

Categories of Vipāśyanā
The Practice of Tranquility and Insight:
A Guide to Tibetan Buddhist Meditation
A Commentary on the Eighth Chapter of the *Treasury*
***of Knowledge* by Jamgön Kongtrül by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche**
Translated by Peter Roberts, pp. 69-107

There are three main categories of vipāśyanā: the vipāśyanās of the *four essences*, the vipāśyanā of the *three doorways*, and the vipāśyanā of the *six investigations*.

The four essences of vipāśyanā are described in the *Explanation of the View* sūtra and in Asanga's *Compendium of the Abhidharma*. In this analysis there are two categories of vipāśyanā—differentiation and complete differentiation. Each of these categories has two aspects—examination and analysis—so that there are actually four categories. Differentiation involves the understanding or prajñā that can distinguish between all the various kinds of phenomena. Complete differentiation is the understanding that distinguishes the actual nature of all phenomena. Examination is the gaining of an understanding of something on an obvious level. Analysis is gaining an understanding on a very subtle level.

The vipāśyanās of the *four natures* are: (1) differentiation through examination, (2) differentiation through analysis, (3) complete differentiation through examination, and (4) complete differentiation through analysis. But in the *Explanation of the View* sūtra each of these four categories is divided again to make sixteen categories in all. The first category (differentiation through examination) is divided into four degrees of examination, namely (a) perfect examination, which means the examining is done very well, (b) definitive examination, in which a more complete understanding results, (c) perfect evaluation, which is even more complete, and (d) essential examination, which is the most complete. So each of these four essences of vipāśyanā has four degrees, making sixteen categories in all.

In the *Compendium of the Abhidharma* Asanga gives a description of the vipāśyanā with four essences in terms of their effect, that is, in terms of their activity. Asanga describes the first two essences of vipāśyanās, the differentiation of phenomena and the complete differentiation of phenomena, as remedies for negative propensities (Skt. *dausthulya*, Tib. *na ga len*) and the conceptualization of phenomena. The last two essences of vipāśyanā, through examination and through analysis, eliminate what needs to be eliminated, such as the mistaken beliefs about phenomena. With these eliminated one can rest in an unmistaken understanding.

In the *Explanation of the View* sūtra there is a description of the vipaśyanā of the *three doorways*, or entrances. In this sūtra Maitreya asks the Buddha, “How many kinds of vipaśyanā meditations are there?” The Buddha replies that there are three kinds. First, there is the vipaśyanā that arises from conceptual characteristics. If one meditates, for example, on selflessness one doesn’t simply think about selflessness but one contemplates the reasons, proofs, and characteristics of selflessness. By going through these and thinking them over, one is able to develop a certain understanding of selflessness. One develops the insight that arises from contemplating the conceptual characteristics of something. The second of the vipaśyanās of the three doors is the insight that arises from investigation. Once one has developed the certainty of the first doorway, then one rests one’s mind in that certainty and this is the second doorway. The third doorway arises from analysis. Because of familiarization with and habituation to certainty, one rests directly within the understanding of selflessness.

Next is the vipaśyanā of the *six investigations* into the characteristics of things. Three kinds of understanding come from these six investigations. First is *the investigation of meaning*, in which one has to investigate the words of the dharma and find out what is the meaning behind the words.

Second is *the investigation of things* or the investigation of external phenomena and internal objects, which refers to mind and mental events. The understanding of the mind is arrived at through the understanding of the eight consciousnesses. The understanding of mental events is the understanding of the kleśas—the negativities of the mind. The investigation of external objects is the understanding of the external sensory experiences of sight, sound, smell, taste, and physical sensation. This is the understanding of the five aggregates of form, sensation, recognition, mental events, and consciousness, the twelve āyatanas, which are the source of perception and so on.

Third is the *investigation of characteristics*, which is examining the object in more detail; for example, discovering that the visual consciousness perceives a visual object, the ear consciousness perceives sounds, etc. One examines the actual characteristics of all the different aspects in more detail. One investigates, for example, the visual form and identifies it as being the object of visual consciousness. Generally, there are two kinds of wisdom—the wisdom of the true nature of things and wisdom of the variety of things. First one has to examine all outer and inner objects to gain an understanding of their qualities. When one has attained this understanding, then one can understand their true nature.

