

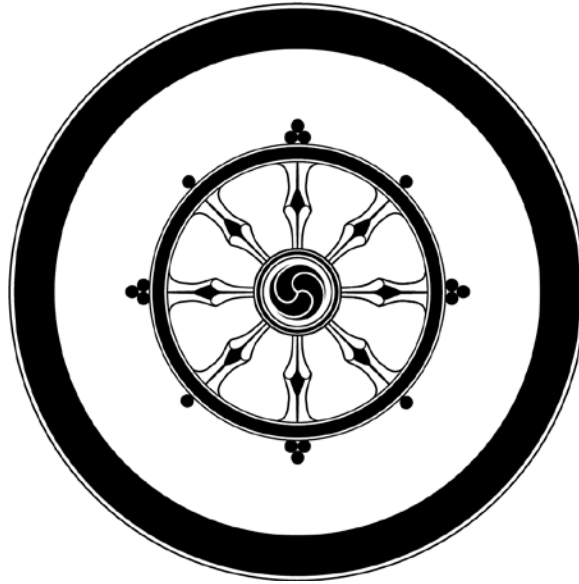
# The Practice of Shamatha-Vipashyana Meditation

## 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 Three: The Approach to 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*

***Exclusively for internal use by participants in the Rime Shedra NYC Course  
"The Practice of Shamatha Vipashyana from Jamgon Kongtrul to Chogyam Trungpa" only  
All Material in this packet is copyright protected.  
Please do not duplicate or share with anyone else.  
Artwork Courtesy of Chris Willcox.***

# Shamatha-Vipashyana Meditation

As Presented by Jamgon Kongtrul and Chogyam Trungpa

(And Many Classical Authors)

A Rime Shedra NYC Course, Tuesdays, January 19 to April 15, 2021, 7-9:15 pm

## Materials for Class Three

### 1) Class Three: The Approach to Meditation

#### a) The View of Meditation as Presented by VCTR

- i) *Meditation in Action*, by Chogyam Trungpa,  
(1) Meditation, pp. 51-64, 12 pages

#### b) The Prerequisites for Shamatha

- i) The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana, Jamgon Kongtrul, *The Treasury of Knowledge*, Translated by Kiki Ekselius and Chryssoula Zerbini, Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche,  
(1) Shamatha: Prerequisites, two pages
- ii) Kamalashila, Bhavanakrama II, in *Stages of Meditation: The Stages of Meditation II by Kamalashila, with Commentary by The Dalai Lama*, Translated by Ven Geshe Lobsang Jordhen, Losang Choephel Ganchenpa, and Jeremy Russell, Root Text Excerpted from pp. 107-158,  
(1) Common Prerequisites for Meditating on Calm Abiding and Special Insight, pp. 94-106; three pages
- iii) *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation*, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Ed. Judith L. Lief,  
(1) The Seven Characteristics of a Dharmic Person, pp. 157-164, seven pages

#### c) The Traditional Classification of the Types of Shamatha

- i) The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana, Jamgon Kongtrul, *The Treasury of Knowledge*, Translated by Kiki Ekselius and Chryssoula Zerbini, Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche,  
(1) Shamatha: The Progressive Classification, no additional pages  
(included in above)

# **Meditation**

## **From *Meditation in Action***

### **By Chögyam Trungpa, Pages 51-64**

#### **Two Types of Meditation**

Meditation is a vast subject and there have been many developments throughout the ages and many variations among the different religious traditions. But broadly speaking the basic character of meditation takes on one of two forms. The first stems from the teachings which are concerned with the discovery of the nature of existence; the second concerns communication with the external or universal concept of God. In either case meditation is the only way to put the teachings into practice.

Where there is the concept of an external, 'higher' Being, there is also an internal personality—which is known as 'I' or the Ego. In this case meditation practice becomes a way of developing communication with an external Being. This means that one feels oneself to be inferior and one is trying to contact something higher, greater. Such meditation is based on devotion. This is basically an inward, or introvert practice of meditation, which is well known in the Hindu teachings, where the emphasis is on going into the inward state of samadhi, into the depths of the heart. One finds a similar technique practised in the Orthodox teachings of Christianity, where the prayer of the heart is used and concentration on the heart is emphasised. This is a means of identifying oneself with an external Being and necessitates purifying oneself. The basic belief is that one is separate from God, but there is still a link, one is still part of God. This confusion sometimes arises, and in [page 52] order to clarify it one has to work inwards and try to raise the standard of individuality to the level of a higher consciousness. This approach makes use of emotions and devotional practices which are aimed at making contact with God or gods or some particular saint. These devotional practices may also include the recitation of mantra.

The other principal form of meditation is almost entirely opposite in its approach, though finally it might lead to the same results. Here there is no belief in higher and lower; the idea of different levels, or of being in an underdeveloped state, does not arise. One does not feel inferior, and what one is trying to achieve is not something higher than oneself. Therefore the practice of meditation does not require an inward concentration on the heart. There is no centralising concept at all. Even such practices as concentrating on the chakras, or psychic centres of the body, are approached in a different way. Although in certain teachings of Buddhism the concept of chakras is mentioned, the practices connected with them are not based

on the development of an inward centre. So this basic form of meditation is concerned with trying to see what *is*. There are many variations on this form of meditation, but they are generally based on various techniques for opening oneself. The achievement of this kind of meditation is not, therefore, the result of some long-term, arduous practise through which we build ourselves up into a 'higher' state, nor does it necessitate going into any kind of inner trance state. It is rather what one might call 'working meditation' or extrovert meditation, where skilful means and wisdom must be combined like the two wings of a bird. This is not a question of trying to retreat from the world. In fact without the external world, the world of apparent phenomena, meditation would be almost impossible to practise, for the individual and the external world are not separate, but merely co-exist together. Therefore the concept of trying to communicate and trying to become one with some higher Being does not arise.

