

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 Fourteen

1) Syllabus: Conclusion

a) Overview of the Practice of Shamatha Vipashyana

- i) Classical version as presented by JKLT
- ii) VCTR's take
- iii) Reconciling these two approaches

b) Input from everyone on how does this impact our practice?

c) Feedback from everyone on the course and the materials

2) Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche Readings from 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*

3) Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche Readings for Class Fourteen:

- a) An Approach to Meditation: A Talk to Psychologists, *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa, Volume Two*, Ed. Carolyn Rose Gimian, excerpts from pp. 441-453, twelve pages
- b) Why we Meditate, *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa, Volume Ten*, Ed. Carolyn Rose Gimian, pp. 661-665, five pages

An Approach to Meditation: A Talk to Psychologists

From *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa, Volume Two*

Edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian, pp. 441-453

"An Approach to Meditation," *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 5, no. 1

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[Page 441] Meditation seems to be the basic theme of spiritual practice. It is a vast subject and one that is very loosely defined, so there is a tremendous possibility of distorting it, adding our own version to it. Therefore, it seems quite important to take a look at meditation scientifically in the way it applies to our spiritual practice.

There are all sorts of concepts about meditation. One involves trying to establish communication with a divine power and using exotic techniques to tune in to this power. This particular style of meditation could be defined as a religious practice. Another way of approaching meditation is as a spiritual practice rather than a religious one, working with the perceiver rather than focusing on external divine forces of any kind.

Do such things as divine forces exist or not? Does a God exist or not? The answer is that it is not certain until we work with the perceiver of that particular energy. In the Buddhist form of meditation we try to look at the perceiver of the universe, the perceiver which is self, ego, me, mine. In order to receive guests, we have to have a place to receive them. It is possible, however, that we may not find it necessary to invite any guests at all. Once we have created the place where guests are welcome, we may find they are there already.

The practice of meditation is based, not on how we would like things to be, but on what is. We often do not have a proper understanding of what we are, of what we are actually doing. Instead our attention is focused on the possible end product of the processes we are involved in. Spirituality should be taken very seriously, very honestly. This means it should not partake of that exotic quality which is filled with promises. [Page 442] From the beginning, it should be concerned with the actuality of who is involved in the practice.

In the tradition of Buddhism, each person in the lineage of teachers develops a self-understanding which adds to the tradition. The process is like handing down a recipe for bread. In each generation the bread is exactly like the original bread, but possibly more flavorful because of the added experience of the bakers involved in the handing down. In each generation the bread is fresh, delicious, and healthy.

One might say, “How can I know that these experiences are valid for me?” I can’t say that they are particularly valid for particular individuals unless I have a personal relationship and understanding with them. But certainly the process of working on one’s psychological states from a fresh point of view is valid. What I have to say about these psychological states is that they are purely one’s own experience. Studying and learning about them is more of a confirmation than new information.

There is a great need to be realistic and critical about what we are. We must not be spiritually gullible. Often we find that what we are is not attractive; we find looking at ourselves discouraging. But looking at ourselves is not finally discouraging; rather it develops the ability to be more realistic. We always ask a question when there is uncertainty. Questions would not arise at all if we did not have the creative ground of uncertainty within us. The questions we ask already contain the answers in embryonic form. In other words, they are expressions of the answers. The answer may turn out to be negative and disappointing, causing us to hate ourselves, but nevertheless, we will have discovered something real.

This self-disillusionment seems to be the starting point of meditation practice. The starting point is dissatisfaction, the absence of a dream, or wishful thinking. It is something realistic, down-to-earth, and direct.

Ego starts from bewilderment; bewilderment or dissatisfaction or not knowing how to step to the next solution. Finding a solution, we haven’t actually found it, because we’re not exactly certain to whom the solution applies. There is, therefore, a basic suspicion of the nonexistence of ourselves, a basic confusion. Somehow that basic bewilderment or confusion is the working base. From that confusion, basic bewilderment, or basic paranoia, whatever we call it, arises the attempt to communicate further in order to establish our ego.

