

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

Class Four: Syllabus

1) Shamatha: The Basics of the Practice

- a) The Way to Meditate:
 - i) The Eight-Fold Posture
- b) The Methods for Setting the Mind:
 - i) The Three Essential Qualities
 - ii) The Four Types of Objects of Observation
- c) The Progression of the Actual Meditation
 - i) Setting the mind with concrete support
 - ii) Setting the mind without concrete support
 - iii) Setting the mind in the Essential Nature

Shamatha-Vipashyana Meditation

From Jamgon Kongtrul (and Others) to Chogyam Trungpa

Materials for Class Four

1) Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche:

- a) *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation*, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Ed. Judith L. Lief, 16 pages
 - i) Take your Time, pp.191-192
 - ii) Upright Posture, pp. 193-197
 - iii) General Guidelines for Meditation Practice, pp. 197-200
 - iv) Breathing Out, pp. 201-202
 - v) Learning How to Let Go, pp. 202-203
 - vi) Light Touch, pp. 203-204
 - vii) Core Boredom, pp. 205-206
 - viii) Labeling Thoughts, pp. 207-211
 - ix) Touch and Go, pp. 212-213
 - x) Acknowledging States of Mind, pp. 213-214
 - xi) Pagyo: A Residue of Mindfulness, pp. 257-258
 - xii) Tren-she: Recollecting and Knowing, pp. 258-259

2) Classical Readings:

- a) Shamatha: The Basics of the Practice, The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana, Jamgon Kongtrul, *The Treasury of Knowledge*, Translated by Kiki Ekselius and Chryssoula Zerbini, six pages
- b) Mahasatipatthana Sutta: The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Digha Nikaya*, Translated from the Pali by Maurice Walshe, pp. 335-336, one page
- c) The Three Qualities of Shamatha, from *Comments on Longchenpa's Final Testament, Immaculate Light*, In *The Fearless Lion's Roar: Profound Instructions on Dzogchen, the Great Perfection*, by Nyoshul Khenpo Jamyang Dorje, Translated by David Christensen, pp. 39, one page
- d) How to Sustain the Meditation with Three Qualities, from *Moonbeams of Mahāmudrā*, by Dakpo Tashi Namgyal, Trs. by Elizabeth M. Callahan, pp. 307-312, four pages
- e) The Objects of Meditation, from *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment, Vol. 3* by Tsong-kha-pa, Translated by the Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee, pp. 35-41, seven pages
- f) The Essential Instructions of the Mahasiddha Maitripa, from *A Spacious Path to Freedom: Practical Instructions on the Union of Mahamudra and Atiyoga*, by Karma Chagme with commentary by Gyatrul Rinpoche, Translated by B. Alan Wallace, pp. 78-80, three pages

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

Shamatha

The Way to Meditate: Posture

During meditation one should be seated comfortably in the eightfold posture.

When meditating on shamatha, at the beginning, one's posture is very important. Therefore, one should be seated comfortably and adopt the eight-fold posture, described here according to the *Stages of Meditation*:

1. The legs should be in vajra posture or half-crossed.
2. The eyes should be half-closed.
3. The body should be held straight.
4. The shoulders should be level.
5. The gaze should be in the direction of the nose.
6. There should be a slight gap between the teeth and between the lips.
7. The tongue should be touching the palate.
8. The breathing should be natural and effortless.

The Methods for Setting the Mind: The Objects of Observation

There are generally four types of objects of observation, in accordance with the individual: pervasive objects, objects for purifying deeds, objects that render skillful and objects for purifying afflictions.

Generally, the Bhagavan taught four types of objects of observation for the yogi:

1. *The pervasive objects* refer to
 - non-analytical setting,
 - analytical focusing,

- observing the “limits of phenomena”, i.e. their varieties and their mode of being, and
 - achievement of the purpose, which is the transformation obtained by meditating on the two aspects of phenomena mentioned above.
2. *The objects for purifying deeds* are the remedies to whichever is greatest of the tendencies coming from deeds committed in former lives out of desire, hatred, obscuration, pride, and discursiveness. Respectively these remedies are; meditation on repulsiveness, love, dependent arising, the division of the (6) elements, and the rising and falling of the breath.
 3. *The objects that render skillful* are of five types, namely the aggregates, the (18) elements, the entrances, the twelve links of dependent arising, and the appropriate and the inappropriate.
 4. *The objects for purifying afflictions* are of two kinds: the levels, of which the higher are more peaceful and the lower more coarse; and the four truths, together with their sixteen attributes such as impermanence etc.

The object of observation chosen should be in accordance with the individual: depending on whichever affliction is strongest, from desire to discursiveness, the object of observation should be the corresponding remedy, from repulsiveness to the rising and falling of the breath. If the tendencies are of equal strength or the afflictions are weak, it is permissible to use any of the above objects of observation, according to one's faculties.

The Progression of the Actual Meditation

Setting the mind with a concrete support

The particular method for setting the mind is to focus on an impure and a pure support.

In the beginning, it is important to train using a support. An impure support refers to any small object such as a piece of wood or a pebble, which one uses as an object of concentration. A pure support refers to a statue or relief of the Buddha, a seed syllable or the attributes of a deity etc. The manner of concentrating should be similar to the way a Brahmin twines his cord, i.e. neither too tight nor too loose.

Setting the mind without concrete support

“Without concrete supports” refers to setting the mind on individual parts; on the complete form; outwardly; and inwardly on the body and on that which depends on the body.

Once one is able to rest even slightly on a concrete support, one can proceed to meditate without concrete support, i.e. using a mental image of a statue of a deity, etc. First one concentrates on the individual parts such as the face, hands, etc.; this is known as meditation with a *partial support*. Then, having become familiar with that, one concentrates on the complete form; this is known as meditation with a *complete support*. The former and latter are summarized as follows by the master Jangchub Zangpo in *The Prerequisites for Samadhi*:

“Shamatha is classified into observation, which is directed outwards, and attainment, which is directed inwards. Observation is of two kinds; special, which refers to statues and seed syllables, and ordinary. Attainment can be either directed towards the body or towards something dependent on the body. The former is of three types: visualizing the body as a deity, as an attribute of a deity or as a skeleton etc. The latter is of five types: concentrating on the breath, on subtle parts, on bindu, on light and on joyful bliss.”

Although there are indeed many ways of enumerating objects of observation in other texts, they are all included in the two categories of with concrete support and without concrete support.

Setting the Mind in the Essential Nature

Strive to remain absorbed in the essential nature, waves of thought having dissolved into the ocean of the all-basis.

Having familiarized oneself with the methods mentioned above, one settles into the state in which all notions of subject and object are completely pacified, with no concept of a support. By this, the endless flow of thought waves is completely dissolved into the ocean of the all-basis, and one arrives at a state of absorption in the essential nature. This is ultimate shamatha, therefore, strive for it!

Excerpts on Shamatha
The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma
Volume One: The Path of Individual Liberation
By Chögyam Trungpa, Ed. Judith L. Lief

Take Your Time, pp. 191-192

In group practice, when the leader rings the gong to begin, don't mentally start to practice right away. When the gong strikes, prepare yourself and pay attention to your body. Correct your posture. Feel your breath, your lungs, your legs, and your posture. Just feel them. The gong is the signal to feel your body, your head and shoulders, and your cushion. Just feel. Having felt everything, as the sound of the gong fades, you can start working on mindfulness of your breath.

The reason you should take your time is to make everything very genuine and honest. When the gong is rung, you don't just go *bam!* into samadhi. When you sit, you have to work with your mind and body and with everything that happens, so prepare yourself. This might take as much time as counting from one to twenty-five. When you first sit down on your cushion, be kind and gentle to yourself. Be natural. Don't tell yourself, "Now I'm going to give it a go, and I'm going to do it the hard way I'm going to give myself pain." That doesn't work. When you sit down, first settle nicely on your cushion and treat yourself well. Give yourself a good time.

As the sound of the gong fades, having settled yourself on the cushion, raise your posture. Don't straighten up right at the beginning when you first sit down. You could even hunch down. Then as the sound of the gong fades away, raise yourself up so that you achieve good posture. Having done so, you can exert yourself further. Ideally, you should not have to reshuffle yourself too much as you are sitting. If you made a mistake when you first started to sit, you can correct that, but if possible don't reshuffle at all. If you take this approach, you can have a nice sitting.

When the sound of the gong has faded completely, having taken your posture, you are ready to start working with your breath. It is as if [page 192] somebody were leading you on a mountain trail on horseback and finally gave you the reins: "You have to ride your own horse. It's all yours." So first you give yourself a good time, and then you become well disciplined.

To review, first you hear the gong, then you settle, then you go out with the out-breath—*tshoo!*—then you come back to your posture. So you have the mind together with the breath, with the body as an overall reference point.