In this kind of meditation practise the concept of *nowness* plays a very important part. In fact, it is the essence of meditation. Whatever one does, whatever one tries to practise, is not aimed at [page 53] achieving a higher state or at following some theory or ideal, but simply, without any object or ambition, trying to see what is here and now. One has to become aware of the present moment through such means as concentrating on the breathing, a practise which has been developed in the Buddhist tradition. This is based on developing the knowledge of *nowness*, for each respiration is unique, it is an expression of *now*. Each breath is separate from the next and is fully seen and fully felt, not in a visualised form, nor simply as an aid to concentration, but it should be fully and properly dealt with. Just as a very hungry man, when he is eating, is not even conscious that he is eating food. He is so engrossed in the food that he completely identifies himself with what he is doing and almost becomes one with the taste and enjoyment of it. Similarly with the breathing, the whole idea is to try and see through that very moment in time.

So in this case, the concept of trying to become something higher does not arise at all, and opinions do not have much importance. In a sense, opinions provide a way to escape; they create a kind of slothfulness and obscure one's clarity of vision. The clarity of our consciousness is veiled by prefabricated concepts and whatever we see we try to fit into some pigeon-hole or in some way make it fit in with our preconceived ideas. So concepts and theories—and, for that matter, theology—can become obstacles. One might ask, therefore, what is the point of studying Buddhist philosophy? Since there are Scriptures and texts and there is surely some philosophy to believe in, wouldn't that also be a concept? Well, that depends on the individual, but basically it is not so. From the start one tries to transcend concepts, and one tries, perhaps in a very critical way, to find out what *is*. One has to develop a critical mind which will stimulate intelligence.

This may at first cause one to reject what is said by teachers or what is written in books, but then gradually one begins to feel something and to find something for oneself.

That is what is known as the meeting of imagination and reality, where the feeling of certain words and concepts meets with intuitive knowledge, perhaps in a rather vague and imprecise way. One may be uncertain whether what one is learning is right or not, but there is a general feeling that one is about to discover something. One [page 54] cannot really start by being perfect, but one must start with something. And if one cultivates this intelligent, intuitive insight, then gradually, stage by stage, the real intuitive feeling develops and the imaginary or hallucinatory element is gradually clarified and eventually dies out. Finally that vague feeling of discovery becomes very clear, so that almost no doubt remains. Even at this stage it is possible that one may be unable to explain one's discovery verbally or write it down exactly on paper, and in fact if one tried to do so it would be limiting one's scope and would be rather dangerous. Nevertheless, as this feeling grows and develops one finally attains direct knowledge, rather than achieving something which is separate from oneself. As in the analogy of the hungry man, you become one with the subject. This can only be achieved through the practice of meditation. Therefore meditation is very much a matter of exercise—it is a working practice. It is not a question of going into some inward depth, but of widening and expanding outwards.

### **Working with Expectation and the Ego**

These are the basic differences between the two types of meditation practice. The first may be more suitable for some people and the second may be more suitable for others. It is not a question of one being superior or more accurate than the other. But for any form of meditation one must first overcome that great feeling of demand and ambition which acts as a major obstacle. Making demands on a person, such as a Guru, or having the ambition to achieve something out of what one is doing, arises out of a built-up desire or wantingness; and that wantingness is a centralised notion. This centralised notion is basically blind. It is like having only one eye, and that one eye being situated in the chest. When you try to walk you cannot turn your head round and you can only see a limited area. Because you can see in only one direction the intelligence of turning the head is lacking. Therefore there is a great danger of falling.

This wantingness acts as a veil and becomes an obstacle to the discovery of the moment of nowness, because the wanting is based either on the future or on trying to continue something which existed in the past, so the nowness is completely forgotten. There may be a certain effort to focus on the nowness, but perhaps only

twenty per cent of the [page 55] consciousness is based on the present and the rest is scattered into the past or the future. Therefore there is not enough force to see directly what is there.

Here, too, the teaching of selflessness plays a very important part. This is not merely a question of denying the existence of Ego, for Ego is something relative. Where there is an external person, a higher Being, or the concept of something which is separate from oneself, then we tend to think that because there is something outside there must be something here as well. The external phenomenon sometimes becomes such an overwhelming thing and seems to have all sorts of seductive or aggressive qualities, so we erect a kind of defence mechanism against it, failing to see that that is itself a continuity of the external thing.

We try to segregate ourselves from the external, and this creates a kind of gigantic bubble in us which consists of nothing but air and water or, in this case, fear and the reflection of the external thing. So this huge bubble prevents any fresh air from coming in, and that is 'I'—the Ego. So in that sense there is the existence of Ego, but it is in fact illusory. Having established that, one generally wants to create some external idol or refuge. Subconsciously one knows that this 'I' is only a bubble and it could burst at any moment, so one tries to protect it as much as one can—either consciously or subconsciously.