The next three kinds of realization deal with the actual nature of things. These are the *investigation of direction*, *investigation of time*, and *investigation through reasoning*. We can easily understand emptiness with the investigation of direction and time. We normally think that there is a north, a south, an east, and a west. We think of directions as having an actual existence. We also talk about “here” and “there” as if there really were a “here” and a “there.” But on closer examination, for example, one could say the wooden table in front of me is on the east side of the throne. When one moves the table a little, then one would say it is north of the throne. Direction, in fact, has no solid reality. So the investigation of direction leads to an understanding of emptiness.

The second investigation of the nature of things is the investigation of time. One usually thinks that there is a past, a present, and a future or one thinks in terms of a day, a month, a year, and so on. But when one examines this more closely, one finds that past does not really exist. Where is the present? One finds that other than being a conceptual projection on things, time has no reality of its own.

The third investigation of the nature of things is through reason. The Buddha said that his teachings should be examined and not taken on trust. For example, if one is buying gold, it wouldn't be correct to simply accept the seller's word that it is gold. One should test it by heating it with a flame to see whether it changes color. The gold might have a different metal inside so next one has to cut it open. Finally, there might be some fine particles of nongold in the lump. So one has to rub it against a stone to see if it is pure gold. In the same way, the Buddha said that his teachings should not be taken on trust, but one should engage in the process of investigation so that one can develop an understanding of the actual nature of things. Once one has gained this understanding, one can apply it to phenomena.

There are four kinds of reasoning. The first two relate to something arising from activity. The first is *the reasoning of dependence* and is involved with cause and effect. Using this reasoning, one can develop an understanding of how one's present life is due to events in a previous life. Since this is difficult to prove and understand, the Buddha taught cause and effect by reasoning, saying that if something exists, it is dependent and must have arisen from previous conditions or a cause. For example, a flower does not appear by itself but is dependent upon the previous conditions of a seed, soil, air, water, and so on. Many things have to come together for the flower to come into existence. So whatever exists is dependent upon previous causes and conditions. This is true of one's body and one's mind, which are the effect of previous causes and conditions in one's previous lifetimes.

The second kind of reasoning is *the reasoning of function*. This is the reasoning of

dependent effect, which means that an effect depends on a particular cause. By understanding the first kind of reasoning and this second kind, one is able to avoid suffering by understanding that every cause has an effect and every effect has a causal condition. For example, in the Guru Rinpoche practice the mantra *Om Ye Dharma Hetu Prabhava*, etc., can be translated as “All phenomena arise from causes.” The Buddha taught that all phenomena are an effect that had to arise due to a certain cause. The mantra says “All the causes have been explained by the Buddha.” That is the second sentence in the mantra. If one wishes to attain perfect happiness, one must be able to find the correct cause of this happiness. To stop suffering, which is the result of causes, one must stop the causes of suffering. Therefore, one can find out how to eliminate suffering and attain happiness in the Buddha’s teachings, which is done through the two kinds of reasoning—the reasoning of a cause having an effect and the reasoning of an effect being dependent on a cause. This means that whatever exists will create a result. Thus external objects or internal objects (such as the mind) will create results in the future. So the first reasoning of previous conditions proves previous lifetimes and the second reasoning of function proves future lifetimes.

The third kind of reasoning is the *reasoning of validity*, or how one knows something is true. There are three subtypes of this reasoning. First, one may experience something directly through seeing, hearing, or one of the other senses and this is called directly perceived validity. Second, there are things one cannot experience directly with the senses, but one understands them through logical deduction, or deduced validity. For example, the understanding of the emptiness of all phenomena or that a previous life must exist are examples of this second kind of knowledge.

The third kind of reasoning is scriptural authenticity. One gains understanding by studying the teachings of the Buddha and of scholars and accomplished masters. There is a subject called *pramāna* in Sanskrit meaning “valid knowledge.” There were two great masters of this in India—Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. Dignāga said there were three kinds of valid knowledge: that which is perceived directly; that which is obtained through deductive reasoning; and that which is received through scriptural authority. But then Dharmakīrti, the other great master of the *pramāna*, said that there are only two kinds of knowledge, direct knowledge and deductive analysis, because scriptural authority is understanding through examination and analysis, which is in fact the result of direct experience. So scriptural authority is encompassed by both of the other two kinds of knowledge and is not a separate third category.

