

The Practice of Shamatha-Vipashyana Meditation

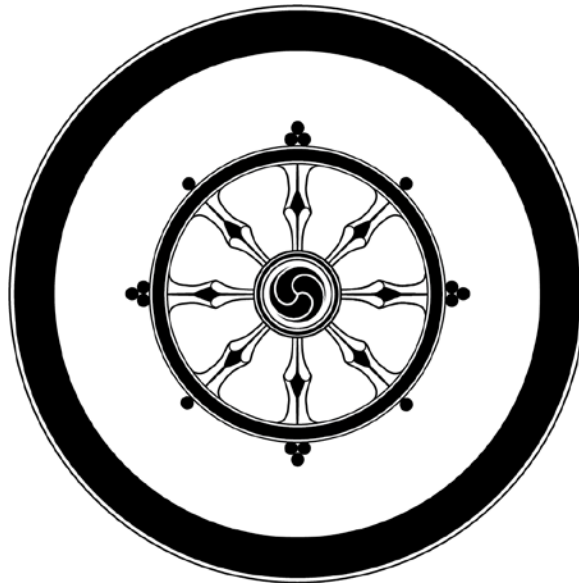
From Jamgon Kongtrul to Chogyam Trungpa

A Rime Shedra NYC Course

Tuesdays from January 19 to April 13, 2021, from 7-9:15 pm

Readings for Class Two

The Samadhi of Shamatha-Vipashyana, the Progression of the Presentation and the Progression of the Practice



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

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

Chapter Five: Vigilance
Shantideva, Bodhicharyavatara

RIME SHEDRA CHANTS

ASPIRATION

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

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

MANJUSHRI SUPPLICATION

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

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

DEDICATION OF MERIT

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

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

Translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee

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The Practice of Shamatha and Vipashyana Meditation

From Jamgon Kongtrul to Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche

Rime Shedra NYC Winter 2021

Syllabus & Readings for Class Two

1) Shamatha-Vipashyana: Definitions, Explanations, Ground of All Samadhi

a) The Buddha to Jamgon Kongtrul

- i) Jamgon Kongtrul, *The Treasury of Knowledge*, Translated by Kiki Ekselius and Chrissy Zerbini, Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, (1) The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana, pp. 3-6, four pages
- ii) Tashi Namgyal, *Moonbeams of Mahamudra*, Trs. Elizabeth Callahan, (1) The Summary Identification of Samadhi and Dispelling of Doubts, pp. 15-17, two pages
(2) The Identification of the Essences of Shamatha and Vipashyana, pp. 30-32, two pages
- iii) Khamtrul Rinpoche, *Royal Seal of Mahamudra*, (1) Distinction between Shamatha and Vipashyana, pp. 227-228, two pages

b) Vidyadhara Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche

- i) Meditation/Samadhi, *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation*, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Ed. Judith L. Lief, p. 29, one page
- ii) Egolessness & Compassion, *The Heart of the Buddha: Entering the Buddhist Path*, by Chögyam Trungpa, Ed. Judith L. Lief, excerpt from pp. 107-108, one page

2) The Progression of the Presentation

a) Vidyadhara Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche

- i) *Meditation Instructor Training Seminars*, by Chogyam Trungpa, Karma Choling, Winter-Spring 1975, Excerpt on the history of the presentation, one page
- ii) Talk 1: Shamatha, 1974 Vajradhatu Seminary: Hinayana-Mahayana, Chogyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, an excerpt on the Progression of the Instruction, p. 1
- iii) 24. The Basic Minimum, *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation*, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Ed. Judith L. Lief, excerpt pp.188-189, five pages

3) The Progression of the Practice of Shamatha Vipashyana Meditation

a) Vidyadhara Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche

- i) *Early Teachers' Training Sessions*, by Chogyam Trungpa, Karme Choling, 1971, (1) The Evolution of Meditative Techniques, two pages
- ii) *The Sanity We Are Born With: A Buddhist Approach to Psychology*, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Compiled and Edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian, (1) Natural Dharma, pp. 58-60
- iii) The Buddhist Path, from the Introduction, *Journey without Goal*, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian, excerpt pp. 4-5
- iv) The Bodhisattva Path, *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, by Chogyam Trungpa, Ed. John Baker and Marvin Casper, excerpt, pp. 167-169
- v) Chapter Four: The Mandala Principle and the Meditative Process, *The Dawn of Tantra*, Herbert V. Guenther and Chögyam Trungpa, Ed. Michael Kohn, pp. 21-25