In fact we have achieved such skill at protecting this Ego that we have managed to preserve it for hundreds of years. It is as though a person has a very precious pair of spectacles which he puts in a box or various containers in order to keep it safe, so that even if other things are broken this would be preserved. He may feel that other things could bear hardship, but he knows that this could not, so this would last longer. In the same way, Ego lasts longer just because one feels it could burst at any time. There is fear of it being destroyed because that would be too much, one would feel too exposed. And there is such character, such a fascinating pattern established outside us, although it is in fact our own reflection. That is why the concept of Egolessness is not really a question of whether there is a Self or not, or, for that matter, whether there is the existence of God or not; it is rather the taking away of that concept of the bubble. Having done so, one doesn't [page 56] have to deliberately destroy the Ego or deliberately condemn God. And when that barrier is removed one can expand and swim through straight away.

But this can only be achieved through the practice of meditation, which must be approached in a very practical and simple way. Then the mystical experience of joy or Grace, or whatever it might be, can be found in every object. That is what one tries to

achieve through Vipassana, or 'Insight' meditation practice. Once we have established a basic pattern of discipline and we have developed a regular way of dealing with the situation—whether it is breathing or walking or what-have-you—then at some stage the technique gradually dies out. Reality gradually expands so that we do not have to use the technique at all. And in this case one does not have to concentrate inwards, but one can expand outwards more and more. And the more one expands, the closer one gets to the realisation of centreless existence.

### Summary

That is the basic pattern of this kind of meditation, which is based on three fundamental factors: firstly, not centralising inwards; secondly, not having any longing to become higher; and thirdly, becoming completely identified with here and now. These three elements run right through the practice of meditation, from the beginning up to the moment of realisation.

### Discussion

**Q.** You mentioned nowness in your talk, and I was wondering how it is possible to become aware of the absolute through awareness of a relative moment in time?

**A.** Well, we have to start by working through the relative aspect, until finally this nowness takes on such a living quality that it is no longer dependent on a relative way of expressing nowness. One might say that *now* exists all the time, beyond the concept of relativity. But since all concepts are based on the idea of relativity, it is impossible to find any words which go beyond that. So nowness is the only way to see directly. First it is between the past and the future—now. Then gradually one discovers that nowness is not dependent on relativity at all. One discovers that the past does not exist, the future does not exist, and everything happens now. Similarly, in order to express space one might have first to create a vase, and then one has to break it, and then one sees that [page 57] the emptiness in the vase is the same as the emptiness outside. That is the whole meaning of technique. At first that nowness is, in a sense, not perfect. Or one might even say that the meditation is not perfect, it is a purely man-made practice. One sits and tries to be still and concentrates on the breathing, and so on. But then, having started in that way, one gradually discovers something more than that. So the effort one has put into it—into the discovery of nowness, for example—would not be wasted, though at the same time one might see that it was rather foolish. But that is the only way to start.

**Q.** For meditation, would a student have to rid himself of Ego before he started, or would this come naturally as he is studying?



**A.** This comes naturally, because you can't start without Ego. And basically Ego isn't bad. Good and bad doesn't really exist anywhere, it is only a secondary thing. Ego is, in a sense, a false thing, but it isn't necessarily bad. You have to start with Ego, and use Ego, and from there it gradually wears out, like a pair of shoes. But you have to use it and wear it out thoroughly, so it is not preserved. Otherwise, if you try to push Ego aside and start perfect, you may become more and more perfect in a rather one-sided way, but the same amount of imperfection is building up on the other side, just as creating intense light creates intense darkness as well.

**Q.** You mentioned that there are two basic forms of meditation—devotional practice, or trying to communicate with something higher, and the other one, which is simply awareness of what is—but this devotional practice still plays a part in Buddhism as well, and you have devotional chants and so on, but I am not quite sure how this comes in. I mean, the two appear to be different, so can they in fact be combined?

**A.** Yes, but the kind of devotional practice which is found in Buddhism is merely a process of opening, of surrendering the Ego. It is a process of creating a container. I don't mean to condemn the other kind of devotion, but if one looks at it from the point of view of a person who has an unskilful way of using that technique, then devotion becomes a longing to free oneself. One sees oneself as being very separate, and as being imprisoned and imperfect. One [page 58] regards oneself as basically bad, and one is trying to break out. In other words the imperfection part of oneself is identified with 'I' and anything perfect is identified with some external being, so all that is left is trying to get through the imprisonment. This kind of devotion is an overemphasised awareness of Ego, the negative aspect of Ego.

Although there are hundreds of variations of devotional practice in Buddhism, and there are many accounts of devotion to Gurus, or being able to communicate with the Guru, and of achieving the Awakened State of mind through devotion. But in these cases devotion is always begun without centralising on the Ego. In any chants or ceremonies, for example, which make use of symbolism, or the visualisation of Buddhas, before any visualisation is created there is first a formless meditation, which creates an entirely open space. And at the end one always recites what is known as the Threefold Wheel: 'I do not exist; the external visualisation does not exist: and the act of visualising does not exist'—the idea being that any feeling of achievement is thrown back to the openness, so one doesn't feel that one is collecting anything. I think that is the basic point. One may feel a great deal of devotion, but that devotion is a kind of abstract form of devotion, which does not centralise inwardly. One simply identifies with that feeling of devotion, and that's all. This is perhaps a different concept of devotion, where no centre exists, but only

devotion exists. Whereas, in the other case devotion contains a demand. There is an expectation of getting something out of it in return.

