in front of your eyes, or you begin to see smoke passing by. You might begin to have a sense that your toes are gigantic and your body is tiny, or you have a gigantic head and a small body. You might think the ceiling is sinking above your head, or your zafu is shifting around. Your vision changes and all kinds of sounds are heard. Some people hear a complete orchestra, with singing and chanting. Different tingling sensations occur in the body. Sometimes there is terror that you don't exist.* Such experiences may seem profound, but as long as there is humor or play, I don't think they are a problem.

Equal Taste

[page 350] The second stage is called *ro-nyam*. *Ro* is “taste,” and *nyam* means “equal”; so *ro-nyam* means “equal taste.” *Ro-nyam* is a slightly higher stage, a little bit more on the adult level. You begin to experience the four noble truths and you also begin to

* When a student asked at this point what that experience of terror was like, Trungpa Rinpoche replied, “I suppose more or less like this,” and continued to sit normally.

experience the simplicity of awareness, so although the sensorial hallucinations might continue, they don't mean anything to you. There is a quality of one flavor, or one taste. Your shamatha practice continues in a very solid way. You have developed mental stability and you are able to stay with the practice. Because you are already completely involved with shamatha, you also begin to see the simplicity and straightforwardness of vipashyana. So at the second stage, or ro-nyam, shamatha and vipashyana are combined. That combination is the goal of the Burmese meditation schools in particular. They highly recommend the second category of vipashyana as a most important experience.

Seeing Things as They Are

The third stage is called teshin mikpa. *Te* means "that," *shin* means "like"; so *teshin* means "like that." *Mikpa* is "perception," "understanding," or "knowledge"; so *teshin mikpa* means "seeing things as they are," which is known as the mahavipashyana experience. The mahavipashyana experience creates a link between hinayana and mahayana practice, in that you begin to experience emptiness, or shunyata. *Shunya* means "empty," and *ta* makes it a noun; so *shunyata* means "emptiness." You sense that you are basically shunya, or empty. Your psychological makeup, the embellishments you indulge in, and your thought process are all nonexistent. Because awareness is very direct, precise, and simple, it brings spaciousness and a glimpse of shunyata. You begin to see not only simplicity, but emptiness, or intangibility. In mahavipashyana, a quality of conviction begins to take place, a primitive shunyata experience. So mahavipashyana is a step further than ro-nyam, because with mahavipashyana you have a glimpse that you are inherently nothing—not as a meditation experience alone, but as a kind of fundamental devastation.

In mahavipashyana, there's an enormous feeling of being helped "out" rather than helped "in." You are pulled out of whatever realm you are in, into a realm, or psychological state, that is completely empty. You begin to realize that you do not have an origin, and you don't belong anywhere. [page 351] You are treading on a path that is a path in terms of experience but is no longer a concrete path, so there is a lot of fear. It is as if you are riding and you lose your grip on the reins, or as if your car begins to go by itself and the steering wheel doesn't work. Something slowly begins to take over so that the path comes to you; you don't go to the path. Practice becomes constantly apparent. It is in your mind all the time, so there is a lot of fear and a lot of concern.

But mahavipashyana experience can also lead to celebration. It depends on your attitude. If your attitude is that the world is playing a trick on you, you will complain to everybody, or at least try to find a source of complaint, so that your ground will be solid

and your ideas will be appreciated. However, if you don't have that attitude of competitiveness, then realizing that there is no ground becomes a source of celebration and joy.

At this stage, the experience that you have nothing to hold on to is continual. And that experience will go on, until at a certain level of vajrayana it takes a different form, with further sophistication. However, in this case it is just the simple experience that you exist, but at the same time you do not have any ground. You have no ground because awareness is constant, and the characteristic of awareness is emptiness. Awareness does not have a portrait, a reflection, or identification. So a positive feeling of nothingness becomes very real at the stage of teshin mikpa, or mahavipashyana experience.

In mahavipashyana, it is as though you have been released. It is like catching a fly and throwing it out the window so that the fly flies away rather than being squashed on the table. The idea of release or liberation in mahavipashyana discipline is to have a glimpse of groundlessness. The basic idea is that the closer you are to enlightened mind, the more your development takes you in that direction, the more groundless you are.