Each time we try to establish our so-called reality, the basic paranoia [Page 443] becomes larger and larger; for establishing relationships with the apparent phenomenal world makes demands, requires energy, and the facing of overwhelming situations. When the phenomenal world becomes greater and more powerful than us, there is automatically a feeling of bewilderment. As we continually feel bewildered, we do our best to establish our pattern. In a materialistic sense, we try and become a rich, respectable, or powerful person. In a spiritual sense, we try and adapt to a basic discipline. Finding a basic discipline could be a process which enriches the ego or the self. Even if we follow a spiritual rather than a worldly life, if we don’t have the basic

understanding of why we are trying to accumulate, we are still materialistic in outlook. This is what is known as psychological or spiritual materialism.

What we do, what we collect doesn't matter. The style of the collection is based on the notion of developing a fundamental health which should be seen as basic ego trying to relate to things as sedatives. Any kind of spiritual practice based on that attitude could be extremely dangerous. One can attain a state that could be called spiritual egohood.

We have a problem there. The question is, how can we approach spirituality otherwise? Is there any possibility of approaching it in another way at all? You might say, "Please don't say no, please tell us some more." Well, that's it in a sense. Once we realize that there is no way out from this end, we want to break through something; we want to step out more, to jump. Jumping or leaping is a very dignified thing to do. It is being willing to be an explorer on the biggest scale, willing to be a samurai in the widest sense, willing to break through, to be a warrior. It seems that the question begins from that point when we actually want to break through something. That leap consists, of course, of giving up goal, aim, and object at the same time. What we are doing in this case is stepping out of even the basic bewilderment; not trying to creep around from underneath or by the back door, but stepping out completely.

We find that in spite of the willingness to explore, we still have the basic bewilderment within us and we have to work with that. This involves accepting the basic bewilderment or paranoia as it is. That is the working base. That basic psychological state consists of layers of psychological facades of all kinds. The basic bewilderment is overwhelmingly stupid and yet intelligent in that it plays its game of deaf and dumb cunningly. Beyond the bewilderment, ego develops certain patterns of [Page 444] emotions and sensations. When emotions are insufficient to fortify the ego, we apply concept, the conceptual process of labeling and naming things. Things having names and concepts attached to them help us domesticate the bewilderment or confusion. Beyond that, ego collects neurotic thoughts, neurotic not in the sense of mad, but in the sense of irregular. Thoughts in this case change direction all the time and are on very shaky ground. A single thought pattern never develops. Rather, one thought overlaps another—thoughts on spirituality, sexual fantasies, money matters, domestic matters, etc., overlapping all the time. That is the last stage of ego development. In a sense, ego is systematically well fortified.

Bewilderment, as we have said, is reinforced by processes developing at the emotional level. Emotion in this case is the basic magnetizing quality, which is passion, or the basic repelling quality, which is aggression. The next level comes in when the emotions cease to function as impulsive processes. At this point, we need an analytical mind to reinforce

them, to put them in their proper place, to confirm their right to be there. The analytical process creates concepts. Concepts are scientifically, mathematically, philosophically, or spiritually worked out.

Concepts and emotions are very crude spokes of the wheel. There is a gap between the two, an area of not knowing where we are, a fear of being nothing. These gaps could be filled with thoughts of all kinds. Discursive thoughts, grasshopperlike thoughts, drunken-elephant-type thoughts all fill the gaps of not knowing what we are, where we're at. If we want to work on that particular base, the idea is to not collect any new things, new subjects.

Further collecting would be inviting invasion from the outside. Since the whole structure of ego is so well fortified against attack, an external invasion is not going to destroy the ego at all. In fact, it is going to reinforce the whole structure because the ego is being given more material with which to work. Meditation practice is based on an undoing, unlearning process. It is an infiltration into this well-fortified structure of the ego.

Beginning meditation practice works purely on dealing with thought processes. It begins there because these thought processes are the last fringes of ego's development. Working on them makes use of certain very simple techniques. The techniques are very important and must be very simple. Presenting exotic techniques tends to emphasize the foreign [Page 445] quality rather than the familiar, "homey" quality that is most desirable. The technique most often used in the Buddhist tradition is awareness of breathing or walking. These techniques are not ways of developing concentration, tranquility, or peacefulness, for these qualities cannot be forcibly developed. All of these things are beyond achievement if they are sought after.