Upright Posture, pp. 193-197

In sitting practice, it is important to hold your posture. To begin with, hold your head and shoulders erect as if you were a great warrior. Have a quality of upliftedness. Then as your posture develops, think of your back. First feel your posture being supported by your head and shoulders; then you can begin to experience your lower torso. You should never slouch, siesta-style. Keep your posture clear and fresh. You should have a sense of who you actually are, without needing to ask. When you sit up, you can breathe. You can feel your head and shoulders. That becomes very powerful. It is fantastic.

Being upright brings a sense of clear perception. The ayatanas, or senses, are clarified, because most of the ayatanas are located on the upper part of your body: your eyes, nose, ears, and mouth. Upright posture also helps the spine. It clarifies depression, which is said to come from the heart and from the seventh, eighth, and ninth vertebrae, as well as the shoulder sockets. With good posture, you naturally develop your inner strength. In addition to that, with good posture, you feel uplifted and overcome [page 194] drowsiness. Posture is connected with overcoming laziness, aggression, and the desire to take time off or to escape from the dharma.

When you meditate, you should straighten your body, but not to the extent of being military in style. You can use a simple cross-legged position, a half-lotus posture. You can also kneel, using a meditation bench for support. This posture comes from the Japanese tradition. Any of those postures seem to be accurate and good. You do not need to sit in the full lotus posture, which may create problems for your feet, such as pins and needles. You can just sit cross-legged, letting your knees drop down, with your hands resting on your thighs, not too far to the front or back. If you have long legs, you may need to use a support cushion. Sometimes your hands might begin to feel as if each finger is monolithic, or you may feel that your tongue, your head, or another part of your body is extremely heavy and is pulling you down. Don't pay too much attention to any of those sensations; they will change.

[page 195] You could adjust your posture if your body feels strained. However, you should not just take any old posture, because bad posture distracts you. It destroys your natural flow of breath and it interrupts your sense of ongoing spaciousness. In turn, if your breathing becomes self-conscious, that is reflected in your posture. With bad posture, you are involved with all kinds of one-sided feelings, as opposed to having a sense of balance. So posture is important.

It is not necessary to sit on a meditation cushion. It is also possible to meditate sitting on a chair. If you have a physical problem such as a strained knee or back, or you have been injured in an accident, there is no point in straining yourself. If your body is aged and it is difficult for you to position yourself on the cushion, I would also recommend that you sit on a chair. Sitting on a chair, known as the *Maitreya* asana, is an accepted meditation posture. However, when you sit on a chair for a long time, you automatically tend to lean back. Relying on the security of the chair back is unhealthy; it leads to a strained body and a weak circulation. So it is recommended that you sit upright, without anything to lean on. In that way, your posture is both upright and self-contained. You are relating with the floor, with the earth, and you can also feel the space around your body.

An upright back is extremely good and necessary. Having an upright back is natural to the human body; slouching is unnatural. Slouching is giving in to neurosis, which we call "setting sun." By sitting upright, you are proclaiming to yourself and to the rest of the world that you are going to become buddha, or awake, one day. Uprightness comes from sitting properly on the cushion or chair. Sitting in the middle of the meditation cushion provides the possibility of holding your seat. Then, because your back is upright, your head and neck are also in the proper position. You are not shy. You do not hang your head. You are not bending to anything. Because of that, your shoulders become straight automatically. You do not need to strain yourself by pulling up with your shoulders. When your back is upright, your energy goes up, and your head and shoulders are automatically good.

Your meditation cushion should not be regarded as a diving board. If you sit perched, as if you were about to launch yourself from a diving board, then all your weight will be on your knees. You will have difficulty holding your back properly, and your spine will be strained by an [page 196] unnecessary bend, which will lead to pain and soreness in your shoulder blades and neck. Consequently, you cannot breathe properly. So it will be helpful if you do not perch on your cushion. Putting your cushion between your legs and riding on it is also not acceptable. Riding on your cushion, like riding a toy horse on the merry-go-round, has an infantile quality. You should assume some kind of dignity, rather than always trying to accommodate yourself.

Your posture is the saving grace in synchronizing your mind and body. If you don't have good posture, you can never do anything. You become like a lame horse trying to pull a cart. You should sit like the Buddha sits. The Buddha does not sit on the edge of his seat; he sits in the middle. When you begin to do that, you feel better. A square cushion, or gomden, is much better designed for sitting in this way than a round cushion, or zafu. With a gomden, you have your own seat, just as the Buddha had his seat under the bodhi tree. You are like the Buddha.

Sitting in the middle of the cushion is comparable to riding a horse. In dressage, you sit in the center of your saddle. Your legs are slightly bent so that your shoulders are aligned with your legs, and you are in a perfect, perpendicular, upright posture. The idea is that you should hold your seat, just like the Buddha on his lotus cushion. I have often noticed that instead of holding their seat, students follow a kind of orthotics approach. If you have a defect in your feet, you can go to a special shoemaker who takes a cast of your feet and makes special shoes for you. If your foot is tilted or you have a bad heel, the shoemaker can adjust your shoes so that you will be able to walk naturally. However, a meditation cushion is not at all like such a shoe. It is designed for people who can hold their seat and sit properly.*

The point of good posture is to enable you to feel your whole system together at once: your body, your head, your neck, your mouth, your belly. All your systems are there fully. You are sitting on the cushion or chair as one unit, one piece, as if you were a well-carved statue of the Buddha. Even on the ordinary physical level, you feel that you are doing the practice fully and properly. You are right there, with your spine in its proper place. The tip of your tongue is lifted to rest behind the upper front teeth. Your eyes are cast slightly down but not closed; and because [page 197] of your posture, your breathing is regulated. You are paying attention to your shoulders, and your abdomen is in the right place, not bulged out or sucked in. There is a sense of straightforwardness, which stems from your backbone, your general posture, and your hips being in the proper place on your cushion.

Although posture is important, the Theravada and Tibetan traditions put less emphasis on the posture than the Japanese tradition, which takes it very literally. As Westerners, you could develop a middle way. The merit of being Westerners is that you have access to all the traditions and disciplines. However, if you get carried away, you could get caught up in spiritual materialism, the fascination with spiritual attainment and the exotic cultural trappings of the East. So you have to pay attention and remind yourself that you are meditating in your own society and culture, not somewhere else.

The meditation posture is quite universal. It is not particularly Buddhist. You can see this posture, this royal pose, in Egyptian sculptures and in South American pottery. It is not mystical or magical. The idea is to be a complete human being. In order to imitate the Buddha, you start with posture.

General Guidelines for Meditation Practice, pp. 197-200

* * Trungpa Rinpoche himself needed to wear orthotic shoes, which he called "space shoes," due to injuries he had suffered in an automobile accident.

It is important to begin by taking a proper upright posture. Having done so, you can establish a firm foundation for meditation practice by following a few simple guidelines.

HAVING A SENSE OF SPACE. When you sit, having some room above your head is very helpful. You shouldn't feel cramped, but that you have room to expand. If you have hallucinations, you could come back to your body. You do not have to develop visionary samsaric recreation; instead, you can refer back to the body and to your posture. Having done so, you can let go and breathe out. And as you do so, you could try to relax—not by slouching, but by being on the dot.

RELAXING THE GAZE. In the meditation posture, you are being there properly, fully present. Therefore, your eyes are open and your gaze is down. Traditionally, the Buddhist scriptures say that your gaze should rest on the [page 198] floor in front of you at a distance the length of an ox's yoke, which would be two to three yards. Often it has been taught that you should gaze down the line of your nose, but I suppose that depends on how big your nose is. The point is just to gaze down. At the same time, you try to keep your posture and gently go out with your breath.

PLACING THE HANDS. You can hold the hands in the “cosmic mudra” or rest them on your knees in the “relaxing-the-mind mudra.” Both are acceptable. For the cosmic mudra, you rest your arms on your thighs, and place your hands one on top of the other, palms facing up. You relax your thumbs and fingers, and raise your thumbs to form a circle, but with your thumb tips slightly apart. You do not need to hold your hands above your thighs, which puts a strain on your arms and shoulders. You also should not hold your hands together tightly, but rest your hands on one another, with your thumbs just about to meet. In that way, your thumbs can remain quite steady. The idea is that if you have a good seat, you could relax your hands.

[page 199] The hand position I usually suggest is the relaxing-the-mind mudra, in which you rest your hands on your knees. It is a much more royal posture, and a somewhat tantric position. This mudra is also called the “double earth-witnessing mudra.” It is a good one. When the Buddha was asked who had witnessed his attainment of enlightenment, he said, “The earth is my witness. I sat on this earth; I practiced on this earth.” Then with one hand he touched the earth as his witness, using the “earth-touching mudra.” Here, since both hands are resting on the knees, it is the double earth-witnessing mudra. You could use either the cosmic mudra or the double earth-witnessing mudra. Overall, the particular mudra or posture is not as important as the totality, or sense of unity. In meditation, you don't do just any old thing, but there is a sense of balance.