In terms of the idea of egolessness, the closer you are to enlightenment, the less ego there is. Egolessness is the root of vipashyana. Since the ego provides an ongoing ground and reference point, you are losing your foundation; therefore, you are helped "out." You lose your reference point and you become thinner and thinner, so to speak. Vipashyana experience cannot be given birth to, developed, or taught unless there is some understanding of egolessness. At the mahavipashyana level, you have been introduced to the egolessness of self, and you are just about to be introduced to the egolessness of phenomena. But you haven't actually been completely introduced yet—you just have a "flu" of it.

[page 352] In ordinary language, shamatha is simply the experience of concentration. It has been said in the texts that even hunters develop shamatha. By one-pointedness with the target, hunters develop their mindfulness or concentration. So you could develop a form of shamatha independent of vipashyana, but to shift from that to a Buddhist-type of concentration, or shamatha, you have to have some experience of, or feeling for, egolessness. You have a sense that there is that possibility, that it is just about to present itself to you, and you practice in that way.

Mahavipashyana is influenced by the mahayana. When you become highly trained in the hinayana and thoroughly absorbed in shamatha practice, your outlook and your experience naturally become mahayana-like. No matter which hinayana school you may

be in, the various doctrinal or philosophical labels and distinctions are irrelevant as far as you are concerned.

Unless you develop vipashyana and realize the importance of wakefulness, you will have only a very distant view of vajrayana or even the higher levels of mahayana. It is necessary to have that kind of basic training and growth. So vipashyana experience and practice is absolutely necessary for a person who follows the Buddhist path and really wants to understand the dharma. Both intellectually and intuitively, vipashyana practice is necessary. You have to make an acquaintance with yourself. You have to meet yourself, to know who you are and what you are. Without vipashyana experience, you don't have any idea of who you are, what you are, how you are, or why you are, at all! So it is very important and absolutely necessary to respect the need for vipashyana experience and practice.

38. Mixing Mind with Space

The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma
Volume One: The Path of Individual Liberation
By Chögyam Trungpa, pages 281-283

In the Kagyü tradition, we employ a special practice technique, which is the experiencing of *chung ne dro sum*. *Chung* is where the thoughts arise, *ne* is where they dwell, and *dro* is where they go, so *chung ne dro sum* is where the thoughts arise, dwell, and go. Those three are accompanied by the practice of *ying rik sewa*. *Ying* means “space,” *rik* means “conscious mind,” and *sewa* means “mixing”; so *ying rik sewa* means “mixing the conscious mind with space.” Sometimes it is called *lung sem sewa*: “mixing the mind and breathing.” *Lung* means “wind” or “air,” *sem* is “mind,” and *sewa* again means “mixing.” In either case, the idea is to experience space. You do not need to deliberately try to mix the mind with the breathing with a solemn effort. Instead, you are simply in contact with the breathing. It is similar to the way that you feel the well-being of your body.

In being mindful of where the thoughts come from, where the thoughts dwell, and where the thoughts vanish, it is not that you are supposed to manufacture a thought and then let it come, let it dwell, and let it go. You have thoughts in any case, and you can be with them. As one thought vanishes, the next thought begins to arise; and by the time the next thought has arisen, the previous thought has already disappeared. You cannot usually experience the vanishing of a thought purely by itself, because to be aware of that thought you sustain it, so you do not really see the vanishing. The vanishing of a thought is seen in terms of the contrast of another idea coming up, at which point the previous thought has already subsided. The arising and dissolving of a thought is not exactly simultaneous, but the beginning, middle, and end happen very fast. When you acknowledge thoughts, they arise; in the process of acknowledging them, they dwell; after you acknowledge them, they drop. Acknowledging the dwelling of a thought does not mean staying with it for a long time, but just experiencing it as your thought. It is very simple.

Thoughts are generally connected with one or another of the eight types of consciousness, which are the working base for the practice of meditation. In meditation practice, you do not exaggerate the different levels of consciousness or disrespect them, but you have balance and respect. Generally, you begin with your physical well-being. You begin with your posture and your sense of discomfort or comfort. Your sense perceptions—the visions, sounds, sensations, tastes, smells, and thoughts that you experience—act as the fuse for your practice. Then, when those sense consciousnesses begin to wear themselves out a little bit, you become slightly bored with them and turn

to the subconscious mind. Conversations are replayed, or particular events in your life are projected back to you in the form of a cinema show. Then there is a gap—a little gap where things don't happen and nothing occurs in the mind.