The fourth kind of reasoning is the *reasoning of intrinsic nature*. There are two kinds of

intrinsic reasons: relative intrinsic nature and absolute intrinsic nature. An example of the relative aspect is the fact that fire is hot and burns. One may ask, “What is the reason that fire is hot and burns?” But there really isn’t any reason except that this is the intrinsic nature of fire. Similarly, one cannot ask, “Why is water wet?” because water is just wet and that is the intrinsic nature of water. Similarly, the nature of all phenomena is empty and that is just the intrinsic nature of all phenomena. There is no real reason why this is true; it is just something that has to be realized.

For example, in the beginning one isn’t certain of the absence of a self or of the nature of emptiness. Through a process of reasoning, one can develop a definite understanding of selflessness and impermanence using logic. By going through these four reasonings, one develops certainty from analytical meditation and through this one gains clarity. Sometimes by doing this analytic meditation too much, one’s mental stability decreases. If this happens, one does more nonanalytic meditation in which one just rests the mind without analyzing. This will bring about more stability.

There are six kinds of investigations—investigation of meaning, things, characteristics, directions, time, and reasoning—that can be used to gain an understanding of relative and absolute phenomena. Vipāśyanā can also be summed up into two types: preparatory vipāśyanā and actual vipāśyanā. Preparatory vipāśyanā, also known as discriminating vipāśyanā, is a preparation stage during which one investigates and analyzes in order to develop a definite understanding. In the actual stage, also called unwavering samādhi, one has gained definite understanding and the mind is able to dwell there.

The vipāśyanā of the four essences, six investigations, and three doorways are all analytical meditations. In general there are two kinds of meditation: the analytical meditation of the pandita who is a scholar and the nonanalytical meditation or direct meditation of the *kusulu*, or simple yogi. So the analytical meditation of the pandita occurs when somebody examines and analyzes something thoroughly until a very clear understanding of it is developed. Doing this, one gains a very definite and lasting understanding, so that there is no danger of making an error. However, this path of the pandita takes a long time. The meditation of the *kusulu* develops from knowing how to meditate, and then meditating very extensively. This method is much swifter, but there is a danger of going astray and making a mistake. So one usually begins with an analysis and examination of the reasons and proofs so that a definite understanding is developed. Then one familiarizes oneself with this and develops an understanding and from this one begins the *kusulu* meditation.

In analytical meditation, for example, one meditates on selflessness, and in trying to identify the “self” one finds that it doesn’t exist internally, externally, or in between. It is similar to śamatha meditation in that one focuses the mind on an object, just as one rests the mind on the in- and out-breath in śamatha meditation. Similarly, when resting on the absence of self, the mind is kept focused one-pointedly on this and just rests, and from this develops the experience of the certainty of the absence of self. It is the same method employed in śamatha meditation so it is called the analytical meditation on the absence of self.

Analytic meditation is not just hearing, receiving, and contemplating the teachings. Instead it is the definite insight one has gained united with śamatha meditation. In śamatha meditation one focuses the mind on breathing or focuses it on no object whatsoever. Here one has definite knowledge that is gained through analytic deduction. This knowledge is joined together with the stability of mind in śamatha and one meditates on the union of these two. This is what is meant by analytic meditation.

The direct, nonanalytical meditation is called kusulu meditation in Sanskrit. This was translated as *trömeh* in Tibetan, which means “without complication” or being very simple without the analysis and learning of a great scholar. Instead, the mind is relaxed and without applying analysis so it just rests in its nature. In the sūtra tradition, there are some nonanalytic meditations, but mostly this tradition uses analytic meditation.

Four Categories of Vipashyana
From Chapter 47. Investigating the Subtleties of Experience
The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma:
Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation
By Chögyam Trungpa, compiled and edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 354-358

There are four categories of vipashyana: discriminating dharmas, fully discriminating dharmas, completely comprehending dharmas, and completely investigating dharmas.