BREATHING THROUGH BOTH NOSE AND MOUTH. When you sit, you should keep your mouth open a little, as if you were saying “Ah.” You should not restrict your breathing to your nostrils, but provide a space so that the [page 200] out-breath comes from both your nostrils and your mouth. In particular, people with sinus problems would have difficulty meditating if they had to close their mouths.

TAKING YOUR SEAT AND PROJECTING OUT. When you are meditating, you are trying to mimic, or emulate, the Buddha. You should have a sense of openness and uprightness. You should feel that you are projecting out, as if you were a universal monarch or the Enlightened One. You should also learn to listen to dharma talks in this way. You don't have to stick your neck out and strain to look at the teacher, but you can hold your posture and keep your neck flexible. Every time you sit, you could project out in that way; not only in the formal meditation practice of relating with yourself and your mind, but also in everyday life.

When you sit, you do not have to become ego-centered, thinking that you are going to attain enlightenment in a couple of months or at least at some time in your life. You do not have to be that corny. However, you could develop ambition and real discipline. In doing so, posture plays an extremely important part. So before you begin any session of sitting practice, you should check your shoulders, your head, your neck, and your back; you should feel your hands on your knees. The minute you sit down, you could check through all that very quickly. This is not a trip, it is not body building; it is very simple. Each session of sitting should begin in that same way, by checking your posture, and after walking meditation, you create your posture again.

Breathing Out, pp. 201-202

As you meditate, your breath is going in and out. You may have ideas about your breath or think there is some problem with the way you are breathing, but you should just try to go along with the breath you have. It is important to breathe normally. Your breath will be affected by your posture, by exercise, or by whether you had a heavy meal or a light meal. Your breathing is also affected by your vision. If your vision is too focused, for instance, your breathing will begin to pick up. Along with that will come sudden discursive thoughts: sexual fantasies, aggressive fantasies, all sorts of fantasies. So it is better not to focus your vision, but to let your vision rest. Even if your breathing is affected by such things, you still should not force yourself to breathe in a certain way, but let your breath flow naturally. And if your breathing happens to be fast, you should give it time to settle.

In meditation practice, you place your attention on the out-breath. As you are breathing, you just go out with the breath and the breath dissolves. As you breathe in,

you wait, and then go out again. It is very natural and very slow. When thoughts come up, you label them “thinking,” and return to the breath. You have to be very precise about the whole thing; you can’t miss an inch. You should not think twice, thinking that you are thinking “thinking.” It has to be right on the dot. When you breathe, you are utterly there, properly there; as you breathe out, you dissolve or diffuse. Then you come back to your posture, and you are ready for another out-breath. Over and over you come back to your posture, breathe out, and come back again. It is quite hard work. As the breath dissolves, it is becoming less important. As your breath goes out and begins to reach beyond you, there is space. You just keep breathing out and dissolving; breathing in just happens. So it is out . . . rest . . . out . . . rest. You don’t use any tricks; you just put an emphasis on out. And while you are practicing, you should not think about what you’re going to get out of meditation. You just do it.

Learning How to Let Go, pp. 202-203

As you practice, you should keep it very simple. After each breath goes out, there is a gap—not a big drop, just a gap. That gap could be felt. You might feel it as a moment of waiting, or expectation, or being ready for the next out-breath. As you breathe out, ideally about twenty-five percent of your awareness is on the out-breath. Beyond that, you don't need to be aware of anything—there is simply a gap—then you breathe out again. If you do not scheme, but just sit and follow your breath, that makes life very simple.

The sitting practice of meditation is basically: out-breath. . . dissolve . . . gap; out-breath . . . dissolve . . . gap; out-breath . . . dissolve . . . gap. Keep it at that level. If any jolt takes place, it is usually due to your posture, so your posture has to be extremely good. If your out-breath doesn’t quite dissolve, it isn’t quite out-breath; so each time you breathe, your practice has to be precise—very simple, very direct, and very accurate. When you breathe out, you do so with some tension or tautness. You look at your breath, but you do not use it as a means of achieving absorption. Sounds, temperature, the feeling of your clothes, the food you might or might not have in your stomach, all sorts of pains in your joints, your back, your neck, and your arms—you could regard all those as thoughts. It is all thinking.

The out-breath is connected with the idea of letting go. You are always breathing out. When you talk, you breathe out; when you eat, you breathe out. Breathing out is not gymnastics, but simply learning how to [page 203] let go. You develop mindfulness as you let go. Mindfulness is in jeopardy when you are busy projecting toward something, or when your mind is distracted because you are trying to make sense of something as you are breathing out.

In meditation practice, you are in the process of developing action along with nonaction as you begin to touch the world. When you meditate, you have mindfulness of the breathing going out, then you cut that; then you have another mindfulness of the breathing going out, and you cut that. In other words, you go out with the transport—and suddenly you have no transport! Then you start again. In that way, the gap of the inbreath becomes extremely spacious. By focusing on the out-breath, your practice is not based on the ongoing speed of out-and-in, out-and-in, all the time. Instead, a leap is involved, a miniature leap. It takes a little effort, but you could feel very refreshed.

If you follow both the in-breath and the out-breath, you are being too faithful. The whole thing becomes very linear: you go out and you come in; you go out and you come in. If you go out and come in again and again, in the end that makes you very heady. You have no rest, and everything is extremely hard work. In contrast, when you go out, then nothing happens; then you go out again, and nothing happens—it is very clean-cut. The out-breath is threatening in a sense, but focusing on the out-breath is a much freer approach. If you allow yourself a rest as you breathe in, the out-breathing becomes more of a journey, however short that journey may be. You simply go out with the breath. When you do so, the body becomes insignificant, and space and breathing become more important. In fact, the breath is the most important part of the practice. Thoughts come up with the sense of body, the sense of “me” being here. However, if there is no central authority, if your practice is purely activity in space, thoughts become transparent.

Light Touch, pp. 203-204

As you breathe, you should not try to reach perfect breathing; you just breathe. Even animals can do that. Breathing obviously comes from your lungs and your nose, but if you are just feeling the breathing coming out of your nostrils, you are not feeling where it actually begins and how it flows. At first, your sense of the breathing may be very general and vague, but as your mindfulness of breathing continues, you experience the whole [page 204] process very specifically. There is a pattern as your breathing goes out, a sense of it really happening, so you do not have to focus on your nostrils. It is like hearing a noise: when you hear a noise, a sound traveling through space, you can relate with the sound rather than having to relate with your ears.

The practice of shamatha is environmental as well as technique oriented. In shamatha practice, a twenty-five-percent touch of awareness on the breath seems to be about right. In any case, you can't do more than that. Because you keep your eyes open, you see things; your ears are not clogged, so you hear things. You are aware of the way your clothes feel and of the temperature in the room. You are aware of your stomach being full or empty. If you took a shower before sitting, you feel clean. You feel your hairdo

and the spectacles you are wearing. You feel whether your mouth is dry or wet. There are all sorts of little sensations like that, which leaves only about twenty-five percent of your awareness left for working with your breath.

That is a natural situation. You exist as a human being, and your sense perceptions are operating everywhere all the time. The idea of shamatha is to narrow all that down into twenty-five-percent awareness of the breath as a way of training yourself. You are internalizing a little, as opposed to trying to cast off the sights you see, the sounds you hear, the smells you smell, and the tastes you taste, and the physical sensations you experience. During your sitting practice, you reduce all that into the breath, which will be about twenty-five percent of your attention, if you calculate scientifically how much is going on in your body. You might as well come back to the breath. It is more joyful, more wholesome, and you don't have to be startled by anything. In shamatha, you are bringing the rest of the things going on in your existence back to one particular thing: the breath. It is very simple.

Cool Boredom, pp. 205-206

Mindfulness of breathing is a way of creating obstacles to subconscious dreams and mental activities. The technique of mindfulness of breathing should provide obstacles. It is a nuisance that you have to keep hassling back to the breath. However, unless you are able to do that efficiently, you will not get properly bored, and if you do not get properly bored, you will not be in tune with the power of the practice. Everything may be happening very smoothly on the surface level, but you are not in tune with the magic of meditation practice or the spiritual energy of the lineage. Boredom is important because boredom is anti-credentialed, anti-entertainment— and as we develop greater psychological sophistication, we [page 206] begin to appreciate such boredom. It becomes cool and refreshing, like a mountain river. That very real and genuine boredom, or “cool boredom,” plays an extremely important role. In fact, we could quite simply say that the barometer of our accomplishment in meditation practice is how much boredom we create for ourselves. Cool boredom is rather light boredom: it has its uneasy quality, but at the same time it is not a big deal. Cool boredom is simply another expression of the experience of well-being. Cool boredom is like what mountains experience. With cool boredom, thought processes become less entertaining—they become transparent. Cool boredom is hopelessness at its most absolute level.