Physically, you may be comfortable and at rest with the sounds you hear and the visions that you see around you. You may be somewhat settled down. But then you dig up further excitement by looking into your personal relationships and emotional involvements with people. Are people being nice or nasty to you? Maybe you remember a particular scene, and experience the jealousy and passion you felt in that context, or maybe you plan your future. All kinds of thoughts begin to come up—and all of them should be experienced. If I say that you should be aware of the thoughts, then you will get into the area of being watchful, which is a project, and you will find that you are becoming a slave of your own awareness. That approach to practice does not work—it is too self-conscious—so I prefer the word experience to awareness.

The meditation technique universally used in all Buddhist traditions is mindfulness of the breathing, because breathing is an expression of being. For instance, you check whether a person is dead or just completely passed out by feeling whether the person is breathing or not. There is nothing particularly mystical about breathing. For instance, I do not think the early Buddhists thought about breathing in terms of prana, or life force; they were just breathing.

Traditionally, just being there is the outcome of the breathing technique. However, in the Tibetan tradition of formless meditation, you can also meditate without focusing on the breathing. The *shikantaza* practice of “just sitting,” from the Japanese Zen tradition, is similar. Some people find it easy to do formless meditation without focusing on the breathing. If they are provided with a short session of sitting practice, it is easy for them to just be there because they do not have to hassle with any technique. However, for long-term sitting practice, it would be advisable to start with the mindfulness of breathing. Later, the awareness of breathing falls away, and at that point you just go along without it. That seems to be the best, most systematic approach.

In terms of both breathing and formless meditation, one of the problems meditators experience is that there is a slight, almost subconscious, guilty feeling that they ought to be doing something rather than just experiencing what goes on. When you begin to feel that you ought to be doing something, you automatically present millions of obstacles to yourself. Meditation is not a project; it is a way of being. You could experience that you are what you are. Fundamentally, sitting there and breathing is a very valid thing to do.

Meditation Without Technique or Goal

From *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Vol. 2*
By Chögyam Trungpa, Edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 131-133

At the same time, shunyata is a meditative experience that regards neither the awareness nor the achievement of awareness as important. Your mind is not focused on any technique; there are no techniques whatsoever, not even techniques of awareness. Your mind is just open, simply open, simply being—or nonbeing. So the shunyata experience is not awareness as such; it is just being open. Awareness is still a reference point of some kind, in that you are aware of something. With the egolessness of vipashyana, you are more aware of the doctrine, but once you get into shunyata, you are less aware of the doctrine. It is just a question of being.

Nagarjuna quite rightly said that if people viewed shunyata wrongly, if they viewed it with very little prajna, they could be devastated.¹ If there is little experience of vipashyana awareness or prajna-like wakefulness, then the shunyata experience becomes just a bundle of vague nothingness, which doesn't mean anything. Therefore, it is necessary to know that from awareness comes warmth, and from warmth comes nonreference point. That process is very important to know and appreciate. The point is that you can't begin with nonreference point. If you try to do so, you are simply making it up.

It is very difficult to grasp a principle such as shunyata. It is not something you can do. However, awareness or mindfulness practice *is* something you can do. When awareness is no longer a battle, warmth arises as a natural process. You develop warmth through dissolving the possessiveness of you being aware and the world being strange. Having experienced that warmth, you begin to realize that you don't have to label it as belonging to a certain territory. So warmth brings nonreference point. As it is said in the *Heart Sutra*, there is no path and no goal. Your accustomed reference point has been completely cut through; it is gone forever.

Nonreference point does not mean just going berserk and getting so confused that you don't know who is who or what is what. Nonreference point is an intelligent perspective in which you begin to see that nothing is its own primary spokesperson. You see that everything is a repetition of something else, so things do not speak for themselves; they

¹ From the *Mulamadhyamakarikā*: "Shunyata wrongly conceived destroys the dimly witted. It is like a snake grasped by the head." Quoted in Nancy McCagney, *Nagarjuna and the Philosophy of Openness* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997).

are just an echo of themselves. The experience of nonreference point is not a process of collecting reassurances so that you could be nonreferential. It is just simple and straight nonreference point—absolutely open.