Discriminating Dharmas

The first category is being able to discriminate dharmas, which in Tibetan is *chö nampar jepa*. *Chö* means *dharma*, but in this case *dharma* does not mean teachings; it means any “entity,” any “knowledge,” any “knowable situation.” *Nampar* means “varieties,” and *jepa* means “separating”; so *chö nampar jepa* means “separating dharmas.” There is so much to learn, so much to know, but you are not overwhelmed by that. You are willing to jump into the giant ocean of dharmas, the ocean of information and experiences. When you develop awareness, you are aware of all the things that are happening in your life and in your world, but you are not overwhelmed. You can handle each situation according to its own particular merit, style, or virtue. Some kind of intelligence is working in you, both during your sitting practice and when you walk out of the shrine room. You see everything clearly.

When you first begin to experience vipashyana awareness, you might be completely shocked. It is like putting on your first pair of glasses: you realize how many things you have missed. However, when you begin to see clearly, you also realize how many things are irritating, so you might prefer to take your glasses off or throw them in the wastepaper basket. You may not really want to perceive that much phenomenal reality; you feel so naked. You don't want to go all the way; you prefer to walk away from that nakedness rather than face reality. That turning away is [page 355] due to a lack of awareness and a lack of mindfulness, the “ignorance is bliss” approach. In contrast, vipashyana is a natural process of brightening yourself up and seeing things clearly. And you are able to do so because you have already developed mindfulness, so mindfulness and awareness work together. Vipashyana and shamatha are fundamentally inseparable.

Fully Discriminating Dharmas

The second category of vipashyana is *raptu jepa*, which means “fully able to separate.” *Raptu* means “very much,” and *jepa*, again, means “separating,” so *raptu jepa* means

“fully separating.” At this stage, having caught a glimpse of phenomenal objects, not only are you not startled by how detailed they are, but you actually want to investigate them. You become more daring in relating with your world. For instance, if you are having some fantastic private pornographic subconscious gossip in your mind, at first you are completely shocked, but then you want to find out where that visualization is coming from. So you don’t just close the door; once you have seen what’s in your mind, you investigate. You feel out what’s happening; you experience it. You do this, not in order to fulfill your lust, but purely in order to find out where in the name of heaven and earth it is coming from. You want to find out how things occur and what they are like. You want to know what texture they have, whether solid or transitory or flighty or flickering or mushy or flowing.

Whatever occurs, the idea of this second category is that you investigate that particular phenomenon. If somebody in the street says, “Fuck you!” you investigate. What does that mean? What kind of reaction do you have? Who said it? Why did it happen? Why you? What is the environment? Is it a rainy day or a snowy day or a sunny day? You happen to hear those particular words from that particular person, and you begin to react to them, to have afterthoughts—and you look with awareness into how such situations happen. But be careful—this does not mean analyzing everything from the point of view of Freudian psychology, or trying to find out whether your fantasies represent this or that. For example, if you have an itch on your cheek, you may not know whether it’s a bedbug bite or a mosquito bite or whether you haven’t washed your face, but it doesn’t really matter—you have an itch. With vipashyana, you are looking at dharmas directly and finding out how they arise, dwell, and disappear [page 356] in your life and in your mind. That is why vipashyana is referred to simply as insight, or clear thinking. It is very clear thinking.

Completely Comprehending Dharmas

The third category is *yongsu tokpa*, which means “completely comprehending.” *Yongsu* means “completely,” “thoroughly,” and *tokpa* means “comprehending,” so *yongsu tokpa* means “completely comprehending.” With *yongsu tokpa*, you are experiencing thoughts of a very crude nature. You experience the big ups and downs, which are very aggressive, very passionate, or very ignorant. Whether such thoughts occur during sitting practice or during the postmeditation experience, you could study them and look at them. You could exert your awareness on them.