The Treasury of Knowledge By Jamgon Kongtrul

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

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

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

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Translator's Note

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

*Kiki Ekselius - Chryssoula Zerbini
Dhagpo Kagyu Ling, 21 June 1985*

The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana

The General Basis of All Samadhis

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

The Necessity of Practicing Samadhi

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

Identifying the Samadhi to be Practiced

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

The Sutra Unravelling the Thought states,

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

Thus, since it is said that shamatha and vipashyana comprise all the samadhis of both the greater and lesser vehicles, and since it is impossible for anyone striving for samadhi to fathom the great number of divisions, this ocean of samadhis is

classified into just shamatha and vipashyana. Therefore, one should first gain certainty in these two. This is necessary because, as stated in the same Sutra, all the qualities ensuing from the practice of the greater and lesser vehicles, whether mundane or supramundane, are the fruit of shamatha and vipashyana. Also Maitreya has said,

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

The Detailed Explanation

The Essential Nature of Shamatha and Vipashyana

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

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

“Shamatha is one-pointedness, vipashyana is individual analysis.”

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

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

Kamalashila's *Stages of Meditation II* says,

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

Etymology

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

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

The Necessity of Both

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

In order to understand the necessity of both shamatha and vipashyana, consider the example of an oil lamp: if the flame is bright and there is no wind, one will see clearly; however, if the flame is bright but it is being blown by the wind, one will not see by it. Similarly, if one has both the superior knowledge which is certain and unmistakable concerning suchness, and the concentration which stays at will on the object of observation, one will see suchness clearly.

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

The Progressive Order

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

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

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

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

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

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

The middle *Stages of Meditation* comments:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Unraveling the Intent states:

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

It continues:

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

The *Jewel Cloud Sūtra* observes:

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

The *Ornament for the Mahāyāna Sūtras* says:

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

It also says:

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

In his commentary on that text, Ācārya Vasubandhu remarks:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In the *Sutra Requested by Jonpa*:

Shamatha is one-pointedness.
Vipashyana is awareness.

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

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

Also in the *Bodhichitta Pitaka Sutra*:

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

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

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

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

Meditation / Samadhi
The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma,
Volume One: The Path of Individual Liberation
Chogyam Trungpa, compiled and edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 29

The second training is samadhi, or absorption. In Tibetan it is *tingdzin*. *Ting* means “still;” *dzin* means “holding”; so *tingdzin* means “holding yourself still.” With *tingdzin*, you do not hang on to your particular preconceptions, but develop a state of mind that is clear, precise, and relaxed. Meditation is based on both mindfulness and awareness. Through shamatha (Tib.: *shi-ne*), or mindfulness practice, you develop concentration and one-pointedness, and with *vipashyana* (Tib.: *lhakthong*), or awareness practice, you develop expansiveness, relaxation, and a wider view.¹ Meditation, or samadhi, is connected with the idea of overcoming the constant search for entertainment. By overcoming that, you begin to cut through the subconscious mind, the mind that provides obstacles to meditation practice. Having done so, you begin to develop a state of absorption in the sense of complete presence. You develop a one-hundred-percent experience of being there.

In meditation, you are mixing your mind with the dharma. Once you attain that state of mind, you have no gaps in your mindfulness. You develop the potential of *vipashyana* as well, because, due to your training, you are so relaxed. You have already been thoroughly broken in, so to speak; therefore, you can hold yourself still, whether you are awake or asleep. You are seeing reality fully through the process of discipline. By means of training in the disciplines of shamatha and *vipashyana*, you have learned to control your mind. You learn how to evolve further, and not get stuck. You learn how you could be fully there, all the time.