The other way of approaching the practice is the gamelike approach. The game is that the path and the goal are the same. You are not trying to achieve anything, but are trying to relate to the path which is the goal. We try to become completely one with the techniques (breathing, walking, etc.). We do not try to do anything with the technique but identify and become one with it. The beginning level of any of the traditions of meditation could be said to be a game, a trip of its own. It's purely imagination; we imagine ourselves meditating. It's another type of dreaming. One has to accept that dreamlike quality and work along with it. We can't start perfectly and beautifully, but if we are willing to start by accepting our neuroses and basic chaos, we have a stepping-stone. Don't be afraid of being a fool; start as a fool.

The techniques of meditation practice are not designed to reduce active thoughts at all. They provide a way of coming to terms with everything that goes on inside. Once we

have accepted what goes on in our mind as neither good nor bad, but just flashes of thoughts, we have come to terms with it. So long as we regard the mind's activity as a foreign invasion, we are introducing another new element to the chaos and are feeding it more. If we accept it as part of our ego development, ego structure, and don't evaluate it or put any labels on it, we come much closer to seeing the interior.

After the thought processes, the next barrier is the pattern of concepts. We should not try to push away the concepts, but try to see them realistically. Concepts are based on irrelevant evaluations. There is nothing which is absolutely good or bad. Once we cease to plant the seed of evaluation, the conceptual processes become a neutral and open ground.

The next process is that of emotion: love, hate, etc. A problem arises when we tend to become too ambitious in terms of dealing with emotions—particularly those involved with the spiritual practice. We've been told to be kind, gentle, good people. Those are the conventional ideas of spirituality. When we begin to find the spiky quality in ourselves, we see it as antispirituality and try to push it away. That is the biggest mistake [Page 446] of all in working with our basic psychological patterns. Once we try to push the biggest problems away and look for a dramatic cure for them, we are constantly pushed back, defeated all the time. The idea is not to seduce ourselves into trying to create a Utopian spirituality, but to try and look into the details of the peak emotions, the dramatic qualities of the emotions. We don't have to wait for situations which are regarded as big and meaningful to us; we should make use of even the small situations in which these emotions occur. We should work on the small or minor irritations and their particular emotional qualities. Do not suppress or let go of irritations, but become part of them; feel their abstract qualities. The irritations then have no one to irritate. They might fade away or become creative energy. If we are able to work brick by brick with those smaller, seemingly insignificant emotions, at some point we will find that removing each brick has taken away the whole wall.

We tend to be involved with ambition in spiritual practice. There's no hope if we become too ambitious in any way. Once this occurs and we try to achieve something very quickly, we are forced to remove the awareness of knowing the situation as it is now. Ambition seduces us into thinking of something that we want to achieve in the future. We become too future-oriented, missing the point of a given situation. Our greatest opportunity is in the present moment and we begin to lose it. However, feeling that the future is an open situation is what meditation practice actually is. Relating with the present situation removes the basic bewilderment that we have discussed, the fundamental heart of the whole ego structure. If we are able to relate with the actual situation as it is, without referring to the past or future, then there are flashes of gaps,

possibilities of approaching the present situation. That freshness or sharpness, the penetrating quality of knowing the present situation, brings in a way of looking at the bewilderment with clarity and precision. If we're trying to achieve something in terms of spiritual ambition, that ambition itself becomes a hang-up.

The only way to relate to the present situation of spirituality or the neurotic state of the moment is by meditation. I don't mean sitting meditation only, but relating with the emotional situations of daily life in a meditative way, by working with them, being aware of them as they come up. Every situation then becomes a learning process. These situations are the books; they are the scriptures. You don't need more than that. Books and sacred writings become purely a source of inspiration. [Page 447] We have to realize that we already have within us the potential of developing spirituality before we read the books or regard them as part of our collection.