This is not the same as being mindful of thoughts. In mindfulness practice, you are just seeing thoughts and labeling them “thinking.” Here, there is a more general awareness of the presence of crude thoughts. With an awareness of the atmosphere created by your crude thought process—your passion, aggression, or ignorance—you are able to

see such thoughts one by one, rather than suddenly being hit by some big thought and being completely overwhelmed. When you are surprised in that way, you may want to call for help or take an aspirin, but when you practice insight, you are not overwhelmed because you are able to dissect your emotions, to separate one from another.

For instance, when a thought of tremendous aggression suddenly occurs, you may feel overwhelmed and start to sweat, but then you apply your awareness. You look at your thoughts and you dissect them. You notice how they arise, how they dwell, and how they disappear. Even if they do not disappear, the first flash disappears, and you have the chance to see the second flash coming into your state of mind. So even if a gigantic pterodactyl runs into you, you don't just scream. First you look at it and see whether you are in a prehistoric situation or not. Realizing that you are still in the twentieth century, you say, "This couldn't happen. Where did this pterodactyl come from? How did it land in front of me? How did this happen?" You don't panic; you just examine what has happened to you.

There is a sense of decency about this. When crude emotions land on your lap and they are glaring at you, you don't just say, "Aagh!" Instead, you see them and dissect them with your vipashyana. This is possible [page 357] because you have practiced enough shamatha to begin with; therefore, your mind is able to handle anything that happens. Once you have worked with shamatha thoroughly, your mind is like Play-Doh, so you have no problem working with anything that comes up—you cannot be shocked.

Completely Investigating Dharmas

The fourth category is *yongsu chöpa*, which means "completely investigating." *Yongsu* means "completely," and *chöpa* means "investigating," or sometimes "theorizing," or "studying," so *yongsu chöpa* means "completely investigating." *Yongsu chöpa* is a much more refined investigating than number three, *yongsu tokpa*, because the thoughts being seen are so minute. Completely investigating does not refer to obvious thoughts that are very easy to comprehend, but to the small, meaningless, and insignificant flickers of thought that occur. With *yongsu chöpa*, you also apply vipashyana to those types of thoughts.

Sometimes you will find that small thoughts are being investigated by small awareness, so it looks as if one subconscious gossip is chasing another subconscious gossip. When you find a little idea in your life being looked at by a little effort, you may think you are perpetuating the whole thing, but that's not the case. In this fourth category of vipashyana, the chaser, so to speak, has awareness. What's being chased—that little thought, or that little, little thought—could be insignificant, meaningless, and almost harmless, but we are trying to make sure that nothing gets away. We have to cover the

whole ground completely, as much as we can. We have to investigate whatever goes on in our ego-mind.

The idea of looking into that level of thought process may seem small, but the practice of vipashyana is very tidy and precise. You investigate where those small thoughts come from. You might simply have a memory of your grandfather eating his sandwich twenty years ago, and you might remember how he used to slur his words while he ate his sandwich. You might remember seeing a tree on your way to somewhere or other. Meaningless thoughts like that also have to be conquered, otherwise you cannot develop discriminating-awareness wisdom. You have to apply a blanket approach to awareness.

Conclusion

When you practice shamatha, you are still involved with effort, hard work. Vipashyana is somewhat effortless, but it is more watchful, so in a sense you could say that it takes more effort. You are not allowing any gaps [page 358] in your awareness—none whatsoever! When you practice mindfulness, you concentrate on one particular area, and when you stop concentrating on that one area, you relax. However, that relaxation is looked at by awareness, so the pinpoint as well as the sense of general radiation is covered completely

Our teachers have taught us that it is necessary to conquer both undisciplined mind and individualistic mind. Undisciplined mind is conquered by shamatha practice; individualistic mind is conquered by vipashyana. Vipashyana is based on dealing with the ego—with the distant territory of ego as well as its more immediate territory. We are trying to attack our ego, mock it, conquer it, invade it, subjugate it. Individualism, or ego, means that which is not seen as a working basis for the general atmosphere of awareness. Wandering mind, confusion, and the inability to discipline oneself—all of those factors derive from the fundamental principle of ego.