¹ *Vipashyana* means “clear seeing.” Its usage varies considerably, from intellectual analysis, to direct perception, to an open and expansive meditative state. Trungpa Rinpoche also links *vipashyana* to postmeditation practice and to the cultivation of awareness in everyday life.

Shamatha and Vipashyana
Excerpted from Egolessness and Compassion in “Sacred Outlook”
From *The Heart of the Buddha*
By Chögyam Trungpa, pages 107-108

...Nontheism is synonymous with the realization of egolessness, which is first discovered through the practices of shamatha and vipashyana meditation.

In shamatha meditation, we work with breath and posture as expressions of our state of being. By assuming a dignified and upright posture and identifying with the outgoing breath, we begin to make friends with ourselves in a fundamental sense. When thoughts arise, they are not treated as enemies, but they are included in the practice and labeled simply as “thinking.” *Shamatha* in Sanskrit, or *shi-ne* in Tibetan, means “dwelling in a state of peace.” Through shamatha practice one begins to see the simplicity of one's original state of mind and to see how confusion, speed, and aggression are generated by ignoring the peacefulness of one's being. This is the first experience of egolessness, in which one realizes the transparency of fixed ideas about oneself and the illusoriness of what one thinks of as “I” or “me.”

With further practice, we begin to lose the reference point of self-consciousness, and we experience the environment of practice and the world without bringing everything back to the narrow viewpoint of “me.” We begin to be interested in “that,” rather than purely being interested in “this.” The development of perception that is penetrating and precise without reference to oneself is called *vipashyana* in Sanskrit and *lhakthong* in Tibetan, which means “clear seeing.” The technique of vipashyana does not differ from shamatha; rather, vipashyana grows out of the continued application of shamatha practice. The clear seeing, or insight, of vipashyana sees that there is no more of a solid existence in phenomena than there is in oneself, so that we begin to realize the egolessness of “other.” We also begin to see that suffering in the world is caused by clinging to erroneous conceptions about self and phenomena. We perceive that philosophical, psychological, and religious ideas of eternity and external liberation are myths created by ego-mind. So, in vipashyana practice, egolessness is the recognition of fundamental aloneness, the nontheistic realization that we cannot look for help outside of ourselves.

History of Shamatha Instruction

The Manual for Shamatha Instructors

This material is based on the two Meditation Instructor Seminars held at Karmê Chöling, Winter-Spring 1975

...In the case history of my coming to this country and teaching, I presented the whole thing somewhat loosely in the beginning because, for one thing, there were no physical facilities for people to sit and practice. Retreat situations were not known, and the general sangha situation hadn't developed yet. So the techniques were presented in a somewhat loose manner, somewhat free style, but still in keeping with the shamatha and vipashyana practice. And I often taught beginners vipashyana at that point.

But the situation is changing. We have enough strength within our own students of meditation that we can inspire people. We have to bring the teaching to a more systematic procedure, which is very necessary. At this point we are making history, so to speak, in transplanting Buddhism into this country. Once we begin to do that, we had better do it properly and purely. That seems to be the important point—to do it in a very traditional way, as it has been done in the past.

**The Progression of the Presentation:
Basic Shamatha Meditation Instruction
An Excerpt from Talk One: Shamatha
1974 Seminary Hinayana – Mahayana
By Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, page 1**

From tomorrow onward you will be sitting a lot--sitting practice is regarded as the heart of Buddhism, also as the heart of the nontheistic tradition of meditation. All of you have received instructions from me; we have created personal interviews and we have all talked to each other. It's amazing that there are so many "interviewees" here. In the past we discussed two approaches to sitting practice: one is the strict discipline of following the breath, and the other one is a sense of just improvising, trying to sit and feel what happens with you. These are the two categories that were developed in my interviews with individuals here as far as I can remember.