**Q.** Is there not a great fear generated when we get to this point of opening up and surrendering?

**A.** Fear is one of the weapons of Ego. It protects the Ego. If one reaches the stage where one begins to see the folly of Ego, then there is fear of losing the Ego, and fear is one of its last weapons. Beyond that point fear no longer exists, because the object of fear is to frighten somebody, and when that somebody is not there, then fear loses its function. You see, fear is continually given life by your response, and when there is no one to respond to the fear—which is Ego loss—then fear ceases to exist.

**Q.** You are talking about the Ego as an object?

**A.** In what sense?

**Q.** [Page 59] In the sense that it is part of the external environment.

**A.** Ego is, as I have already said, like a bubble. It is an object up to a point, because although it does not really exist—it is an impermanent thing—it in fact shows itself as an object more than actually being one. That is another way of protecting oneself, of trying to maintain Ego.

**Q.** This is an aspect of the Ego?

**A.** Yes.

**Q.** Then you can't destroy the Ego, or you would lose the power to recognise, the power to cognate.

**A.** No, not necessarily. Because Ego does not contain understanding, it does not contain any insight at all. Ego exists in a false way all the time and can only create confusion, whereas insight is something more than that.

**Q.** Would you say that Ego is a secondary phenomenon rather than a primary phenomenon?

**A.** Yes, very much so. In a sense Ego is wisdom, but Ego happens to be ignorant as well. You see, when you realise that you are ignorant, that is the beginning of the discovery of wisdom—it is wisdom itself.

**Q.** How does one decide in oneself whether Ego is ignorance or wisdom?

**A.** It is not really a question of deciding. It is simply that one sees in that way. You see, basically there is no solid substance, although we talk about Ego existing as a solid thing having various aspects. But in fact it merely lives through time as a

continual process of creation. It is continually dying and being reborn all the time. Therefore Ego doesn't really exist. But Ego also acts as a kind of wisdom: when Ego dies, that is wisdom itself, and when Ego is first formulated that is the beginning of ignorance itself. So wisdom and Ego are not really separate at all. It seems rather difficult to define, and in a way one would be happier if there was clear-cut black and white, but somehow that is not the natural pattern of existence. There is no clear-cut black and white at all, and all things are interdependent. Darkness is an aspect of light, and light is an aspect of darkness, so one can't really condemn one side and build up everything on the other. It is left entirely to the individual [page 60] to find his own way, and it is possible to do so. It is the same for a dog who has never swum—if he was suddenly thrown in the water he could swim. Similarly, we have a kind of spiritual instinct in us and if we are willing to open ourselves then somehow we find our way directly. It is only a question of opening up and one doesn't have to have a clear-cut definition at all.

**Q.** Would you care to sum up the purpose of meditation?

**A.** Well, meditation is dealing with purpose itself. It is not that meditation is for something, but it is dealing with the aim. Generally we have a purpose for whatever we do: something is going to happen in the future, therefore what I am doing now is important—everything is related to that. But the whole idea of meditation is to develop an entirely different way of dealing with things, where you have no purpose at all. In fact meditation is dealing with the question of whether or not there is such a thing as purpose. And when one learns a different way of dealing with the situation, one no longer has to have a purpose. One is not on the way to somewhere. Or rather, one is on the way and one is also at the destination at the same time. That is really what meditation is for.

**Q.** Would you say, then, that it would be a merging with reality?

**A.** Yes, because reality is there all the time. Reality is not a separate entity, so it is a question of becoming one with reality, or of being in reality—not *achieving* oneness, but becoming identified with it. One is already a part of that reality, so all that remains is to take away the doubt. Then one discovers that one has been there all the time.

**Q.** Would it be correct to describe it as the realisation that the visible is not reality?

**A.** The visible? Can you define a bit more?

**Q.** I am thinking of William Blake's theory of the merging of the observer with the observed, and the visible not being the reality at all.

**A.** Visible things in this sense are reality. There is nothing beyond nowness,

therefore what we see is reality. But because of our usual way of seeing things, we do not see them exactly as they are.

**Q.** [Page 61] Would you say, then, that each person is an individual and must find an individual way towards that?

**A.** Well, I think that brings us back to the question of Ego, which we have been talking about. You see, there is such a thing as personality, in a way, but we are not really individuals as separate from the environment, or as separate from external phenomena. That is why a different approach is necessary. Whereas, if we were individuals and had no connection with the rest of things, then there would be no need for a different technique which would lead to oneness. The point is that there is appearance of individuality, but this individuality is based on relativity. If there is individuality, there must also be oneness as well.

**Q.** Yes, but it is the individuality that makes for oneness. If we weren't individuals we couldn't be one. Is that so?

**A.** Well, the word 'individual' is rather ambiguous. At the beginning individuality may be overemphasised, because there are various individual aspects. Even when we reach the stage of realisation there is perhaps an element of compassion, an element of wisdom, an element of energy and all sorts of different variations. But what we describe as an individual is something more than that. We tend to see it as one character with many things built onto it, which is a way of trying to find some sort of security. When there is wisdom, we try to load everything onto it, and it then becomes an entirely separate entity, a separate person—which is not so. But still there are individual aspects, there is individual character. So in Hinduism one finds different aspects of God, different deities and different symbols. When one attains oneness with reality, that reality is not just one single thing, but one can see from a very wide angle.