27 Labeling Thoughts, pp. 207-211

The thinking process takes place all the time. That is everybody's problem. In order to solve that particular problem, you have to discover what goes on in your mind. It is very direct and personal. In sitting practice, you spend at least eighty percent of your practice

dealing with thoughts, but that does not mean you are being extraordinarily naughty or terrible. Even if you are so completely occupied with your thoughts that you do not have much time left to work with the technique, don't think you are being bad. You should feel grateful that your sitting practice is not one-hundred-percent thoughts! Eighty-percent thoughts is pretty good, so don't punish yourself. You are not doing anything wrong and you are not committing any sin.

In meditation practice, you regard everything that takes place in your mind—every little detail, every little explosion—as thinking. You are not trying to separate thoughts from emotions. If you feel angry at somebody; if you have a sudden burst of passion, your own private porn show; if you are going through cookbooks and visualizing beautiful food or drink; if you are on the coast swimming in the ocean or walking barefoot along the seashore—all those little outbursts of anger or passion are regarded as just thinking. Metaphysical dialogues or debates, evaluations of art and [208] music, questions of reality and enlightenment, ideas of mathematics and science, ideas of love and friendship—all those philosophical questions that come into your head are regarded as just thinking. Even if you have very dedicated thoughts or dharmic thoughts, they are still regarded as just thinking.

Regarding emotions as thoughts may seem dry, but when you have a strong thought it involves your whole being. For example, if you are in a battlefield, you can be shot to death by an enemy sniper at any time. That is a thought, but a very real thought. You think that to your right and to your left, your friends are turning into corpses instantaneously, and since you are standing in the middle you too could be a corpse pretty soon. Those are really strong thoughts. However, although such thoughts have some reference point of reality, they are still thoughts. Even when you take action, it is your thoughts that drive you into action. For instance, driving manuals talk about having a thinking distance, a braking distance, and a stopping distance. When a car in front of you stops, first you think about stopping, then you step on the brake, and finally you actually stop. It always works like that.

You might think you are making a breakthrough this very moment and that you are just about to dissolve into space. You might think you are going to kill your mother or father on the spot because you are so upset with them. You might think you are going to make love to somebody who is extraordinarily lovable. You might think you are about to have such a fantastic affair that it could exhaust the whole universe. You might have a thought of assassinating your guru, or you might want to make lemon juice and eat cookies. A large range of thinking goes on, but in terms of sitting practice, it does not matter whether you have monstrous thoughts or benevolent thoughts, sinful or virtuous thoughts—any thought is just thinking. So please don't be shocked by your thoughts, and don't think that any thought deserves a gold medal.

You do not need pigeonholes for all the concepts that arise. It doesn't make any difference whether you have good thoughts or bad thoughts, whether you think that you are the Buddha himself or you think you are in the realm of hell. It is all just thinking. Thoughts arise all the time. If you have a hierarchical bureaucracy in which every thought pattern that occurs in the mind is labeled as good or bad, all kinds of problems develop. When you feel hurt, you think about that; when you feel good, you think about that.

In the Buddhist approach, doubt is just a thought. Doubt could be said to be a powerful thought, but it is still a thought. You may have doubt as to whether doubt is a thought or not, but that doubt itself is a thought. Guilt is also just a thought. You do not try to get rid of guilt, and you do not try to feel that you are doing something worthwhile. If you have a guilty thought, so what? It is a thought. It is your mind.

In shamatha, you have to look at such thoughts, but not because they have a case history. It is like seeing rain, snow, a hailstorm, or a cloudy day—it's all just weather. This might seem too easy, but it is very useful to look at things in this way. We usually do not do so, however. If you are extremely angry with somebody and your wife comes along and tells you, "Darling, this is just your thought," then you get angry with her as well! You scream, "It's not just my thought! He did something wrong to me, and I am extremely angry. I want to kill him!" But we have to give up that idea. It seems to be a big thing to give up, but your wife is right—it is a thought.

We have to accept that all experiences are just thought patterns. Buddha said that when a musician plays a stringed instrument, both the strings and his fingers are his mind. According to Buddhist psychology, there are fifty-two different types of thought processes. Some are pious, some are political, some are domestic, some are sensible. But all of them are just thoughts. As far as meditators are concerned, that is the key. With that key, you begin to find that you can handle life as it happens around you. With so many pigeonholes, you cannot handle the whole thing. But once you begin to realize that everything is thought process, you can handle your life because nothing is complicated. Everything is thought.

The traditional technique for dealing with all those mental activities is mentally to note them and label them "thinking." Inevitably, once you are settled into your practice—*bing!*—there will be a thought. At that point you say "thinking," not out loud but mentally. Labeling thoughts in that way will give you tremendous leverage to come back to your breath. When a thought takes you over completely, so that you are not even on the cushion but somewhere else—in San Francisco or New York City—as soon as you notice, you say "thinking" and bring yourself back to the breath. You don't regard

yourself as good or bad. You are just you, thinking and coming back to the breath. You are not trying to push thoughts away, nor are you trying to cultivate them. You are just labeling them [page 210] “thinking.” No matter what thought comes up, don’t panic; just label it “thinking”—stop—and go back to your breath.

By labeling thoughts “thinking,” you are simply seeing them and acknowledging them as they are. You acknowledge everything as thoughts, as the thinking process, and come back to the technique. Labeling practice has to become instinctual. You can talk to yourself, but that is a second-rate experience, arising out of extreme boredom. It is not necessary to verbalize. Rather than saying, “Now I should get back to the breath,” just come back! There has to be some abruptness. Introductory remarks as to what you are going to do are a waste of time.

Coming back to your breath is not regarded as suppression; it is returning to where you began. Your work has been interrupted, so you are coming back to it. It is as if you were chopping wood, then your friend came along and you got involved in a conversation. You tell your friend, “I must get back to work,” rather than “I must suppress our conversation.” You don’t come back to the breath because things are becoming unpleasant, or use coming back to the breath as a protection or shield. At the shamatha level, whether a thought is unpleasant or pleasant doesn’t really matter. You just label it “thinking,” and come back to the breath.

If you seem to be working with the breathing and having thoughts at the same time, that means you are unable to identify completely with your breath. There is some deception in thinking that you can work with the thoughts and the breath at the same time. If a thought occurs along with the breathing, you are thinking; if a sense perception such as hearing occurs, you are thinking. You cannot hear without thinking. If you hear a sound, you know which kind of sound it is, whether it is music or a gunshot. You cannot hear without categorizing, so you are still thinking. Everything is thinking. It goes on everywhere continually. We have not yet come to any conclusion as to whose fault that is. Instead, we just label everything “thinking,” as in “I think I have a mosquito on my face.”

Meditation practice is very simple and straightforward. Don’t try to make a big game out of it. If you keep it simple, there is no confusion. While you are practicing, you should not think about what you are going to get out of it. You just do it. Also, unless it is practically necessary, it is very important not to think about what you are going to do after meditating. You should just settle down into the practice.

Everything that comes up in your mind is just thought process. It is thinking. Thinking might bring something else—nonthinking—but we [page 211] are a long way from

experiencing that. As far as the hinayana is concerned, no mahayana exists. Everything is hinayana, the narrow path. In shamatha practice, you regard everything as thought. When you sit, you should think, "There are no nonthoughts." Even techniques are thoughts. That is straight shamatha, without soda and ice.

Touch and Go, pp. 212-213

The attitude that brings about the possibility of mindfulness is mind's awareness of itself. Your mind is aware of itself, which means that you are aware that you are aware. Mindfulness is based on a sense of being and individuality. It is not mechanical. As an individual person, you relate with what is happening around you. We could use the phrase "touch and go." You touch or contact the experience of actually being there, then you let go. That touch-and-go process applies to your awareness of your breath and also to your awareness of day-to-day living. Touch is the sense of existence, that you are who you are. You have a certain name and you feel a certain way when you sit on the cushion. You feel that you actually exist. It doesn't take too much encouragement to develop that kind of attitude. You have a sense that you are there and you are sitting. That is the touch part. The go part is that you do not hang on to that. You do not sustain your sense of being, but you let go of it.

When you touch, you should experience that thoroughly, two hundred percent rather than one hundred percent. If you are committed two hundred percent, which is more than normal, you have a chance to let go, and you might end up experiencing one hundred percent. However, if you hang on to that awareness, touch becomes grasping. So you touch and go. You do not try to experience the whole thing, but you just let go of yourself completely, halfway through the experience. The approach of touch and go is not so much trying to experience, but trying to be.

Experience is not particularly important. Experience always comes up as long as you touch. But you don't hang on to your experience; you let it go. You intentionally disown it. That seems to be the basic point of touch and go. Clinging to experience reminds me of the pain of having a tick on the neck: if the tick gets too fat, it will die on your body, so you have to pull it out in order to save its life. Our state of mind is like a tick that doesn't have an outlet and always bottles things up. If we cling to experience constantly and don't let go, we are going to be gigantic, enormous. If we bottle up everything within ourselves, we cannot even move! We cannot play with life anymore because we are so fat.