What is the root of all this? Why do we practice vipashyana at all? We understand that it will be helpful to us, but why is that so? If we approach practice in the style of mental gymnastics, it is like expecting that if we do lots of exercises, our body will get in shape. But what are we getting in shape for? Why are we doing this at all, in the name of heaven and earth? It has to do with ego! So as you continue sitting and working with your basic shamatha discipline, you could add in a little bit of vipashyana, or awareness. In fact, you could practice vipashyana during all your waking hours. While you're taking a shower, while you're brushing your hair, while you're pressing your clothes, or while you're preparing your cup of tea, it would be helpful to practice vipashyana.

The Six Discoveries

From Chapter 48. Sharpening One's Perception
The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma:
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Whatever is knowable in the world, of either relative or transcendent nature, can be understood and experienced by means of vipashyana meditation. Vipashyana leads to a complete understanding of the knowable. This does not mean that you will become a great scholar by practicing vipashyana, but that the attitude and approach of vipashyana opens your way of thinking, so that obstacles to learning are no longer prominent.

There are several attributes of vipashyana experience, based largely on the intellectual sharpness developed, rather than simply on the meditative experience. These attributes develop out of the four categories of vipashyana: discriminating dharmas, fully discriminating dharmas, completely comprehending dharmas, and completely investigating dharmas. The Tibetan term for attribute, *tsölwa*, means “searching,” but in this context, I thought “discovery” would be a better translation. The point is [page 360] that through vipashyana, by means of hearing and seeing the dharma, you make six discoveries, or six types of *tsölwa*.

Meaning: Discovering the Meaning of Words

The first discovery is discovering the meaning of words, or *tön tsölwa*. *Tön* is “meaning,” and *tsölwa* is “discovery,” so *tön tsölwa* is the “discovery of meaning.” In this discovery, you are relying more on the sense of the teachings than on the words. You develop trust in yourself as you begin to realize that you have the potential of knowledge and wisdom within you. You realize that dharma is a question of waking up, rather than painfully cultivating knowledge.

Tön tsölwa means that you have an understanding of how language works, how expressions work, and what happens when you talk dharmically. The basic point in regard to language is to have tremendous precision. You know the meanings of words; you understand the subtleties. You understand how an idea is first initiated, then described, and then understood. Interestingly, English grammar is slightly lopsided in terms of our perceptions. Suppose, for instance, you see a white horse. As far as the thought process goes, when you see a white horse, first you see the horse and then you realize the horse is white. You actually see horse-white. Likewise, you see man-good or man-bad. That is how the thought process works. However, you don't have to strain

yourself to speak pidgin English. The idea is to articulate and synchronize language with your state of mind.

Tön tsölwa is connected with an interest in language and the expressions of language. It is an understanding of the grammar used to express dharmic language. Fundamentally, this means that you have an understanding of threefold logic. For instance, when you say “individual salvation,” you don’t just jumble the sounds together; you understand the meaning of the word *individual*, and the meaning of the word *salvation*. In this example, the ground is the individual; the path is salvation; and the fruition is that the individual is freed—therefore it is “individual salvation.” If you are trying to describe the dharma, you could say “good dharma” or “The dharma is good.” If you say “good dharma,” that can be taken as ground or as fruition. If you say “The dharma is good,” that is path. Dharma is being *qualified* by good. First we reflect on dharma, and then we realize that dharma is— What? Good or bad? Good! Vipashyana [page 361] discipline allows us to ponder our thinking process and how we relate with words.

Form: Discovering the Objects of Inside and Outside

The next discovery is *ngöpo tsölwa*. *Ngöpo* means “object,” or “gross thing.” It is “thingness,” “tangibleness.” *Tsölwa* is “discovery,” so *ngöpo tsölwa* is the “discovery of objects.” In this discovery we learn to discriminate between our individual world and the world around us. We are discovering the objects of outside and inside. “Inside” means personal situations and emotions; “outside” means the external setup. Outside includes such things as good weather or bad weather, or the favorable or unfavorable rate of exchange from Canadian to American dollars.

This discovery is also called the “search for reality.” All experiences in life, every word and every situation, involve subtleties, and those subtleties are clearly seen. Such discernment has nothing to do with paranoia; it is very relaxed. Once you have had an experience of vipashyana, of going out or expanding yourself, neurotic discrimination or paranoia no longer applies. It becomes irrelevant or useless.