**Q.** If a student has a receptive mind and wishes to make himself at one with Nature, can he be taught how to meditate, or does he have to develop his own form?

**A.** Nature? How do you mean?

**Q.** If he wishes to study, can he accept other people's teaching, or can he develop them himself?

**A.** In fact it is necessary to receive oral instruction, oral teaching. Though he must learn to give before he can accept anything, [62] he must learn to surrender. Secondly, he finds that the whole idea of learning stimulates his understanding. Also this avoids building up a great feeling of achievement, as though everything is 'my own work'—the concept of the self-made man.

**Q.** Surely that is not sufficient reason for going to receive instruction from a teacher, just to avoid the feeling that otherwise everything is self-made. I mean, in the case of someone like Ramana Maharshi, who attained realisation without an external teacher, surely he shouldn't go and find a Guru just in case he might become big-headed?

**A.** No. But he is exceptional, that is the whole point. There is a way, it is possible. And basically no one can transmit or impart anything to anybody. One has to discover within oneself. So perhaps in certain cases people could do that. But building up on oneself is somehow similar to Ego's character, isn't it? One is on rather dangerous ground. It could easily become Ego's activity, because there is already the concept of 'I' and then one wants to build up more on that side. I think—and this may sound simple, but it is really the whole thing—that one learns to surrender gradually, and that surrendering of the Ego is a very big subject. Also, the teacher acts as a kind of mirror, the teacher gives back one's own reflection. Then for the first time you are able to see how beautiful you are, or how ugly you are.

Perhaps I should mention here one or two small points about meditation, although we have already discussed the general background of the subject.

Generally, meditation instruction cannot be given in a class. There has to be a personal relationship between teacher and pupil. Also there are certain variations within each basic technique, such as awareness of breathing. But perhaps I should briefly mention the basic way of meditating, and then, if you want to go further, I am sure you could do so and receive further instruction from a meditation teacher.

As we have mentioned already, this meditation is not concerned with trying to develop concentration. Although many books on Buddhism speak of such practices as *Samatha* as being the development of concentration, I think this term is misleading in a [63] way. One might get the idea that the practice of meditation could be put to commercial use, and that one would be able to concentrate on counting money or something like that. But meditation is not just for commercial uses, it is a different concept of concentration. You see, generally one cannot really concentrate. If one tries very hard to concentrate, then one needs the thought that is concentrating on the subject and also something which makes that accelerate further. Thus there are two processes involved and the second process is a kind of watchman, which makes sure that you are doing it properly. That part of it must be taken away, otherwise one ends up being more self-conscious and merely aware that one is concentrating, rather than actually being in a state of concentration. This becomes a vicious circle. Therefore one cannot develop concentration alone,

without taking away the centralised watchfulness, the trying to be careful—which is Ego. So the Samatha practice, the awareness of breathing, is not concerned with concentrating on the breathing.

The cross-legged posture is the one generally adopted in the East, and if one can sit in that position, it is preferable to do so. Then one can train oneself to sit down and meditate anywhere, even in the middle of a field, and one need not feel conscious of having a seat or of trying to find something to sit on. Also, the physical posture does have a certain importance. For instance, if one lies down this might inspire one to sleep; if one stands one might be inclined to walk. But for those who find it difficult to sit cross-legged, sitting on a chair is quite good, and, in fact, in Buddhist iconography the posture of sitting on a chair is known as the *Maitreya asana*, so it is quite acceptable. The important thing is to keep the back straight so that there is no strain on the breathing.

And for the breathing itself it is not a matter of concentrating, as we have already said, but of trying to become one with the feeling of breath. At the beginning some effort is needed, but after practising for a while the awareness is simply kept on the verge of the movement of breath; it just follows it quite naturally and one is not trying particularly to bind the mind to breathing. One tries to feel the breath—outbreathing, inbreathing, outbreathing, inbreathing—and it usually happens that the outbreathing is [64] longer than the inbreathing, which helps one to become aware of space and the expansion of breathing outwards.

It is also very important to avoid becoming solemn and to avoid the feeling that one is taking part in some special ritual. One should feel quite natural and spontaneous, and simply try to identify oneself with the breath. That is all there is to it, and there are no ideas or analysing involved. Whenever thoughts arise, just observe them *as thoughts*, rather than as being a subject. What usually happens when we have thoughts is that we are not aware that they are thoughts at all. Supposing one is planning one's next holiday trip: one is so engrossed in the thoughts that it is almost as though one were already on the trip and one is not even aware that these are thoughts. Whereas, if one sees that this is merely thought creating such a picture, one begins to discover that it has a less real quality.

One should not try to suppress thoughts in meditation, but one should just try to see the transitory nature, the translucent nature of thoughts. One should not become involved in them, nor reject them, but simply observe them and then come back to the awareness of breathing. The whole point is to cultivate the acceptance of everything, so one should not discriminate or become involved in any kind of

struggle. That is the basic meditation technique, and it is quite simple and direct. There should be no deliberate effort, no attempt to control and no attempt to be peaceful. This is why breathing is used. It is easy to feel the breathing, and one has no need to be self-conscious or to try and do anything. The breathing is simply available and one should just feel that. That is the reason why technique is important to start with. This is the primary way of starting, but it generally continues and develops in its own way. One sometimes finds oneself doing it slightly differently from when one first started, quite spontaneously. This is not classified as an advanced technique or a beginner's technique. It simply grows and develops gradually.