By undoing the successive layers of facades, we begin to discover that the precision and sharpness we spoke of is there already. We don't have to develop it or nurse it. It's just a question of acknowledging it. That is what is known as faith and devotion. The fundamental meaning of faith is recognizing that precision, clarity, and health are already there. That is the psychologically wealthy way of looking at situations. You see that you are already rich, that you don't have to search for something else or introduce a new element.

We say that the sun is behind the clouds, but actually it is not the sun but the city from which we view it that is behind the clouds. If we realized that the sun is never behind the clouds we might have a different attitude toward the whole thing.

Question and Answer Session

Audience: For me you made it very clear—the neutral ground of our concepts. But when you talked about emotions, you introduced another word—working on the “small irritations,” which is somewhat different.... I would like to hear you elaborate on the small emotions.

Rinpoche: Well, the seemingly smaller irritations are not really small but “small” is a way of viewing them. We view them as being insignificant things—such as the little bug crawling up your leg or a drafty window blowing at your face. Little details like that are seemingly insignificant because they have less concepts from your point of view. But they still do have the irritating quality in full flesh. So the way to deal with it is that you have a tremendous opportunity there, because you don't have that heavy concept, so you have a very good open approach toward working with that irritation.

When I say “working with” irritation, I don’t mean to say suppress irritation or let go of irritation. But trying to become part of the irritation, trying to feel the abstract quality. You see, generally what happens when we have irritation is that we feel we are being undermined by irritation, and we begin to lose our own basic dignity; something else overwhelms us. That kind of power game goes on always. That is the source of the problem. When we are able to become completely one [Page 448] with irritations or feel the abstract quality of the irritation as it is, then irritation has no one to irritate. So it becomes a sort of judo practice, the using of the irritation’s energy as part of your basic development.

Audience: Could you please relate what you have just discussed with this leap into the void, or this great adventure you mentioned earlier? How do they tie in?

Rinpoche: Well, you see, generally there is a basic bewilderment of not knowing anything. One is uncertain how to approach, how to relate with the situation. Then there is an occasional gap within the basic bewilderment, that something is happening. It’s not an overcrowded situation but it’s more like a dark corner. Basic bewilderment is a crowded situation under light—you see so many things crowded, the situation is happening in front of your eyes. But then you begin to realize there is also a quiet corner which is still dark but you don’t know what is behind that. In such areas there is no bewilderment, only suspicion, of course. Naturally. The whole thing is based on trying to enrich our ego all the time.

So the shunyata principle, or the emptiness—leaping into the emptiness—is, one can almost say, leaping into those dark corners. And by the time you leap into dark corners they seem to be brilliant corners, not dark. Darkness, as opposed to what you see purely in front of your eyes, relating with the overcrowded situation, is dark because it is not overcrowding. That is why we begin to regard it as an insignificant or mysterious corner. It is very tricky to talk about leaps because we immediately begin to think where we are leaping from. It’s actually more a question of accepting mysterious corners, open space, which doesn’t bring any psychological comfort or security for the ego. That is why they are frightening and mysterious, because there is no security of anything at all. So once you acknowledge that complete ultimate freedom of absence of security, then suddenly the carpet is pulled out from under your feet. That is the leap, rather than leaping somewhere deliberately.

Audience: Am I reading you right when you say the effect of meditation begins when one empties oneself from preconceived ideas and notions, and one must empty oneself before one can be filled?

Rinpoche: Well, I wouldn't say that is the aim of meditation particularly, but that is the by-product of meditation. In actual practice you don't have to achieve anything, but you try to be with the technique.

[Page 449] *Audience:* We have a pattern of becoming one with whatever it is that concerns one and going with it; and in the process it is no longer a problem. I understand Buddhism also contains this thinking.

Rinpoche: I think so, yes. But the whole point is not trying to solve the problem. It's having a friendly, welcoming attitude to the problem.

Audience: I'm amazed that so many of our so-called modern concepts—breathing, etc.—Buddhism has used for thousands of years. I had the pleasure of being with a Buddhist monk in Bali and found that all my “original” thinking was already contained within Buddhism.

Rinpoche: Well, it's something basic, the voice of basic sanity. I mean, you can find it anywhere, in any tradition if it faces reality. It doesn't necessarily have to be Buddhist.