Discovering the objects of inside and outside means discriminating between this situation and that situation, between introversion and extroversion. In terms of relationship and communication, you see the greater importance of going out and giving, rather than holding back. You might think this is quite a bizarre way of categorizing things, but when you work with the subtleties of the awareness process, you are able to see whether here and there are working together, whether they are synchronized or not. Then the discovery of this and that, inside and outside, becomes very powerful and important.

Characteristic: Discovering the Nature of Perception

The third discovery is the “discovery of the nature of perception,” or *tse-nyi tsölwa*. *Tse* means “mark,” “sign,” or “characteristic”; it is analogous to the mark of being female or male. *Nyi* means “itself”; so *tse-nyi* refers to how things are categorized according to their own individual existence. *Tsölwa*, again, means “discovery,” so *tse-nyi tsölwa* is the “discovery of individual characteristics.” It refers to how things could be shared or not shared between yourself and others, or how things could be the [page 362] first thought or second thought. For example, when you give birth to a thought—“Ha! Cup of coffee”—that is first thought. The second thought is, “How and where can a cup of coffee be purchased or manifested?” There is the thought process of journeying from here to there.

This discovery refers to the nature of your perception, how you operate your prajna. For instance, when you want to turn on a light, you first think of the switch, then you can turn the light on or off. So it goes “switch,” then “light.” It is the same with listening and hearing, or looking and seeing. You discover how you first perceive your world by first thought, and how that is then translated into second thought.

Traditionally, this category has to do with both private and public, almost like the previous category of inside and outside. You are not confused about basic logic, and you can figure out the origin of thought patterns in communication. As a practitioner of vipashyana, you are not completely insulted, because although at face value someone is rude or aggressive to you, you are able to look beyond that to the causal characteristics of that person’s reactions.

Direction: Discovering Sides

The fourth discovery is discovering sides. The Tibetan term *chok* means “direction,” or “side”; *tsölwa* means “discovery,” so *chok tsölwa* is “discovering sides.” Discriminating the good side from the bad side is quite ordinary: you see whether you are on the side of the dark or the light. Being on the side of the dark means that you are causing harm to yourself or others; being on the side of the light means that you are being a positive influence on yourself and others. This category is about knowing what to do and what not to do. It is about discrimination and common sense. You are able to detect that which is not suitable or a hindrance to the path, whether it is a negative or a positive experience.

Discovering sides is not based on picking and choosing, or on making yourself comfortable. It has broad vision and an unyielding quality. You are able to seek wisdom, to seek good attributes. That is, you have an allegiance, or natural instinct, as to what is

right for you and what is not. You are able to tune yourself instinctively in to the appropriate situations. It is very simple. In this discovery, you are relating with the common norms of good and bad, but with tremendous wisdom and clarity.

Time: Discovering Past, Present, and Future

[page 363] The fifth discovery is discovering time. *Tü* means “time”; *tsölwa* means “discovery,” so *tü tsölwa* means the “discovery of time,” or “not being confused by time.” This is not as simple as realizing whether it is daytime or nighttime. *Tu tsölwa* means that time should be considered, so that what you have experienced in the past, what you are experiencing now, and what you might experience in the future are not confused. Past is past, present is present, and future is future.

You need to develop clear thinking, both intellectually and intuitively, so you are not confused by time or the duration of things. People have tremendous paranoia due to their confusion about time. For instance, you might regard what you think you will experience in the future as a present threat or problem, or because you have experienced something in the past, you might think that in the future it will happen again. There are all kinds of analogies for such paranoia. For instance, you might think that because the Second World War happened, another Hitler is waiting to do the same thing in the future. However, you could develop a clear sense of time so that what you have experienced is what you have experienced; what you are experiencing is what you are experiencing; and what you might experience is what you might experience. You could develop clarity in your experience of past, present, and future.

The instruction in a nutshell is that you could take advantage of your present situation. You have power over the present. Your future situation can be attained and achieved because you have the information and resources of the past: the past has gotten you this far, to the present; and at present, you have what you have. You understand that your future is somewhat predetermined by the present situation, and you realize what you are doing. You have inherited information, credentials, and knowledge from the past; therefore, you know how to act now, in the present, and you can attain what you might attain in the future. So the future is entirely dependent on you, whether or not you would like to put it into effect.