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

## **Shamatha**

### **The Prerequisites for Shamatha**

**To rely on the conditions for shamatha is to reject everything unfavorable, to stay in a favorable area, to have few desires, to be content, to adopt pure ethics, and to give up distraction and discursive thoughts.**

Since one wishes to accomplish shamatha, it is very important to rely on the causes or prerequisites for it. In the *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, Atisha says:

“If the conditions for shamatha deteriorate, even if one meditates with great effort for a thousand years, one will not accomplish samadhi.”

Therefore, it is also said in the chapter dealing with the prerequisites for samadhi:

“Keep well the previously mentioned conditions and settle the mind in virtue, by means of any correct object of observation. If a yogi thus accomplishes shamatha, he will also gain the supersensible cognitions.”

What are these prerequisites? According to Kamalashila's *Stages of Meditation II*, they are:

“To stay in a favorable area, to have few desires, to be content, to forsake excessive activity, to adopt pure ethics, to give up distraction due to desire as well as discursive thoughts.”

Further, in the *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras*, it is said:



“The wise person practices wherever he can have good facilities, a wholesome environment, a healthy place, good friends and the requisites for yogic happiness.”

- 1) Staying in a favorable area means:
  - a) To have good facilities, i.e. To easily obtain food and clothing;
  - b) A wholesome environment, with no danger from robbers, thieves, etc.;
  - c) A healthy place, free from disease;
  - d) Good friends of like view and conduct;
  - e) And the requisites for happiness, i.e. freedom from commotion and disturbing noises.
- 2) Having few desires refers to food and clothing.
- 3) Being content is being satisfied with just the bare essentials.
- 4) Forsaking excessive activity refers to buying and selling etc.
- 5) Adopting pure ethics means not transgressing one's vows of personal liberation or bodhicitta.
- 6) Giving up discursive thoughts refers to that mental activity which, arising out of desire, results in many shortcomings in both this and future lives.

Furthermore, one should also rely on the conditions and prerequisites for shamatha mentioned by Atisha in the chapter dealing with the prerequisites for samadhi, and avoid their opposites.

## **The Progressive Classification**

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

When shamatha is classified according to individuals or categories, there are four types; the shamatha which corresponds to the mind of the desire realm, to the levels of the concentrations, to the formless absorptions and to the absorption of cessation. These are explained in the previous and following chapters.

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

***From The Stages of Meditation II by Kamalashila***

***In Stages of Meditation by The Dalai Lama***

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The same sutra says,

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

*The Questions of Narayana Sutra* says,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**The Seven Characteristics of a Dharmic Person**  
***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. 157-164**

According to hinayana logic, being genuine is fundamental. We are trying to do everything properly, precisely the way the Buddha taught. How we can actually relate with ourselves in that vein is through the seven characteristics of a dharmic person: passionlessness, contentment, fewer activities, good conduct, awareness of the teacher, propagating prajna, and an attitude of goodness.<sup>1</sup> This traditional list of seven characteristics represents a long-standing tradition of discipline. It is how our forefathers in the Kagyü lineage fully practiced their discipline. Such lists were taught by the Buddha himself to his own monks and nuns. The seven characteristics of a dharmic person give us guidelines as to how to begin. They have to do with how we can train ourselves, how we can organize our livelihood, and how we can create a decent society. If you are going on a scout trip, you need to know how to gather wood and how to light a fire. If you are going out, you first need to shower and put on your clothes. Likewise, if you are studying Buddhism, you first have to be clean-cut and learn how to conduct yourself. That is absolutely basic.

***General Guidelines: Creating a Proper Physical Environment [158]***

As a general overall guideline, it is recommended that you begin by creating a proper physical environment for meditation practice. A good way to develop meditative discipline is to be in the right physical circumstances. Your location, where you take your seat, should be reasonable. It should not be too hot or too cold, and it should be somewhat isolated from the hustle and bustle of the city. You should be neither too full of food nor too hungry. Making sure that your environmental situation is right is just common sense. Having set up a proper environment for meditation, you can then begin to organize your life as a whole according to shamatha discipline.

***1. Passionlessness***

<sup>1</sup> This discussion combines two slightly varying approaches to the characteristics of a dharmic person. The traditional list of seven is sandwiched within two more items—creating a proper physical environment, and remembering to follow all of these guidelines—to make a list of nine in all, which Trungpa Rinpoche describes as nine ways of organizing one's mind according to shamatha.

The first characteristic of a dharmic person is passionlessness. Having established the basic environment, you begin to pick up on all the little details of how you try to create your own local comfort zone. You see all the ways that you try to make yourself comfortable in the practice. Passionlessness means that instead of trying to create an overly comfortable situation for yourself, you reduce that desire.

Passionlessness is an interesting theme for Westerners. In the West, you have all kinds of ways to occupy yourself, from chewing gum to taking trips to the Bahamas. You are always looking for ways to solve your boredom—your boredom *problem*. In contrast, passionlessness means experiencing boredom properly and fully. In Western society, when any little irritation comes up, there is always something to cure it. They even sell little pads to stick on your spectacles to keep them from sliding down your nose. If you have chewing gum in your pocket, you develop an itch on your hip: you want to take some out and put it in your mouth right away. You are in such a hurry that you can't even open the package properly; you just dump the gum into your mouth and chew it. When the weather is cold, you can't stand even a few seconds of chill; you must rush into your bedroom to get a sweater. If your tea is slightly bitter, you automatically reach for the sugar pot and put in several more spoonfuls of sugar.