But at this point I would like to make a blanket policy, which should be much better and more workable. Also, if you are going to sit for long periods of time with such a number of people, there is more demand on your state of being, and in fact, on your basic existence. So I would like to suggest following the basic practice of *shamatha* at the beginning of your sitting period, strict *shamatha* practice--well, it's not exactly strict. Certain schools make a very primitive practice out of *shamatha*. What we are doing is not primitive practice, but strict practice; there is a lot of difference between the two. What we are going to do is not primitive practice based on the peasantry level, but strict practice, in the sense that there's no way to move around, no way to jiggle around, no way to maneuver around your practice. You do what you are told to do. That seems to be one of the basic points. If there's no way to relate with discipline then there's no way to develop yourself; you are constantly swirling around and you find yourself drifting into all kinds of situations.

The sitting practice of meditation here is basic mindfulness practice. We are not doing awareness practice as such--that might come later--we are doing mindfulness practice as opposed to awareness practice. Some of you might feel you are regressing and back to the A-B-C-D level, rather than moving on to something more advanced and glorious, but it is necessary to do it this way, to develop your meditation at the mindfulness level.

Excerpt on the Progression of the Presentation

From 24 The Basic Minimum

The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma

Volume One: The Path of Individual Liberation

By Chögyam Trungpa, Ed. Judith L. Lief, pp. 188-189

When I began teaching Westerns to meditate, I noticed that some students were able to tune in to openness directly. So I did not give them a [page 189] technique, but encouraged direct opening, a sudden flash. However, in intensive meditation programs, that approach became a problem. Those students began to question whether that open experience was genuine or a hallucination. Although they had nothing to do but sit and let that openness happen, all kinds of thoughts began to churn up in the mind. Auditory, visual, and physical sensations began to take them over. So although such instructions are valid on their own merit, during intensive practice I feel that students should practice the more conservative approach of mindfulness of breathing. Also, there are different styles of breathing belonging to different levels of meditation practice, such as shamatha, vipashyana, *mahavipashyana*, or great vipashyana, and shunyata. However, instead of classifying the different styles of practice, I prefer to present very simply and directly what it is necessary to do to begin sitting.

Part One: The Evolution of Meditative Techniques
Early Teachers' Training: Lectures by and Discussions with
Vidyadhara Venerable Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche
These discussions with a small group of students
Took place at Karmê Chöling in 1971

A. Shamatha Meditation

Shamatha meditation is calmness through stilling the mind, through precision. Not judging thoughts but just acknowledging them. The only way to do this is through precise attention to the details of breathing. The breath is very faithful and acute. Shamatha is taught only to a very literal person. The technique is to acknowledge thought, "I am thinking, I am thinking," and to follow the breathing.

If a person is unable to keep to the precision of that, then you introduce the watcher: "I am being mindful of breathing out, I am being mindful of breathing in. My breath is short, my breath is long." Thoughts are verbalized. The difference between shamatha and vipashyana is subtle. In shamatha you verbalize the thoughts.

B. Vipashyana Meditation

In vipashyana meditation you don't divide thoughts into sections but follow a more general process. You don't verbalize your thoughts and you don't teach the calmness of mind. Instead you pay attention to the acute precision of the breathing, i.e. the outgoing breath, without verbal labels.

We teach outbreath. The inbreath is considered only the turning for the next outbreath. Eyes open. Vipashyana is the process of identifying with the breath dissolving in space. It has the acute precision of breathing from the nostrils.

C. Shamatha-Vipashyana

We do shamatha-vipashyana meditation. Here you introduce an element of sensation, or the *feeling* of the whole thing rather than *paying attention* to the whole thing. You just pay attention to the outline of the breath rather than being faithful in any way to the precision. At this stage it is feeling without acute precision, and the student is taught to be more intelligent than necessary.

D. Mahavipashyana

We also teach mahavipashyana, which is attention to shunyata. What is special here is the *identification* with the breath. You don't have to follow the outline any more once you *are* the breath. Therefore, identification with breathing is very important and rarely taught. The other techniques are all forms of attention to the breath, and the person is conscious of the journey. It is a bit of looking still, and one is taught to be intelligent.

You identified as the breath dissolved into nothing, but this still has a clumsy quality, it still has dogma. Don't concentrate on your body. It is still awkward because you have to introduce some negativity there.