Acknowledging States of Mind, pp. 213-214

A further touch is necessary. Touch is not simply the general awareness of being. It also applies to mindfulness of your individual states of mind. That is, your mental state of aggression or lust also has to be touched. Such states have to be acknowledged. However, you do not just acknowledge them and push them off. You need to look at them without suppression or shying away. In that way, you actually have the experience of being utterly [page 214] aggressive or utterly lustful. You don't just politely say, "Hi, good-bye. It's nice seeing you again, but I want to get back to my breath." That would be like meeting an old friend and saying, "Excuse me, I have to catch the train and make my next appointment." Such an approach is somewhat deceptive. In shamatha, you don't just sign off. You acknowledge what is happening and you look at it.

The basic point of shamatha is not to give yourself an easy time so you can escape the embarrassing, unpleasant, or self-conscious moments of your life, whether they arise as painful memories of the past, painful experiences of the present, or painful future prospects. When such thoughts arise, you could experience them, look at them, and then come back to your breath. This is extremely important.

It is possible to twist the logic, and relate to meditating and coming back to the breath as a way of avoiding problems, but such avoidance is itself a problem. You might feel good that you are sanctioned by the Buddha and you have the technique of mindfulness, which is extremely kosher, good, sensible, and real. You might think that you don't have to pay attention to all those little embarrassments that happen in your life; instead, you could regard them as unimportant and come back to the breath. However, in doing so, you are patching over your problems. You are bottling them up and keeping them as your family heirloom. Since this kind of attitude can develop, it is very important to look at those embarrassments and then come back to the breath. However, in doing so, there is no implication that if you do look at them, that is going to be freedom or the end of the game.

Your greatest problem is not that you are an aggressive or lusty person. The problem is that you would like to bottle those things up and put them aside. You have become an expert in deception. Meditation practice is supposed to uncover any attempts to develop a more subtle, sophisticated form of deception. It is important to realize that basic point and to work with it. So you should experience your aggressive thoughts; you should look at them. This does not mean that you are going to execute those thoughts. In fact, we do not execute more than five or ten percent of our thoughts, including our dreams, so there is a big gap. When you do act, unless you have looked at such thoughts, you will not act properly. However, if you look at your aggressive thoughts, you do not usually put them into practice, but they dwindle.

Pagyö: A Residue of Mindfulness, 257-258

The result of shamatha practice is *pagyö*, a residue of mindfulness. *Pag* means “residue,” and *yö* means “possessing”; so *pagyö* means “possessing residue.” *Pagyö* is also translated as “conscientiousness” or “being heedful.” *Pag* refers to deposits of little fungi found on rocks. In Tibet, we used these fungi, which are sometimes orange or red, and sometimes yellow or jade green, to color our *tormas*, or ritual cakes.

Residues are produced when what you experience on the spot is confirmed by your previous experience. Residues are partly a matter of memory, and partly a matter of what you are presently experiencing. Having such residues gives you something to connect with. Based on your experience of this world, you always have a residue of something or other. When you look at red, you have a residue of red, and when you look at white, you have a residue of white. Such residues enter into your system, [page 257] and those inputs should be acknowledged. Then you can begin to see things as they are. It’s very basic.

The point of mindfulness is not to be aware of possible dangers, or to watch out in case something might go wrong. Mindfulness means being there on the spot, along with your residue. If somebody attracts your attention by saying, “Look out!” or “Look at this!” you do not have to be cautious; you could just look. You could raise your eyebrows and say, “What’s going on?” You could be mildly attentive and inquisitive.

Sometimes *pagyö* is described as the gaze of an elephant. An elephant is not usually easy to startle. If you make a loud noise or if you throw a firecracker in front of an elephant, it just looks around. It has that “So what?” kind of approach. An elephant doesn’t get excited. Likewise, *pagyö* is tentative but highly keen. You cannot be startled and you do not panic—you just have a residue of mindfulness. *Pagyö* is also referred to as *decorum*. Since you have developed perspective, sophistication, and subtlety, you are aware of what is going on. *Pagyö* is a very positive idea.

Tren-She: Recollection and Knowing, pp. 258-259

From mindfulness also stems *trenpa*, or “recollection,” and *sheshin*, or “knowing.” *Trenpa* can also mean “wakefulness.” With *trenpa*, you are fully there, but you are not particularly overwhelmed by anything. *Trenpa* is a process of discovery in which you are touched precisely, rather than being overwhelmed by emotions or excitement. In the process of *trenpa*, you make very precise discoveries about yourself constantly.

With *trenpa* you have some kind of memory or recollection, and *sheshin* is a check on those recollections. *She* means “knowing,” and *shin* means “as it is”; so *sheshin* means “knowing as it is.” *Sheshin* is the kind of knowledge that makes you feel at home in the

world, rather than regarding the world as a strange place and not knowing how to handle it. Sheshin functions within the environment of trenpa. Once you have a memory, you check it with what is happening in the present. It's like renting a car: if you rent a new car, you automatically refresh your memory of how to drive; you check out the gearshift, the brakes, the lights, and the steering wheel. Trenpa is the possibility of working with what is happening, and sheshin is actually dealing with what is happening.

[page 259] The main point of trenpa and sheshin is that a sense of knowing, or seeing, always happens. If you are willing to acknowledge its existence, there is the potential of being wakeful, open, and precisely there constantly. This is not based on being a sharp person, a smart person, or a very careful person. Rather, it is about being a person who can actually be—by yourself, very simply. In our lineage, one example of such a person was His Holiness the sixteenth Gyalwa Karmapa. It may be rare, but it is possible that one could be, and at the same time act.

The combination of trenpa and sheshin, of recollection and knowing, is called tren-she. Tren-she is the kind of recollection that connects the past and the present together. For instance, you may remember that if you step in a puddle with your shoes on, it is likely that the water will run into your shoes, and your socks will get wet and dirty. It is something you have done before; therefore, you know what's going to happen if you do it again. The traditional analogy for tren-she is that of a warning, but I would like to correct that analogy. Tren-she does not simply mean being warned about something bad—it is realizing that you should be on the dot.

Tren-she is not concentrated awareness; it is a more general sense of awareness. For instance, if you are wearing a bright red coat, you are aware of the redness and brightness around you, and whether your coat is made of wool or cotton. Likewise, you are aware of your posture, your head and shoulders, and whether you are wearing your glasses or not, a watch or not, stockings or no stockings. That intrinsic awareness we always generate is like antennae. We know that “I have a beard” or “I have earrings on” or “I have a safety pin in my trousers to hold them up.” We are aware of things of that nature, beyond simply being aware of the in-breath and out-breath.

With tren-she, you know what you know and what you have without being told. It is almost at the level of clairvoyance. For example, you may get a sudden flash that your father is in trouble, and it turns out to be true. That sense of tren-she is the very early stage of the development of superconsciousness or clairvoyance. However, you should be very careful about such things. You might have an image of your father falling down and find out that he is perfectly well and happy in Miami Beach! So things could be other than you think. Nonetheless, when tren-she takes place on the spot in your existence, you simply know. Tren-she allows you to be very sensitive and very precise.

Mahasatipatthana Sutta

The Greater Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness

The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Digha Nikaya

Translated from the Pali by Maurice Walshe, pp. 335-336

Thus have I heard. Once the Lord was staying among the Kurus. There is a market-town of theirs called Kammasadhamma. And there the Lord addressed the monks: 'Monks!' 'Lord', they replied, and the Lord said: 'There is, monks, this one way to the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and distress, for the disappearance of pain and sadness, for the gaining of the right path, for the realization of Nibbana - that is to say the four foundations of mindfulness.

'What are the four? Here, monks, a monk abides contemplating body as body, **ardent, clearly aware and mindful**, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world; he abides contemplating feelings as feelings, ... ; he abides contemplating mind as mind, ... ; he abides contemplating mind-objects as mind-objects, ardent, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside hankering and fretting for the world.'

'And how, monks, does a monk abide contemplating the body as body? Here a monk, having gone into the forest, or to the root of a tree, or to an empty place, sits down cross-legged, holding his body erect, having established mindfulness before him. Mindfully he breathes in, mindfully he breathes out. Breathing in a long breath, he knows that he breathes in a long breath, and breathing out a long breath, he knows that he breathes out a long breath. Breathing in a short breath, he knows that he breathes in a short breath, and breathing out a short breath, he knows that he breathes out a short breath. He trains himself, thinking: "I will breathe in, conscious of the whole body." He trains himself, thinking: "I will breathe out, conscious of the whole body." He trains himself, thinking: "I will breathe in, calming the whole bodily process. He trains himself, thinking: "I will breathe out, calming the whole bodily process." Just as a skilled turner, or his assistant, in making a long turn, knows that he is making a long turn or in making a short turn, knows that he is making a short turn, so too a monk, in breathing in a long breath, knows that he breathes in a long breath ... and so trains himself, thinking: "I will breathe out, calming the whole bodily process." '

'So he abides contemplating body as body internally, contemplating body as body externally, contemplating body as body both internally and externally. He abides contemplating arising phenomena in the body, he abides contemplating vanishing phenomena in the body, he abides contemplating both arising and vanishing phenomena in the body. Or else, mindfulness that "there is body" is present to him just to the extent necessary for knowledge and awareness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. And that, monks, is how a monk abides contemplating body as body.'