From little things like pads for your spectacles to the biggest of the biggest, as long as you can afford it, you try to cure any kind of boredom or irritation. That approach is a problem. You have not been taught how to deal with boredom, or the levelness in your life, and you are not able to withstand more extreme hardships, such as starving or freezing to death. With passion, you always need some kind of sustaining power, whereas with passionlessness, you are able to maintain yourself. You can relate with boredom, and you don't immediately fill every gap.

## **2. Contentment**

The second characteristic of a dharmic person is contentment. You don't have to expand yourself; instead, you are contained in your own existence. You appreciate what you have and rejoice in it. Enough is enough! When you are constantly changing from one thing to another, you cannot celebrate your own life. You cannot celebrate what you have or what you are. You are unable to celebrate the simplicity of practice or the simplicity of life.

Contentment is related to passionlessness. With contentment, if you feel an itch to chew gum, but you don't have any chewing gum in your pocket on that particular day, you feel relieved: "For heaven's sake, I don't have any chewing gum! That's fine! It gives me a chance to appreciate simplicity." Instead of thinking in terms of obstacles like not

having any chewing gum in your pocket or having a bad day, you switch gears altogether.

If you lose your toes in an accident, you appreciate that you lost your toes. You might even organize a party to celebrate the loss of your ego hang-up. When you have lost something and it is gone, that gives you more space to breathe, so you could celebrate with no regrets. You have an appreciation of obstacles becoming simplicity. Contentment is unconditional. It is free and personal. You are free to sit and practice and develop your awareness.

### ***3. Fewer Activities***

The third characteristic of a dharmic person is not engaging in too many activities. You are reducing unnecessary activities, reducing nonfunctional talking and entertainment mentality.

This is important, because normally we tend to get involved in all kinds of projects and have all kinds of engagements. Instead of holding your discipline or your mindfulness, you can just jump from A to B to Z. [160] You have all sorts of choices. If you don't like tea, you can have coffee; if you don't like coffee, you can switch to Coca-Cola; if you don't like Coca-Cola, you can drink scotch or tequila. You can involve yourself in constant activity.

Sometimes you don't even know what you want to do. You come up with the idea that you need to be occupied with *something*, but you can't put your finger on anything in particular. And when you are sitting and meditating, you have that same problem. You make choices all the time. If you are sitting on a rug, for instance, you begin to choose which color to look at: the white or the black, the purple or the green. You decide which fantasy to dwell on: your future, your past, your desire for food, the eccentricities of your friends and relatives, or various creative activities like sex, cooking, or buying clothes. So even in sitting practice, you are involved in lots of activities. Engaging in fewer activities means that you are giving that up. You are giving up business deals, and such things as consulting your astrology chart or tarot cards or throwing dice, and you do not waste a lot of time retelling stories or developing frivolous jokes.

When you are too chummy with your world, it becomes endless. There are always new things to do, and you keep discovering things you had never even heard of before. There are infinite possibilities. However, when you finally have everything, it will drive you mad because the whole thing is too much and you can't possibly do it all. In the end, you

feel that you are not capable of doing even one thing properly. That is the problem with materialism. According to the hinayana, you have to cut that down.

#### ***4. Good Conduct***

The fourth characteristic of a dharmic person is good conduct. Good conduct is quite straightforward. It is based on being willing to work on yourself, which is the logic of individual salvation, and dedicating your deeds to the benefit of all sentient beings.<sup>2</sup> Good conduct is based on mindfulness and awareness in which you see whatever you are doing as an extension of your sitting practice. Awareness is not self-consciousness; it is simply looking at what you are doing. You respect yourself and the sacredness of your being. When you have self-respect, you don't spill your [161] tea in your saucer and you don't put your shoes on the wrong feet. When you are aware, you appreciate your whole existence and the world around you. You appreciate the weather, your coffee, your tea, your clothes, your shower. There is a tremendous sense that for the first time, you have become a real human being.

Ordinarily when people talk about developing awareness, they mean being cautious or careful. In this case, awareness is simply a question of waking up. The opposite of waking up is falling asleep, which is unpleasant, sweaty, energy consuming, and degrading. It is like putting your head in the sand and trying to hide, ostrich-style. By falling asleep you are avoiding any possibility of realization. Instead, you just feel bad about yourself and the consequences of your existence, which is not as glamorous as you would like it to be. But you should not be embarrassed about yourself. It is possible to celebrate. You could be so sharp. You could be so smart that you could look at yourself and smile. You could be awake and aware at the same time, on the spot. When you reflect that sense of constant sunrise, when you are always awake and aware of what you are doing, that is good conduct.

#### ***5. Awareness of the Teacher***

The fifth characteristic of a dharmic person is awareness of the teacher. You are aware of the teacher and of other realized people. As you are studying with such people, the idea is to be without shyness. Because you are without shyness, you could relate with the teacher as somebody who has already accomplished the path. In the hinayana, the teacher is an example, an elder who is behaving in a way that, you should behave. You could emulate that teacher properly and fully. You have a sense of sacredness in

<sup>2</sup> A reference to the basic intentions of the two main Buddhist vows, the refuge vow and the bodhisattva vow: making friends with oneself and developing compassion for others.



studying and listening to the teacher. At the same time, you appreciate that you too are part of that same tradition and discipline.