Audience: Is meditation a continuous process of dynamic living?

Rinpoche: Definitely. Without ambition, of course.

Audience: When one is liberated, when one has practiced meditation in the proper way, without ambition, and one reaches the goal, how does one live? What is the nature of his being?

Rinpoche: Well, the actual nature of that being is quite dangerous to talk about.

Audience: Why is it dangerous?

Rinpoche: Well, that could be a temptation.

Audience: An attempt to go there artificially?

Rinpoche: Or unwise.

Audience: Can't we discuss it?

Rinpoche: I would say the continual process of living becomes more real. You are actually in touch with more real reality, the nakedness of reality where there is natural confidence without a framework of relativity. So I would imagine that that state of being, from a personal psychological point of view, is extremely free. But not being free about anything, but just being free, being true.

Audience: Is there ecstasy and rapture?

Rinpoche: I don't think so, because then you have to maintain that ecstasy. It is a state which doesn't involve any maintenance.

[Page 450] *Audience:* What are the prerequisites before one begins to meditate?

Rinpoche: That you are willing to meditate, willing to go into discipline or practice—a conviction which could be a false conviction at that time, but it doesn't matter.

Audience: How does one go about escaping from the belief in the analytical mind in order to begin?

Rinpoche: Well, it seems that in terms of meditation the literal quality of the technique automatically brings you down, because there is no room for any sidetracks at all. It is quite an absurd, repetitive, ordinary technique, quite boring often; yet somehow you are put into a framework where an instinctive understanding of relating with the technique, rather than an intellectual one, begins to develop.

You see, the problem is that analytical mind cannot be freed by another aspect of analytical mind until the questions of analytical mind are dissolved. This is the same as the method of "Who am I?" in Ramana Maharshi's teaching. If you regard "Who am I?" as a question, then you are still analyzing yourself, but when you begin to realize that "Who am I?" is a statement, the analytical mind becomes confused. One realizes there is something personal about it. Something instinctive which is freed by the actual living situation. The disciplined technique of practicing meditation amounts to putting yourself into an inconceivable situation in which the analytical mind doesn't function anymore. So I would say that the disciplines of the Buddhist teachings are largely a way of freeing oneself from analytical mind. Which has a dream quality. Analytical mind is close to the clouds, while the instinctual level is much closer to the earth. So in order to come down to earth, you have to use the earth as a means of bringing you down.

Audience: What is the relationship between being a vegetarian and the Buddhist practice?

Rinpoche: Well, I think there again we've got a problem. If we regard the whole thing as introducing a foreign element into our system, then we get involved in a particular style of living and we have to maintain that style. And if we don't maintain that style, we feel threatened by it; whereas the natural living situation might present being a vegetarian as a relevant subject for the individual. In other words, the first is dogma and the latter more of a direct situation.

[451] You see, the problem is if you give up something, that automatically means that you take on something. Naturally. And you have to maintain that. And each time there is a congratulatory quality of viewing yourself that develops as well: I'm doing good today, I feel grateful and I'm going to be good tomorrow, and so on. That becomes a further self-deception. Unfortunately, no one can remove your self-deception by his magical powers. You have to work on yourself.

Audience: Could you give us some examples of the meditation practices?

Rinpoche: Generally, in the Buddhist tradition the first step is working on the breathing—not concentrating, not contemplating, but identifying with the breath. You are the technique; there is no difference between you and the technique at all. By doing that, at a certain stage the technique just falls away, becomes irrelevant. At that point, your practice of meditation is much more open to meditation in action, everyday life situations.