The Three Qualities of Shamatha
From *Comments on Longchenpa's Final Testament, Immaculate Light*
In *The Fearless Lion's Roar: Profound Instructions on Dzogchen, the Great*
***Perfection*, by Nyoshul Khenpo Jamyang Dorje**
Translated by David Christensen, pp. 39

The subsequent verses teach us how to meditate with mindfulness (dran pa), attentiveness (shayzhin; shes bzhin), and conscientiousness (bag yod).

Mindfulness, moreover, is like a virtuous hook
That catches the crazed rampant elephant of the mind,
Leading it away from all faults and toward what is virtuous.
Rely on this from now on!

Attentiveness is like an undistracted watchman
Who affords the thief of nonvirtue no opportunity,
And protects the supreme wealth of virtue.
Let your mind rely on it with certainty from now on!

Conscientiousness is like a well-constructed moat,
Which prevents brigand bands of afflictive emotions from striking.
It leads an army to victory over the foes of karma.
Strive to guard your mind from now on!

We must keep the virtuous practices of love, compassion, rejoicing, and so forth, in our minds. Mindfulness is like a hook that can subdue the wild elephant of mind, and attentiveness is like a guard who protects the wealth of our virtuous practice. So we should never separate from them. In essence, we must always practice with mindfulness, attentiveness, and conscientiousness.

How to Sustain the Meditation with Three Qualities
From *Moonbeams of Mahāmudrā*
By Dakpo Tashi Namgyal, Trs. by Elizabeth M. Callahan, pp. 307-312

**A General Discussion of How to Sustain [Meditation] with Mindfulness,
Alertness, and Conscientiousness**

[page 307] All occasions of meditation should involve resting with mindfulness, alertness, and conscientiousness, as is said in the sūtras:

[page 308] If you always turn to mindfulness and alertness, you will not be affected by mistaken notions.

The *Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* advises:

To those who wish to protect their mind
I say: guard your mindfulness and alertness
even if it comes down to your life.
Vow to do that.

Mindfulness. This is the mental state of not forgetting the object for practice. Here it is [specifically] the mental formation that guards against unvirtue and engages in virtue, as the *Sūtra of the Questions of Ratnacūda* teaches:

Mindfulness does not allow any mental afflictions to arise. Mindfulness does not give the work of māras any chances. Mindfulness does not go down bad paths or misleading paths. Mindfulness does not act like a door opening the possibilities for unvirtuous minds or mental events. That is true mindfulness.

Mindfulness has many divisions. The *Compendium of Dharma Sūtra* describes the mindfulness that is part of the path to awakening and its enumerations:

What is true mindfulness on the path to awakening? It is the mindfulness that realizes phenomena. It is what discerns phenomena. It is that which analyzes phenomena. It accompanies phenomena. It reflects upon phenomena. It considers phenomena. That mindfulness realizes the characteristics belonging to each and every phenomenon.

The *Sūtra of the Questions of Aksayamati* discusses the distinctions of the true mindfulness on the path of noble ones:

What is true mindfulness? It is the mindfulness that rests closely with something. It is unshakeable, straightforward, and does not vacillate. It sees the shortcomings that flaw samsāra. It leads to [page 309] the path that connects with nirvāna. What is mindful, sound, and does not forget the noble path is called “true mindfulness.”

Furthermore, the *Compendium of Dharma Sūtra* presents the bodhisattva’s foundation of mindfulness:

Child of good family, what is the bodhisattvas’ foundation of mindfulness? What is mindfulness? What is the abode of mindfulness? I will answer those questions. Child of good family, mindfulness is the bodhisattvas' recognition that phenomena are unborn. Bodhisattvas have the aspiration to know the unborn. Their mindfulness is fully trained through their recognition of the unborn. Always imperturbable, their mindfulness is unwavering. Its depth and limits are unfathomable. It is hard for the worldly, śrāvakas, and pratyekabuddhas to comprehend.

Although there are many such enumerations, what is relevant now [is to mention] the following [three types of mindfulness]. There is the mindfulness [or recollection] that looks to the past, as presented in the *Four Hundred Verses*:

Things seen do not reappear
and [their perceiving] mind does not arise again.
Thus what is called mindfulness [or recollection]
is simply being deceived about a deceptive object.

Dharmakīrti refers to the mindfulness that apprehends by linking previous and latter [moments]:

That which is other than the deluded sense [consciousnesses]
and, linking entities together,
doesn't identify them as separate is deluded:
that is mindfulness, which is conceptual.

The higher abhidharma [that is, the *Compendium of Abhidharma*] explains the particular mindfulness that ascertains objects:

[page 310] What is mindfulness? It is not forgetting a familiar object. Its function is to be undistracted.

Among those three, the first two are conceptual mindfulness and, therefore, are necessary during investigation and analysis. They are, however, to be abandoned during meditative equipoise. The latter is described as the mindfulness that is practiced during śamatha and, thus, is the mindfulness that is definitely necessary during meditative equipoise.

[Alertness]. On the basis of that [mindfulness], we examine the conduct of our three doors and give rise to the alertness that differentiates the bases to be adopted or rejected. The *Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* teaches:

When mindfulness sits at the mind's door
for the sake of guarding it,
alertness will come.

It also provides a definition of alertness:

Repeatedly examine
the condition of your body and mind.
That alone sums up the definition
of what it means to protect alertness.

Here it is important to cultivate primarily the mindfulness and alertness that sustain the abiding state of mind and that properly undertake abandoning and adopting during enhancing conduct. Lacking such mindfulness and alertness is problematic, as the *Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* explains:

Those whose minds are devoid of alertness
may listen, reflect, and meditate,
and yet, like water leaking out from a cracked vase,
none of it remains in their memory.

Those who have studied, who have faith,
and much perseverance,
[page 311] but who are flawed by a lack of alertness,
will be stained by downfalls.

The thief “no alertness”
shadows diminished mindfulness.
Like a thief stealing any merit we have amassed,
it sends us to the negative states.

[Conscientiousness]. Those with that type of mindfulness and alertness develop

conscientiousness. The essence of conscientiousness is that it protects our mind from afflictive phenomena and enables us to fully practice worldly and transcendent virtues. The *Sūtra on the Inconceivable Secret Teachings of the Tathāgatas* says:

Conscientiousness disciplines our mind, protects others' minds, dispels our predilection for the mental afflictions, and arouses our delight in the dharma.

It continues:

To be conscientious is to be without improper thoughts and without thoughts involving unvirtuous and evil qualities.

The *Moon Lamp Sūtra* teaches:

The root of all the qualities said to be virtuous—ethical discipline, listening, giving, and patience—is conscientiousness. The Sugata called it “the bestower of treasure.”

The *Letter to a Friend* says:

Miserliness, deceitfulness, idleness, overt pride, desire, aggression, and being inflated about your family, looks, learning, youth, or power should be seen as your enemies.

The Muni declared conscientiousness to be the source of amṛta and its lack, the abode of death.

[page 312] Therefore, be conscientious continuously and with respect so that your virtuous qualities may increase.

On the basis of those approaches there are the following sayings in the teachings of the practice lineage that we should know:

- Revulsion is the foot or owner of meditation.
- Devotion is the head or enhancement of meditation.
- Mindfulness is the lookout or main practice of meditation.
- Kindness, compassion, and bodhicitta are the activity of meditation.
- Consideration and integrity are the armor of meditation.

It is critical that we apply ourselves to abandoning distractions and to practicing the meditation of letting our mind settle into its natural state.

The Objects of Meditation
From *The Great Treatise on the Stages*
***of the Path to Enlightenment, Vol. 3* by Tsong-kha-pa**
Translated by the Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee, pp. 35-41

The Objects of Meditation Themselves

The Bhagavan stated that yogis have four types of objects of meditation, these being: (1) universal objects of meditation, (2) objects of meditation for purifying your behavior, (3) objects of meditation for expertise, and (4) objects of meditation for purifying afflictions.

1. Universal objects of meditation

Universal objects of meditation are of four types: (a) discursive images, (b) non-discursive images, (c) the limits of existence, and (d) achievement of your purpose.