Actually, you may find yourself very confused, wondering what to do. But instead of asking, “What does one do in meditation?” you just do it. There is an absence of technique, absence of reference point, absence of any purpose and goal. You just sit like a rock. You can do that; you can just sit there and do it. It is like the Zen *shikantaza* technique of just sitting. The spiritual desire to attain enlightenment accompanies the entire bodhisattva path, and there is also the desire to help other people. But those ideas are based on the perspective of nonreference point, so it is not at all personal. The whole thing is based on impersonality.

Without the background of shamatha and vipashyana, you cannot actually experience the shunyata state of meditation. If you did not have any experience of awareness or mindfulness, you could quite possibly have problems if you tried to jump ahead into the mahayana jargon of shunyata. You might try to imitate the shunyata experience, to make it up without going through it. You might think, “Wow, that's a great idea,” and expect some kind of direct confrontation with reality. But somehow it is not all that direct, and it is not warfare. It is a very simple personal experience.

The craving for sudden experience could instead lead to sudden nuttiness. It is like the story of the meditator who was trying to see that everything is empty and nonexistent. He was trying to subjugate his invented perceptions, his perceptual obstacles or demons. One evening when he was in retreat he went out for a walk, and while he was gone his sister brought him a pot of yogurt. She waited and waited, and finally she got tired of waiting so she left the pot of yogurt in his meditation cell. When the meditator came back from his walk and entered the room, he saw the pot of yogurt. It was getting very dark and hazy, and he saw this huge eye staring at him. He said to himself, “I'm going to have combat with this. It is obviously an obstacle to my path, some kind of demon.” So he hit the pot of yogurt with his shawl, and the yogurt began to splatter all over the cave. The whole cave became filled with eyes, and the more he hit the pot, the more eyes he produced.

The Way of Maha Ati
By Chögyam Trungpa and Rigdzin Shikpo
The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa, Volume One, Pages 461-465
Ed. by Carolyn Rose Gimian

THE ALAYA

The ground of samsara and nirvana, the beginning and end of both confusion and realization, the nature of universal shunyata and of all apparent phenomena, more fundamental even than the trikaya because it is free from bias toward enlightenment, is the alaya, sometimes called the pure or original mind.

Although prajna sees in it no basis for such concepts as different aspects, yet three fundamental aspects of complete openness, natural perfection, and absolute spontaneity are distinguished by upaya as useful devices.

COMPLETE OPENNESS

*All aspects of every phenomenon are completely clear and lucid.
The whole universe is open and unobstructed, everything
mutually interpenetrating.*

*Since all things are naked, clear, and free from obscurations, there is
nothing to attain or to realize. The nature of things naturally appears
and is naturally present in time-transcending awareness.*

The everyday practice is simply to develop a complete acceptance and openness to all situations and emotions and to all people, experiencing everything totally without mental reservations and blockages, so that one never withdraws or centralizes onto oneself.

This produces a tremendous energy which is usually locked up in the processes of mental evasion and generally running away from life experiences.

Clarity of awareness may in its initial stages be unpleasant or fear inspiring. If so, then one should open oneself completely to the pain or the fear and welcome it. In this way the barriers created by one's own habitual emotional reactions and prejudices are broken down.

When performing the meditation practice one should get the feeling of opening oneself out completely to the whole universe with absolute simplicity and nakedness of mind, ridding oneself of all “protecting” barriers.

Don’t mentally split in two when meditating, one part of the mind watching the other like a cat watching a mouse.

One should realize that one does not meditate in order to go deeply into oneself and withdraw from the world.

Even when meditating on chakras in Buddhist yoga there is no introspective concentration—complete openness of mind is still the keynote.

NATURAL PERFECTION

Everything is naturally perfect just as it is, completely pure and undefiled.

All phenomena naturally appear in their uniquely correct modes and situations, forming ever-changing patterns full of meaning and significance, like participants in a great dance.

Everything is symbol, yet there is no difference between the symbol and the truth symbolized.

With no effort or practice whatsoever liberation, enlightenment, and buddhahood are already fully developed and perfected.

The everyday practice is just ordinary life itself. Since the underdeveloped state does not exist, there is no need to behave in any special way or to try to attain or practice anything.

There should be no feeling of striving to reach some exalted goal or higher state, since this simply produces something conditioned and artificial that will act as an obstruction to the free flow of the mind.