Natural Dharma

The Sanity We Are Born With—A Buddhist Approach to Psychology

By Chogyam Trungpa, Pages 58-60

To begin with, the main point of meditation is that we need to get to know ourselves: our minds, our behavior, our being. You see, we think we know ourselves, but actually we don't. There are all sorts of undiscovered areas of our thoughts and actions. What we find in ourselves might be quite astounding.

Meditation often means "to meditate on" something, but in this case I am referring to a state of meditation without any contents. In order to experience this state of being, it is necessary to practice what is known as "mindfulness." You simply pay attention to your breath, as you breathe in and out, and to every detail in your mind, whether it is a thought pattern of aggression, passion, or ignorance, or just insignificant mental chatter. Mindfulness also means paying attention to the details of every action, for example, to the way you extend your hand to reach for a glass. You see yourself lifting it, touching it to your lips, and then drinking the water. [Rinpoche takes a sip from his glass.] So every detail is looked at precisely—which doesn't make you self-conscious, particularly, but it may give you quite a shock; it may be quite real. When mindfulness begins to grow and expand, you become more aware of the environment around you, of something more than just body and mind alone. And then, at some point, mindfulness and awareness are joined together, which becomes one open eye, one big precision. At that point, a person becomes much less crude. Because you have been paying attention to your thoughts and actions, you become more refined.

Out of that precision and refinement comes gentleness. You are not just paying attention, but you are also aware of your own pain and pleasure, and you develop sympathy and friendship for yourself. From that you are able to understand, or at least see, the pain and suffering of others, and you begin to develop a tremendous sense of sympathy for others. At the same time, such sympathy also helps the mindfulness awareness process develop further. Basically, you become a gentle person. You begin to realize that you are good: totally good and totally wholesome. You have a sense of trust in yourself and in the world. There is something to grip on to, and the quality of path or journey emerges out of that. You feel you want to do something for others and something for yourself. There is a sense of universal kindness, goodness, and genuineness.

When you experience precision and gentleness, the phenomenal world is no longer seen as an obstacle—or as being particularly helpful, for that matter. It is seen and appreciated

as it is. At this point, you are able to transmute the various defilements of passion, aggression, and ignorance into a state of wisdom. For example, when aggression occurs, you simply look at the aggression, rather than being carried away by it or acting it out. When you look at the aggression itself, it becomes a mirror reflecting back to your face. You realize that the aggression has no object; there is nothing to be aggressive toward. At that point, the aggression itself subsides, but its strength or energy is kept as a positive thing. It becomes wisdom. Here wisdom does not mean the usual notion of being wise. Wisdom is egolessness, or a state of being, simply being.

The whole process requires a certain amount of mindfulness and awareness throughout, obviously. But you naturally develop a habit of seeing whatever defilement occurs just as it is, even if it is just for a glimpse. Then you begin to be freed from anxiety, and you begin to achieve a state of mind that need not be cultivated and which cannot be lost. You experience a natural state of delight. It is not that you are always beaming and happy, or that you just stay in a state of mystical ecstasy. You feel other people's suffering. It has been said in the texts that the Buddha's sensitivity to others' pain and suffering, compared to the sensitivity of an ordinary person, is like the difference between having a hair on your eyeball and having a hair on the palm of your hand. [Page 60] So delight in this case means total joy, having a total sense of "isness." Then you are able to help others, you are able to help yourself, and you are able to influence the universe with an all-pervasive sense of isness which neither comes nor goes.

We follow these stages of meditation methodically, with tremendous diligence and the help of a teacher. When one reaches a state of no question [Startled laughter erupts among the audience, as a loud thunderclap occurs nearby] the natural dharma is proclaimed. [Rinpoche indicates environment with his fan.] Therefore one begins to feel, without egotism, that one is the king of the universe. Because you have achieved an understanding of impersonality, you can become a person. It takes a journey. First you have to become nothing, and then you can become somebody. One begins to develop tremendous conviction and doubtlessness, without pretense. This stage is called enlightenment, or wakefulness in the ultimate sense. From the beginning, wakefulness has been cultivated through mindfulness, awareness, and sympathy toward oneself and others. Finally one reaches the state where there is no question whatsoever. One becomes part of the universe. [More loud thunder, accompanied by tumultuous rain.]