The two types of images (*discursive* and *non-discursive*) are posited in terms of the observer: the first is the object of insight, and the second is the object of meditative serenity. The image is not the actual specifically characterized object upon which your mind is focused, but rather the appearance of that object's aspect to your mind. When you carry out analysis while observing an object, then the image is discursive since analytical thinking is present. When you stabilize your mind without analysis while observing an object, the image is said to be non-discursive since analytical thinking is absent. As for these images, what objects of meditation are they images of? They are the images, or aspects, of the five objects of meditation for purifying behavior, the five objects of meditation for expertise, and the two objects of meditation for purifying afflictions.

The *limits of existence* are posited with reference to the observed object. There are two: The limits of existence for the diversity of phenomena, which are expressed in the statement, "Just this is all there is; there is nothing more"; and the limits of existence for the real nature, expressed in the statement, "This alone is how things exist; they do not exist in any other way." In the case of the diversity of phenomena, this means that the five aggregates include all composite phenomena; the eighteen constituents and twelve sources include all phenomena; and the four truths include everything there is to know; there is nothing else beyond this. In the case of the nature, this means that reason establishes the truth or reality of those objects of meditation.

Achievement of purpose is posited in terms of the result. With either serenity or insight you direct your attention to the images of those objects of meditation. Then you stabilize on them, become accustomed to them, and, by virtue of repeated practice, you become free from your dysfunctional tendencies, undergoing a fundamental transformation.

2. Objects of meditation for purifying your behavior

Objects of meditation for purifying behavior are objects that purify behavior in which attachment or the like [hatred, delusion, pride, or discursiveness] is predominant. There are five such objects of meditation. Respectively they are: (a) ugliness, (b) love, (c) dependent-arising, (d) differentiation of constituents, and (e) inhalation and exhalation.

(a) Of these, the *objects of meditation on ugliness* consist of the thirty-six uglinesses pertaining to the body, such as head and body hair, and external uglinesses such as a corpse's turning blue. When an aspect of impurity and ugliness arises in your mind, you keep your attention on it.

(b) *Love* involves focusing on friends, enemies, and persons toward whom you have neutral feelings, and having an attitude—at the level of meditative equipoise—of providing them with help and happiness. Keeping your attention on these objects of meditation with a loving attitude is called “meditation on love”; love refers both to the subjective attitude and to the object.

(c) Regarding the *object of meditation on dependent-arising*: All there is in the past, the present, and the future is dependent-arising in which effects that are mere phenomenal factors simply arise based on mere phenomenal factors. Apart from these, there is no performer of actions or experiencer of their effects. You focus your attention on this fact, and hold it there.

(d) As for the *object of meditation on the differentiation of the constituents*: You differentiate the factors of the six constituents—earth, water, fire, air, space, and consciousness. You focus your attention on them and hold it there.

(e) Regarding the *object of meditation on inhalation and exhalation*: You focus your attention without distraction by counting and watching the breath move in and out.

3. Objects of meditation for expertise

There are also five objects of meditation for expertise, namely expertise in (a) the aggregates, (b) the constituents, (c) the sources, (d) dependent-arising, and (e) what is and is not possible.

(a) The *aggregates* are the five aggregates of form and the others [feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness]. Expertise in these is knowing that, apart from these aggregates, the self and what pertains to the self do not exist.

(b) The *constituents* are the eye and the others of the eighteen constituents. Expertise in them is knowing the causal conditions by which those constituents arise from their own seeds.

(c) The *sources* are the eye and the others of the twelve sources. Expertise in these is knowing that the six internal sources are the dominant conditions for the six consciousnesses, that the six external sources are the object-conditions, and that the mind which has just ceased is the immediately preceding condition.

(d) *Dependent-arising* is the twelve factors. Expertise in them is knowing that they are impermanent, suffering, and devoid of self.

(e) *What is and is not possible* refers to such things as it being possible for a pleasant fruition to arise from a virtuous action, but not possible for a pleasant fruition to arise from a non-virtuous action. Expertise in this is knowing that things are this way. This is a particular case of expertise in dependent-arising; the difference is that you understand diverse causes.

When you use these as objects of meditation for cultivating serenity, you keep your attention on just one of the perspectives in which the aggregates, etc. may be known.

4. Objects of meditation for purifying afflictions

Purifying afflictions means either merely reducing the strength of the seeds of the afflictions or else utterly eradicating the seeds. In the former case, the objects of meditation are the comparative coarseness of each lower stage and comparative calmness of each higher stage, proceeding from the level of the desire realm up to the level of Nothingness. In the latter case, the objects of meditation are impermanence and the other of the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths. When you use these as objects of meditation for cultivating serenity, you do not analyze, but instead keep your attention on any one cognition of an aspect of those objects that appears to it.

Kamalaśīla's second *Stages of Meditation* states that objects of meditation are three. (1) After you have brought together everything that all twelve branches of scripture say about determining, settling into, and having settled into reality, you stabilize your mind upon it. (2) You observe the aggregates, etc., which include phenomena to some extent. (3) You stabilize your mind on the physical form of the Buddha, which you have seen and heard about.

How do you stabilize your mind on things such as the aggregates? When you understand how all compositional things can be included within the five aggregates, you mentally collect them, gradually, into these five aggregates. Then you observe them and keep your attention on them. Just as discerning wisdom develops when you cultivate differentiation, so when you cultivate collectedness you develop concentration wherein your attention is brought together on the object of meditation without moving toward other objects. This is a personal instruction of the knowledge tradition. Likewise, when you understand how all phenomena can be included within the constituents and sources, you mentally collect them into these categories and keep your attention on this.

Summary of the Various Objects

Among these four types of objects of meditation, objects of meditation for purifying behavior, as explained, facilitate the stopping of attachment and such in those whose behavior is dominated by attachment and such. They are special objects of meditation because you may readily attain concentration based upon them. Objects of meditation for expertise are conducive to the development of the insight that knows emptiness inasmuch as they refute a personal self that is not included among those phenomena. Therefore, they are excellent objects of meditation for cultivating serenity. Objects of meditation for dispelling afflictions serve as general antidotes to the afflictions, so they have great significance. The universal objects of meditation are not distinct from the aforementioned three. Therefore, since you must achieve concentration using an object of meditative serenity that has a particular purpose, those who achieve concentration using things like pebbles and twigs for objects of meditation are clearly ignorant of the teachings on objects of concentration.

There are those who suppose that if you focus on an object of meditation and keep your attention on it, this is an apprehension of signs. They claim that meditation on emptiness means just stabilizing your mind without any basis, without focusing on any object of meditation. This is a total misunderstanding of how to meditate on emptiness. If you have no consciousness at that time, then neither will you have a concentration that cultivates emptiness. On the other hand, if you have consciousness, then you are

conscious of something, so you have to accept that there is an object of consciousness in terms of which consciousness is posited. If there is an object of consciousness, then precisely that is the object of meditation of that mind, because “object,” “object of meditation,” and “object of consciousness” have the same meaning. In that case, they would have to accept that even their method of concentration would apprehend signs. Thus, their approach is not correct.

Furthermore, whether something constitutes meditation on emptiness is determined by whether it is meditation founded upon the view that knows the way things are; it is not determined by whether there is any conceptualization vis-à-vis the object. This will be demonstrated at length below. Even those who claim to stabilize their minds without an object of meditation must think first, “I will keep my attention such that it does not stray toward any object whatsoever,” and then keep their attention in that way. After they have focused like that on the mind itself as an object of meditation, they must be certain to fix on this object without straying in any way. Thus, their own experience contradicts their claim that they have no object of meditation.

In this way, the classic texts on achieving concentration explain that there are many objects of meditation. The purposes of these meditative bases for stabilizing your mind are as explained above, so you should gain expertise in them. Kamalaśīla’s *Stages of Meditation* explains that the object of meditation of serenity is indeterminate, and Atisha’s *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* says, “[It is] whatever object or objects of meditation that are appropriate.” These statements mean that you are not required to stick with one particular object of meditation; they do not show how to define the range of existing objects of meditation.

Who Should Meditate on Which Objects

As there are various kinds of people, from those with a preponderance of attachment to those with a preponderance of discursiveness, Asanga’s *Śrāvaka Levels* cites an answer to a question of Revata:

Revata, if attachment uniquely dominates the behavior of a monk-yogi, a practitioner of yoga, then he focuses his mind on the object of meditation of ugliness. If hatred dominates his behavior, he meditates on love; if ignorance dominates his behavior, then he meditates on the dependent-arising of this condition; if pride dominates his behavior, he focuses his mind on the differentiation of the constituents.

And:

If discursiveness uniquely dominates his behavior, then he focuses his mind on an awareness of the exhalation and inhalation of the breath. In this way, he focuses his mind on an appropriate object of meditation.

Asanga's *Śrāvaka Levels* also states:

In this regard, persons whose behavior is dominated by attachment, hatred, ignorance, pride, or discursiveness should, for a while at the outset, just purify those behaviors by contemplating objects of meditation for purifying behavior. After this they will see the stability of their minds, and they will ascertain only their objects of meditation. So they should definitely persevere at using their objects of meditation.