One should never think of oneself as “sinful” or worthless, but as naturally pure and perfect, lacking nothing.

When performing meditation practice one should think of it as just a natural function of everyday life, like eating or breathing, not as a special, formal event to be undertaken with great seriousness and solemnity. One must realize that to meditate is to pass beyond effort, beyond practice, beyond aims and goals, and beyond the dualism of bondage and liberation.

Meditation is always perfect, so there is no need to correct anything. Since everything that arises is simply the play of the mind, there are no bad meditation sessions and no need to judge thoughts as good or evil. Therefore one should not sit down to meditate with various hopes and fears about the outcome—one just does it, with no self-conscious feeling of “I am meditating,” without effort, without strain, without attempting to control or force the mind, without trying to become peaceful.

If one finds one is going astray in any of these ways, stop meditating and simply rest and relax for a while before resuming.

If one has experiences that one interprets as “results,” either during or after meditation, do not make anything special of them, but just observe them as phenomena. Above all, do not attempt to repeat them, since this opposes the natural spontaneity of the mind.

ABSOLUTE SPONTANEITY

All phenomena are completely new and fresh, absolutely unique at the instant of their appearance and entirely free from all concepts of past, present, and future, as if experienced in another dimension of time.

The continual stream of new discovery and fresh revelation and inspiration which arises at every moment is the manifestation of the eternal youth of the living dharma and its wonder, splendor, and spontaneity are the play or dance aspect of the universe as guru.

Learn to see everyday life as a mandala in which one is at the center, and be free of the bias and prejudice of past conditioning, present desires, and future hopes and expectations.

The figures of the mandala are the day-to-day objects of one’s life experience, moving in the great dance or play of the universe, the symbolism by which the guru reveals profound and ultimate meaning and significance. Therefore be natural and spontaneous, accept and learn from everything.

See the ironic, amusing side of irritating situations.

In meditation see through the illusion of past, present, and future. The past is but a present memory or condition, the future a present projection, and the present itself vanishes before it can be grasped.

Free oneself from past memories of, and conceptions about, meditation. Each moment of meditation is completely unique and full of the potentiality of new discovery, so one is incapable of judging meditation by past sessions or by theory.

Just plunge straight into meditation at this very moment with one's whole mind and be free from hesitation, boredom, or excitement.

THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION

It is traditional, and best if possible, to sit cross-legged when meditating, with the back erect but not rigid. However, it is most important to feel comfortable, so it is better to sit in a chair if sitting cross-legged proves painful.

One's attitude of mind should be inspired by the three fundamental aspects, whether the meditation is with or without form, although in the latter case the three aspects constitute the whole meditation itself, with particular emphasis on complete openness.

Meditations with form are preceded by, followed by, and contain periods without form and similarly it may often prove desirable, if not essential, to precede a period of formless meditation by a period with form.

To provide for this eventuality many preliminary meditations have been developed over the centuries of Buddhist practice, the most important classes being meditations on breathing, mantra repetitions, and visualizations.

The second and third of these classes need personal instruction from [page 465] one's guru before they can be attempted, but a few words on the first would not be out of place here, since the method used varies little from person to person.

First, let the mind follow the in-and-out rhythm of the breath until it becomes calm and tranquil; then rest the mind more and more on the breath until one's whole being seems to be identified with it.

Finally, become aware of the breath leaving the body and going out into space and gradually transfer the attention away from the breath and toward the sensation of spaciousness and expansion.

By letting this final sensation merge into complete openness, one moves into the sphere of formless meditation proper.

In all probability the above descriptions of the three fundamental aspects and the meditation practices involved will seem very vague and inadequate.

This is inevitable since they attempt to describe what is not only beyond words but beyond thought, and invite practice of what is essentially a state of being.

The words are simply a form of upaya (i.e., skill in means), a hint, which if acted upon may enable the innate natural wisdom and the naturally perfect action to arise spontaneously.

Sometimes in meditation there is a gap in normal consciousness, a sudden complete openness.

This only arises when one has ceased to think in terms of meditator, meditation, and the object of meditation. It is a glimpse of reality, a sudden flash which occurs at first infrequently and then gradually more and more often. It may not be a particularly shattering or explosive experience at all, just a moment of great simplicity.

Do not make the mistake of deliberately trying to force these experiences to recur, for this is to betray the naturalness and spontaneity of reality.