But that doesn't mean that the person should become absorbed in the state of meditation in the vague sense at all. You see, the basic meditation is being, I suppose we could say. But at the same time it is not being dazed by being. You can describe being in all sorts of ways. You could say being is a cow on a sunny afternoon in a meadow, dazed in its comfort. You could think in terms of an effort of being, trying to bring some effort to yourself to be being. That is to say, being with the watcher watching yourself doing. Then there is actual being—we could call it "actual"—which I suppose is just being right there with precision and openness. I call it panoramic awareness, aerial view. You see a very wide view of the whole area because you see the details of each area. You see the wide view, each area, each detail. Black is black and white is white; everything is being observed. And that kind of openness and being is the source of daily practice. Whether the person is a housewife or secretary or politician or lawyer, whatever it may be, his life could be viewed that way. In fact, his work could become an application of skillful means in seeing the panoramic view. Fundamentally, the idea of enlightenment—the notion or term *enlightenment* or *buddha* or *awakened one*—implies tremendous sharpness and precision along with a sense of spaciousness.

We can experience this; it is not myth at all. We experience a glimpse of it, and the point is to start from that glimpse and gradually as you [Page 452] become more familiar with that glimpse and the possibilities of reigniting it, it happens naturally. Faith is realizing that there is some open space and sharpness in our everyday life. There occurs a flash, maybe a fraction of a second. These flashes happen constantly, all the time.

Audience: If being is being in everyday life as present in the moment, then what is the tradition of monasteries in Buddhism? Are monasteries just for people who can't cope with very much stress so they have to withdraw to what can be handled? What is the role?

Rinpoche: Well, I would say that monasteries are the training ground. It is the same as putting yourself in a certain discipline when you sit and meditate. You are a monk for that whole time, if you like to put it that way.

Audience: But the goal and object would be finally to leave the monastery and—

Rinpoche: Teach people, work with them. Obviously, yes. That's one of the differences, I would say, between Catholic contemporary enclosure orders and Buddhist ones, that monasteries are training grounds for potential teachers.

Audience: I have a question about one's actual needs in meditation. From books that I've read on meditation and the spiritual way, it seems that the people begin to leave their sexual lives, heterosexual or homosexual, in a way. I'd like your feeling on this—sex, meditation, the spiritual way.

Rinpoche: Well, there again it's entirely relative to the situation where the person is. The brahmacharya idea—which prohibits sex—sees it as something which destroys your completeness. On the other hand, in some traditions of Buddhism, sexuality is regarded as the highest way of living in the world, as the last answer and development. But I don't think the two are contradictory to each other at all. Sex can be a destruction of completion if the person's style of living is demanding, in other words, if there is no space in the relationship at all. Then it is purely a battlefield. But if the relationship becomes dance, the essence of exchange or communication, then the whole pattern of how to perceive that develops. I would say that the situation is very much dependent on the individual person, and sex generally is supposed to be the essence of communication. [Page 453] Communication can be demanding, which could be destructive and even a way of dissociating oneself from people. Or communication could be inviting people.

Audience: Do you feel it is necessary to have a guru?

Rinpoche: I think so, yes, but at the same time, there are all sorts of dangers involved with shopping for a guru.

Audience: Can the willingness to meditate be differentiated from the awareness of the advantages to be gained from meditating?

Rinpoche: That seems to be an evolutionary pattern. You begin to see the need for it and you put your effort into it. It's like taking medicine.

Audience: What is your opinion about dealing with the chakra system?

Rinpoche: The chakra system is part of the teachings of India, both Hindu and Buddhist. However, it fits differently into the pattern of spiritual evolution of the two traditions. In Hinduism, working with the chakras is familiarizing yourself with spirituality. In Buddhism, having familiarized yourself already, it becomes dancing with spiritual knowledge. And it seems in the latter case that chakra and all those concepts come from that dancing quality which is a using of the energy you have already developed. You have prepared your ground already and you are using the energy around it. I will say that for beginners it is extremely dangerous to play with energy, but for advanced students such work becomes relevant naturally.

Audience: It is said that when one is ready one recognizes his guru. Is it true also that the guru recognizes his disciple?

Rinpoche: I think so, yes. Otherwise he wouldn't be guru.

Audience: Does this recognition take form on the physical plane or only on the subtle?

Rinpoche: Well, the physical plane is also a psychological state. So it's the same thing.