I think that is probably enough at this point. There are various details and technicalities regarding the types and stages of meditation, but since time is short and also since it would be futile to talk about this and that too much, I would like to stop here. Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Excerpt from “The Bodhisattva Path”
From *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*
By Chögyam Trungpa, pages 167-169

We have discussed the Hinayana meditation practice of simplicity and precision. By allowing a gap, space in which things may be as they are, we begin to appreciate the clear simplicity and precision of our lives. This is the beginning of meditation practice. We begin to penetrate the Fifth Skanda, cutting through the busyness and speed of discursive thought, the cloud of “gossip” that fills our minds. The next step is to work with emotions.

Discursive thought might be compared to the blood circulation which constantly feeds the muscles of our system, the emotions. Thoughts link and sustain the emotions so that, as we go about our daily lives, we experience an ongoing flow of mental gossip punctuated by more colorful and intense bursts of emotion. The thoughts and emotions express our basic attitudes toward and ways of relating to the world and form an environment, a fantasy realm in which we live. These “environments” are the Six Realms, and although one particular realm may typify the psychology of a particular individual, still that person will constantly experience the emotions connected with the other realms as well.

In order to work with these realms we must begin to view situations in a more panoramic way, which is *vipashyana* (Pali: *vipassana*) meditation. We must become aware not only of the precise details of an activity, but also of the situation as a whole. Vipashyana involves awareness of space, the atmosphere in which precision occurs. If we see the precise details of our activity, this awareness also creates a certain space. Being aware of a situation on a small scale also brings awareness on a larger scale.

Out of this develops panoramic awareness, *mahavipashyana* (Pali: *mahavipassana*) meditation: that is, awareness of the overall pattern rather than the focusing of attention upon details. We begin to see the pattern of our fantasies rather than being immersed in them. We discover that we need not struggle with our projections, that the wall that separates us from them is our own creation. The insight into the insubstantial nature of ego is prajna, transcendental knowledge. As we glimpse prajna we relax, realizing that we no longer have to maintain the existence of ego. We can afford to be open and generous. Seeing another way of dealing with our projections brings intense joy. This is the first spiritual level of attainment of the bodhisattva, the first *bhumi*. We enter the Bodhisattva Path, the Mahayana Path, the open way, the path of warmth and openness.

In mahavipashyana meditation there is a vast expanse of space between us and objects. We are aware of the space between the situation and ourselves and anything can happen in that space. Nothing is happening here or there in terms of relationship or battle. In other words, we are not imposing our conceptualized ideas, names and categories on experience, but we feel the openness of space in every situation. In this way awareness becomes very precise and all-encompassing.

Mahavipashyana meditation means allowing things to be as they are. We begin to realize that this needs no effort on our part because things *are* as they are. We do not have to look at them in that way: they *are* that way. And so we begin to really appreciate openness and space, that we have space in which to move about, that we do not have to try to be aware because we already are aware. So the Mahayana Path is the open way, the wide path. It involves the open-minded willingness to allow oneself to be awake, to allow one's instinct to spring out.

Previously we discussed allowing space in order to communicate, but that kind of practice is very deliberate and self-conscious. When we practice mahavipashyana meditation, we do not simply watch ourselves communicate, deliberately allowing a gap, deliberately waiting; but we communicate and then just space out, so to speak. Let be and not care anymore; don't possess the letting be as belonging to you, as your creation. Open, let be and *disown*. Then the spontaneity of the awakened state springs out.

The Mandala Principle and the Meditative Process
Excerpt from Chapter Four in *The Dawn of Tantra*
By Herbert V. Guenther and Chögyam Trungpa
Michael Kohn, ed., Shambhala, Boston & London, 2001, pp. 22-25

... The starting point is samatha practice, which is the development of peace or dwelling on peace. This practice does not, however, involve dwelling or fixing one's attention on a particular thing. Fixation or concentration tends to develop trance-like states. But from the Buddhist point of view, the point of meditation is not to develop trance-like states; rather it is to sharpen perceptions, to see things as they are. Meditation at this level is relating with the conflicts of our life situations, like using a stone to sharpen a knife, the situation being the stone. The samatha meditation, the beginning point of the practice, could be described as sharpening one's knife. It is a way of relating to bodily sensations and thought processes of all kinds; just relating with them rather than dwelling on them or fixing on them in any way.