Studying and receiving teachings from an authentic teacher will affect your state of mind, including your subconscious gossip. Therefore, it is important to take advantage of meeting a good teacher by studying and contemplating the dharma. If you study hard enough, when you have subconscious gossip during your shamatha practice, the chances are that your subconscious gossip will be dharmic, instead of reruns of past memories, such as hitting your grandmother on the head. However, although dharmic subconscious-gossip can be very helpful and good, you [162] should not capitalize on dharmic thoughts, but regard them as thinking and come back to your breath.

### ***6. Propagating Prajna***

The sixth characteristic of a dharmic person is propagating prajna, or intellect. That is to say, you should understand who you are and what you are made of. You should find out what your mind is made out of, what your mind's projections are made out of, and what your relationship with your world is made out of. In doing so, the abhidharma teachings on Buddhist psychology will be very helpful. As you study and practice, you take pride in how much you have learned, and you begin to become more and more confident. It's like being a good horse in a good stable: you are well groomed and you are well fed. You feel that you are growing up and becoming a prideworthy dharmic person. You take pride in the dharma.

Taking pride in learning is a postmeditation discipline, rather than something you only do during your time on the cushion. It means that daily conversations and other postmeditation experiences could be changed into dharmic situations. You do not have to be pious and refuse to talk about anything but the dharma, but your conversations could take place within the context of the dharma. Whatever you do, you remain in the context of dharma, and you understand that your life is soaked in the dharma. You are free to crack jokes and sing songs in the shower, but you are not taking time off from anything. Your life is infested with dharma.

### ***7. Attitude of Goodness***

The seventh and last characteristic of a dharmic person is an attitude of goodness, which comes from studying the dharma. Properly considering the dharma will help you to realize and appreciate basic goodness. In your study of the dharma, you are given long lists to learn, and the way things work is explained very mechanistically and

intellectually, but that approach is very helpful. By understanding the teachings logically, you understand why you are here and what you are—which is good.

According to some theistic traditions, you inherit a big sin right at the beginning, called “original sin.” Therefore, that sin has to be purified. But according to the nontheistic Buddhist tradition, original sin is a myth. By studying how your mind can be unwound and by undoing what you are [163] doing, you discover basic goodness. You recognize that fundamental quality in everybody

The sense of goodness comes from your own shamatha practice and from the postmeditation discipline of considering properly. Considering properly means that the dharma is put through your mental process. When you study the dharma and work through the logic, you develop a sense of having a great command of dharma. It is no longer just foreign information coming at you, or something that you have never heard of before. Instead, there is a feeling of immediacy, and the dharma is available to you. You can comprehend the dharma so well, so purely, that you don't take in dharmic information naively. You don't feel that you are supposed to agree with everything, but you apply critical intelligence to the logic you are presented with. You can churn through the dharma quite thoroughly. It is like processing dough through a spaghetti machine to make good spaghetti, or beating and hammering raw gold to refine it and make it into jewelry. Good gold or good spaghetti—take your choice. The dharma is always true and reasonable; nonetheless, you do not feel belittled by the dharma. Instead you process it through your own intellectual and personal understanding, and also in the context of sitting meditation. Your objections and your inspirations are all included in your dharmic understanding.

### ***8. Remembering to Be Dharmic***

To the seven characteristics of a dharmic person we could add an extra step: remembering to do all of these! If we include this point and the first point, creating a proper physical environment, that makes nine altogether. That is a sort of baker's dozen approach, a way to make sure that everything happens properly. Altogether, becoming a dharmic person means that dharma is no longer regarded as a separate entity but as part of your basic existence. You are making friends with the dharma so that whether you are practicing or not, away or at home, you still have a sense of the immediacy, directness, rightness, truthfulness, and realness of the dharma. The conclusion, when dharma has soaked through everything in your existence, is known as mixing your mind with the dharma.

Becoming a dharmic person is based on both meditation and postmeditation practice. The practice of sitting meditation is included, in that when you sit, there is a sense that you are in the dharma already; and [164] outside of sitting practice, in postmeditation, you are also in the dharma. You are in the dharma and with the dharma. In short, you become a dharmic person altogether. The hinayana approach has nothing to do with big explosions of enlightenment on the spot. It is about paying attention to details: you are paying attention to your mind and your behavior patterns. If you keep sitting, you will find out that both sanity and insanity exist in you. But insanity is not regarded as an obstacle; it is regarded as kindling wood. It is because of your insanity that you are here. But you don't stop there; you go beyond insanity. You brighten up greater sanity by sitting and by perfectly watching your activities.

When you first wake up and before you fall asleep, just look and be genuine. You can't fool yourself. If you have been attempting to fool yourself, don't—it won't work. If you try to fool yourself, you will experience constant torture. So you need to develop appreciation. You need to reduce your demands and stick to the point. In the hinayana, you begin to realize the need for very good toilet training. I hope I am not insulting you by saying you are not toilet trained. In fact, it could be seen as a compliment that you need a higher level of toilet training. It could be something to look forward to! The possibility that you could be toilet trained is a tremendous cause for celebration. Our lineage fathers, including my own teacher, were fully toilet trained. The basic hinayana approach is a kind of higher-level toilet training, very much so. With such training, you could actually relate with yourself fully and properly. You could be fully toilet trained with a smile on your face.