Why We Meditate

From *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa, Volume 10*

Edited by Caroline Rose Gimian, pp. 661-665

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The actual experience, techniques, and disciplines of meditation are still unfamiliar to many people. So I would like to give you a basic idea of how meditation practice works, how it operates in our everyday life situation, and how it functions scientifically, so to speak. The practice of meditation is not so much based on becoming a better person, or for that matter becoming an enlightened person. It is seeing how we can relate to our already existing enlightened state. To do that is a matter of trust, as well as a matter of openness.

Trust plays an extremely important part in the practice of meditation. The trust we are discussing is trust in yourself. This trust has to be recovered rather than developed. We have all kinds of conceptualizations and attitudes that prevent us from uncovering that basic trust. These are known as the veil of conceptualization.

Sometimes we think of trust as trusting someone else to provide us with security, or trusting someone else as an example or an inspiration. These kinds of trust are generally based on forgetting yourself and trying to secure something trustworthy from the outside. But when our approach is highly externalized, the real meaning of trust is lost.

Real trust is not outward facing, as if you were completely poverty stricken. When you have that mentality, you feel that you have nothing valuable within you, so you try to copy somebody else's success or style or use somebody else's resources. However, Buddhism is known as a nontheistic tradition, which means that help doesn't come from outside.

The Sanskrit term for meditation, *dhyana*, is common to many Buddhist traditions. In Chinese, it is *chan*, and in Japanese it is *zen*. We may use the word "meditation" in the English language, but how can we actually express its meaning, or what this approach actually is?

We have to know what we mean by meditation at all. Sometimes we use the word "meditation" to mean emptying out or letting go. Sometimes we mean relaxation. However, the point of meditation practice is actually to rediscover our hidden neurosis and our hidden sanity at the same time.

Although meditation involves training and discipline, the point is not to become a good, highly trained person who will behave in a certain enlightened style, so that you will be accepted among the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Rather, the meaning of meditation is intense lightness. Meditation is intense, because the practice is demanding, and your commitment to the sitting practice of meditation day after day is very demanding. At the same time, the practice of meditation is very light, because you have nothing to do, and nothing to accomplish, when you practice. So intense lightness or intense freedom is the meaning of meditation.

There is another tradition of practice, the contemplative tradition, which involves contemplating certain themes, subjects, or ideas. You may visualize a full moon, a flickering candle, or raindrops, or you may imagine yourself glowing with light. There are visualizations using symbols and signs of all kinds. These all fall in the category of the contemplative tradition, rather than the meditative tradition. According to the Buddha, such practice is often merely mental gymnastics, or a source of entertainment that is furthering your neurosis instead of leading to enlightenment. So according to the buddhadharma, simplicity is important. Therefore dhyana, meditation, means reliance on simplicity. That is the starting point.

Another important aspect of meditation is discipline. Discipline leads to openness, but that does not mean one's frivolity is included as part of the path. Discipline is very severe and extremely demanding, highly demanding. You are expected to take part in this severe discipline, which is the discipline to be, to sit, to practice, and to completely involve your attitude, your conceptualizations, your subconscious mind, your emotions, your domestic affairs, and every aspect of yourself in your practice. Everything in your life situation becomes part of meditation, which is an enormous demand.

Giving in to such demand eventually begins to open a huge gate or door that has been shut tight. From this point of view, developing openness is not so easy—at all. It is opening a heavy wooden door, which is stuck. Opening this huge door is enormously demanding. It is not an artificial door, but a real, heavy door. To open it, first you touch the door handle, and then you have to pull and pull and pull. Not succeeding, you have to pull further.

Then, finally, you begin to hear the sound of the wood creaking, which is the first sign that you are finally going to be able to open this door. The creaks are encouragement that something is actually happening. Slowly, slowly, it opens a little, and then more, until finally you can open the whole door. Whew! This is how discipline equals openness—it is very deliberate, extremely deliberate. Nothing comes free, and nothing comes easy, either.

Meditation is also about exerting yourself and using your inquisitive mind as part of the practice. In order to be a good student, you have to be highly inquisitive. Then information is no longer a foreign element; it becomes part of furthering your inquisitiveness.