Dwelling or fixing comes from an attitude of trying to prove something, trying to maintain the "me" and "my" of ego's territory. One needs to prove that ego's thesis is secure. This is an attempt to ignore the samsaric circle, the samsaric whirlpool. This vicious circle is too painful a truth to accept, so one is seeking something else to replace it with. One seeks to replace the basic irritation or pain with the pleasure of a fixed belief in oneself by dwelling on something, a certain spiritual effort or just worldly things. It seems that, as something to be dwelled on, conceptualized ideas of religion or spiritual teachings or the domestic situations of life are extensions of the ego. One does not simply see tables and chairs as they are; one sees my manifestation of table, my manifestation of chair. One sees constantly the "me" or "my" in these things; they are seen constantly in relationship to me and my security.

It is in relation to this world of my projections that the precision of samatha is extremely powerful. It is a kind of scientific research, relating to the experiences of life as substances and putting them under the microscope of meditative practice. One does not dwell on them, one examines them, works with them. Here the curiosity of one's mind acts as potential prajna, potential transcendental knowledge. The attitude of this practice is not one of seeking to attain nirvana, but rather of seeing the mechanism of samsara, how it works, how it relates to us. At the point of having seen the complete picture of samsara, of having completely understood its mechanism, nirvana becomes redundant. In what is called the enlightened state, both samsara and nirvana are freed.

In order to see thought processes (sensations and perceptions that occur during the

practice of shamatha) as they are, a certain sense of openness and precision has to be developed. This precise study of what we are, what our make-up is, is closely related with the practice of tantra. In the tantric tradition it is said that the discovery of the vajra body—that is, the innate nature of vajra (indestructible being)—within one’s physical system and within one’s psychological system is the ultimate experience. In the samatha practice of the Hinayana tradition, there is also this element of looking for one’s basic innate nature as it is, simply and precisely, without being concerned over the absence of “me” and “my.”

From the basis of the samatha practice, the student next develops what is known as *vipassana* practice. This is the practice of insight, seeing clearly, seeing absolutely, precisely—transcendental insight. One begins to realize that spending one’s whole time on the details of life, as in the samatha practice, does not work. It is still somehow an adolescent approach. It is necessary to begin to have a sense of the totality. This is an expansion process.

... in the vipassana practice, having established the precision of details, one begins to experience the space around them. In other words, in making a pot, the importance is not so much on making the pot itself, but on shaping the space. Just so, in the vipassana practice the process is one of trying to feel the space around the pot. If one has a sense of the space one is going to create by producing a pot, one makes a good potter. But if one is purely concerned with making a shape out of clay without having a sense of the space, one does not make a good potter; or a good sculptor either, for that matter. In this way of beginning to relate with the space, vipassana is gradually letting go, a releasing and expanding.

From this point it is then possible to get a glimpse of the *shunyata* experience. The obstacle to the shunyata experience is the split between basic being and one’s concept of it, between one’s being and one’s projections. All kinds of questions, problems and obstacles arise in relation to this division. The reason that the first glimpse of shunyata becomes possible at this point is that, having seen the details of things as they are through samatha practice and experienced the space around them through vipassana, one begins to relax. One begins to experience the needlessness of defending or asserting oneself. At this point shunyata emerges as the simple absence of those walls and barricades of defense and assertion. One begins to develop the clear and precise experience of seeing a tree as just a tree; not one’s version of a tree, not a tree called such-and-such, but a tree just as it is. The culmination of the experiential process of the development of intellect is the experience of shunyata, which is the experience of the non-existence of duality. The research work is already accomplished; the process of searching for something has been laid to rest. This is the attainment of prajna.