Thus, you certainly should work with these objects of meditation.

If you are a person whose behavior is balanced, or one whose afflictions are slight, then it suffices to keep your attention on whichever of the aforementioned objects of meditation you like; it is not necessary to have a particular one. *Asanga's Śrāvaka Levels* states:

Those whose behavior is balanced should work at whichever object they like so as to attain just mental stability; this is not for the purpose of purifying behavior. Understand that the same applies to those with slight afflictions.

Being dominated by desire—or another of those five afflictions—means that in a previous life you were fully involved in that affliction, became accustomed to it, and expressed it frequently, so that now even if there is a minor object of desire—or another of the five—that affliction arises in a strong and long-lasting form. Balanced behavior means that you were not fully involved in desire and the others in your previous lives, you did not become accustomed to them, and you did not express them frequently. Still, you have not recognized that they are faults and you have not suppressed them, so while desire and such are not predominant or of great duration, it is not as though they do not occur. Having slight afflictions means that you were not fully involved and so on in desire—or another of those five—in your previous lives, and you do see their disadvantages, etc. Therefore, with respect to objects of desire and such that are major, many, or intense, your desire and such arise slowly, while for moderate or minor objects, these afflictions do not arise at all. Also, when desire or another of those five afflictions is predominant, you take a long time to realize stability; with balanced behavior, you do not take an excessively long time; with minor afflictions,

you do so very quickly.

An answer to a question of Revata [as cited in the *Śrāvaka Levels*] also explains who works on objects of meditation for expertise:

Revata, if a monk-yogi, a practitioner of yoga, is confused about the characteristic nature of all composite things, or confused about the thing called person, self, living being, life, that which is reborn, or the nourisher, he should focus his mind on the objects of meditation for expertise in the aggregates. If he is confused about causes, he should focus on the objects of meditation for expertise in the constituents. If he is confused about conditions, he should focus on the objects of meditation for expertise in the sources. If he is confused about impermanence, suffering, and selflessness, he should focus on the objects of meditation for expertise in dependent-arising, and on what is and is not possible.

As this states, you mainly use these five objects of meditation to stop confusion.

Which persons should focus their minds on objects of meditation for dispelling afflictions is also stated in the same sūtra [answering the questions of Revata]:

If you wish to be free from the attachment of the desire realm, focus your mind on the coarseness of the desire realm and the calmness of the form realm; if you wish to be free from the attachment of the form realm, focus your mind on the coarseness of the form realm and the calmness of the formless realm. If you wish to become disenchanted with all of the perishing aggregates, and wish to be free from them, then focus your mind on the truth of suffering, the truth of origins, the truth of cessation, and the truth of the path.

You can use these objects of meditation both for analytical meditation with insight and for stabilizing meditation with serenity, so they are not exclusively objects of meditation for serenity. Still, since some serve as objects of meditation for newly achieving serenity and others are used for special purposes after attaining serenity, I have explained them here in the section on the objects of meditation of serenity.

The Essential Instructions of the Mahasiddha Maitripa

A Spacious Path to Freedom

Practical Instructions on the Union of Mahamudra and Atiyoga

By Karma Chagme with commentary by Gyatrul Rinpoche

Translated by B. Alan Wallace, pp. 78-80

First there are three types of quiescence:

- [1] quiescence that depends on signs,
- [2] quiescence focused on conceptualization, and
- [3] quiescence that is settled in nonconceptualization.

[1] In the first there are two types:

- [a] maintaining the attention outwards, and
- [b] maintaining the attention inwards.

[a] Outwardly there are two types:

- [i] impure and [ii] pure.

Quiescence that Depends on Signs

Impure Outward Attention

[i] With the posture endowed with the seven attributes of Vairocana, adopt the gaze. Maintain your attention without distraction upon a pillar, a pot, a stick, or a pebble, etc., together with the posture and the gaze. Do this without indulging in distraction elsewhere and without the dispersion of conceptualization. While so doing, settle in relaxation. Moreover, if laxity or excitation arises, recognize whether the attention is being maintained above, below, to the right or to the left.

Pure Outward Attention

[ii] In the pure type, maintain the attention upon the Jina's body. In front of you place an image of Lord Amitabha, or if you do not have one, imagine it. Do not let thoughts proliferate away from it or indulge in distractions. While so doing, settle [the mind] while relaxing in simple nondistraction. This is maintaining the attention upon the pure body of the Jina.

In the practice of focusing on the Buddha's body, place before you a statue or some other representation of the Buddha's body. It may be large or small; it may be any

manifestation of the Buddha, such as Sakyamuni, Amitabha, or any other embodiment. Gaze upon this image for a while. Then, without looking at it, create a mental image of it. Scan this mental image from top to bottom, examining the details from the top of the head, to the face, and so on to the bottom of the body. Then scan again upwards. There are great benefits in attending to the Buddha's body in this meditative context: by doing so, you store karmic seeds for attaining a Buddha's body yourself. There are various ways in which you might practice visualizing the Buddha. You could visualize the Buddha stupendously large like a galaxy, or you could imagine it being microscopic in size. You could imagine it being single or multiple. The point of the training is to master this untamed mind, which is rigid and inflexible, so that it can become flexible and pliant, and can be applied to whatever you wish. At the end of the session, whatever the size of the image, you can gradually shrink it down to a single point; then allow that point itself to vanish into nothing. Finally, dwell in that nothingness for a while.

The real point of all this is to bring about the inner balance and serenity of your mind. That is the crux of the matter. It's important not to get into a great deal of conceptualization as to whether this is a Mahayana or Hinayana practice, or what sect it might be from—none of this is necessary. Don't be too clever. Just keep it simple and train the mind in this way, knowing that the real point is inner serenity, maintaining quiescence in the mind. If you make it too complicated, you simply create unnecessary obstacles for yourself in the practice of Dharma.

One way to focus on the Buddha's speech in the cultivation of quiescence is to focus on the syllable A or HUM. You can imagine the syllable as large or small, as one or many; and you can imagine them dissolving into emptiness. There are various valid approaches. The direct benefits of this practice are that you sow the karmic seeds for your own accomplishment of a Buddha's speech, and you purify unwholesome influences and imprints due to your own nonvirtuous speech in the past.

[b] In terms of maintaining the attention inwardly there are two types:

[i] impure and [ii] pure.

Impure Inward Attention

[i] Maintaining the attention upon an impure bindu: Maintain your attention on a white bindu, about the size of a pea, emitting rays of light, upon a lotus and moon-disk at your heart. Do not let thoughts proliferate away from it, or indulge in distractions. These are practical instructions on transforming ideation into the path without abandoning it. Quiescence that is of the [nature of the] spiritual path transforms ideation into the path, and attention is maintained by focusing on the ideation of the path. These are the practical instructions.

Instead of trying to stifle your thoughts, in this practice you transform them into the very path itself. The thought that is being transformed into the path is the visualization of the white bindu.

Pure Inward Attention

[ii] Maintaining the attention on the pure body of the Jina: maintain your attention on Avalokitesvara upon a lotus and moon-disk at your heart, his body the size of the outer thumb joint, and radiant with light. Do not let thoughts disperse away from it, or indulge in distractions. If laxity or excitation arises, for both the impure and pure methods maintain the attention by meditating on the forehead or the navel.

That is quiescence that is dependent upon signs.

Quiescence Focused on Conceptualization

[2] Quiescence in which the attention is focused on conceptualization: In relation to the excessive proliferation of conceptualization, including such afflictions as the five poisons or the three poisons, thoughts that revolve in duality, thoughts such as those of the ten virtues, the Six Perfections or the Ten Perfections whatever virtuous and nonvirtuous thoughts arise—steadily and nonconceptually observe their nature. By so doing, they are calmed in nongrasping; awareness vividly arises clear and empty, with no object of grasping; and it is sustained in the nature of self-liberation, in which it recognizes itself. Again, direct the mind to whatever thoughts arise, and without acceptance or rejection, you will recognize your own nature. Thus implement the practical instructions on transforming ideation into the path.

Quiescence that is Settled in Nonconceptualization

[3] The ultimate quiescence of maintaining the attention upon nonconceptualization: With the body possessing the seven attributes of Vairocana, sit upon a soft cushion in a solitary, darkened room. Vacantly direct the eyes into the intervening vacuity. See that the three conceptualizations of the past, future, and present, as well as virtuous, nonvirtuous, and ethically neutral thoughts, together with all the causes, assembly, and dispersal of thoughts of the three times are completely cut off. Bring no thoughts to mind. Let the mind, like a cloudless sky, be clear, empty, and evenly devoid of grasping, and settle it in utter vacuity. By so doing you will experience the quiescence of joy, clarity, and nonconceptuality. Examine whether or not attachment, hatred, clinging, grasping, laxity, or excitation enter into that, and recognize the difference between virtues and vices.