That inquisitiveness is referred to in traditional terms as faith or devotion. Why so? You are inquisitive because you want to find out something. There is something that interests or itches you. It sucks you in and you want to find out more and more. That attraction is the basis for faith or devotion. You feel that there's got to be something behind the whole thing, so you explore more and more and more. You never tire of your experience, but you are highly inquisitive about it. Each time you discover something, you feel even more inquisitive. That faith or devotion to things is very contagious.

Another aspect of meditation is that it reveals further neurosis. Here, we are speaking of the neurosis that you've been trying to hide underneath your carpet, your pillows, your seat, underneath your desk. You don't want to look into it, so you try to slip it underneath something somewhere. You try not to think about it at all.

We have to come face-to-face with these neuroses that we've been concealing from ourselves. We usually say, "Oops, that's not very nice, but never mind. Something else will come up that feels much better. I'll take advantage of that, rather than looking at this other thing, which is so unpleasant. Let's just forget about it." We've been doing that for a long time. In fact, we've become so professional at this approach that we really don't question ourselves.

So meditation is uncovering those tricks that we've developed. In the beginning, a person who is practicing meditation usually feels extremely clumsy and embarrassed. You may even question whether you're doing something worthwhile. Meditation may seem unnecessary. You may feel that you're wasting your time, money, and effort.

Meditation is about relating with two factors. It relates you with yourself, and it also relates you with your world. Through the practice of meditation, you are able to synchronize your world and yourself together. Working with the two eventually produces a spark. It is like rubbing two sticks together or striking a flint against a stone to produce a spark. The spark of light you produce is called *karuna*, or compassion.

When you first come to meditation, you may not like yourself very much. You may feel that you even hate yourself, or hate your world. But you continue to practice and relate with your world and yourself simultaneously, both in meditation and in everyday life

situations. Doing so properly, thoroughly, and completely, some kind of warmth begins to develop. You find that the phenomenal world is workable after all. It may not be lovable yet, but at least it's workable, manageable. And you realize that maybe you too are workable and manageable.

So the practice of meditation is comprised of these three elements: working with yourself, working with the phenomenal world, and working with the warmth that develops. You begin to take a liking to your frustration, pain, and boredom. Everything is part of your world.

The practice of meditation is the only way to develop this basic trust in yourself and your world. Beyond that, meditation is the key to developing openness and the potential of enlightenment. Without this practice as the basis, you may be sidetracked by all kinds of entertaining processes. Those sidetracks may feel quite good for a few months. You can do all kinds of exotic, seemingly fantastic things. Still, when you are going through these experiences, your vessel has a hole in it, somewhere or other. Somewhere, you are still leaking. You are not able to hold things within yourself properly. Your fascination, your sense of impatience, and trying to make the best of things in the world by entertaining yourself is the heart of what I call spiritual materialism.

That approach is always a problem, not only in the modern world but throughout history. It existed in the past, going back twenty-five hundred years to the time of the Buddha. Spiritual materialism, the desire to turn spirituality into something you can possess and the tendency to see spirituality as a thing outside of yourself, is always there to be dealt with.

With the mentality of spiritual materialism, when you feel that everything in your life is a mess, you try to find someone to blame. We might blame the president of the country, the head of the police force, or our own boss. But you are missing the point. You ignore the leak in your own vessel, the leak within yourself. Nobody regards his or her own vessel as inefficient. We miss the point: that actually *our* vessel is leaking; our pot is leaking.

Meditation, especially at the beginning, exaggerates the leaks that are taking place. You keep pouring all kinds of goodies, all kinds of interesting experiences, into your vessel, but it never fills up. Finally, through the practice of meditation, you realize that there is a leak. It's not all that magical. The leakage is distrust. You realize that you are rejecting your basic sanity, and that you think that this basic sanity is something you have to purchase from somebody else and then transplant it into yourself.

The real weakness is thinking that you are not good enough, and that there is some outside security that you have to find. If you feel that somebody else has the sanity and you are messed up, then you think that you have to become like someone else, rather than becoming yourself. When you realize that this is what you have been doing, then your life becomes real and workable—because it has been workable all along.

In summary, meditation is a means of working with oneself and the phenomenal world. Working with those two together produces sparks of warmth and trust. A sense of workability begins to develop throughout your life.