Because of this realization, you do not feel trapped in any way. You have confidence and dignity. You are no longer subject to the whirlpool. You no longer fear that once you jump into the rushing river, you are bound to be swept down Niagara Falls. By practicing vipashyana discipline, you are trying to get out of karmic encirclement. You are trying to [page 364] cut through karmic cause and effect, so that you can realize your dignity and elegance. You can be arrogant in the positive sense because you can cut through the

vicious circle of karma by applying the techniques that have been presented to you. That is the realization or discovery of time.

Insight: Discovering Knowledge

The sixth discovery is discovering knowledge, or insight. In Tibetan it is *rikpa tsölwa*. *Rikpa* is “insight,” and *tsölwa* is “discovery,” so *rikpa tsölwa* is the “discovery of insight.” In this context, insight refers to scientific insight, insight into cause and effect. It refers to relative reference, the ultimate logical mind. The Tibetan term for insight is *rikpa*, and the Sanskrit term is *vidya*, which means “knowledge,” and in particular “scientific knowledge.” That is what we are discovering: knowledge. We are beginning to know the nature of cause and effect. In other words, we have an understanding of karma. In the simple example of planting a seed, we know that when we care for the plant, it is going to grow and develop to fruition. Insight involves faith and the appreciation of scientific discoveries. Albert Einstein could be an example of this kind of discovery. I heard that Einstein was more interested in knowledge than in cash, so he used to use his checks as bookmarks.

Vidya, like science, is based on understanding and trusting the norm of truth that exists in the phenomenal world. It is said in the texts that the knowledge that comes from vipashyana is based on understanding that fire is hot, water is liquid, and so forth. Understanding the elements of earth, water, fire, and air—that earth is solid, water is wet, fire burns, and so on—is basic science. Anything that scientists have discovered is included in the teachings, even simple things, like if you bang your head on the wall, it hurts. You might think this is the kind of lesson you get in sixth grade, and that you are above it. Nonetheless, you have to consider how much you have taken for granted, how much you have ignored, how little trust you have had in the cause and effect of circumstances.

The workings of the elements are very important. If you realize the workings of the elements, you begin to realize the workings of the cause and effect of karma as well, because they are basically the same. According to Buddhism, if you kill, you get killed. You might not have to go through the courts and receive capital punishment, but if you kill somebody, sometime in the future it will happen to you. Through insight, [page 365] or vidya, we discover the truth about karma. This allows the kleshas, or confused emotions, to dry up by themselves.

Applying the Six Discoveries

You could apply these six discoveries to anything in your life. As an example, in dealing with pain, the first discovery, meaning, is connected with one’s psychological attitude

toward the experience of pain or pleasure. Form has to do with not being deluded by your imagination, but beginning to make a connection with the reality of the pain. That is, pain is pain; the meaning of pain is pain; and the feeling of pain is pain. The characteristic, or nature, of pain is that it is threatening to one's existence. Pain may involve the fear of death, or the fear of continuing to live. All kinds of fears are involved, which provide various reference points toward the pain. With direction, you are discovering how much space pain occupies and how much space pleasure occupies. And within that space, you discover how important your body and this particular existence is to you. As for time, in relating with pain you apply time, whether it is the duration of a situation that you created yourself, or an experience that is presenting its case to you. With insight, you have an overview. You are viewing all of life, or in this example all your pain, in terms of its meaning, form, characteristic, direction, time, and insight.

The six discoveries are the result of the clear thinking of vipashyana, the result of the process of seeing very precisely. They are not something to look for; instead, they are behaviors or patterns that develop. Vipashyana is the heart of the buddhadharma. It sets the general tone of the psychology of Buddhism. A Buddhist has clear thinking and an objective view of the world. He or she is able to recognize and use relative logic. There is no chance that such a person will be swayed by fascinations or extremes. With vipashyana, everything becomes very precise and very direct.

Throughout the teachings, and in all the practices you are given, nothing is held back. All the aspects and the attributes of the practices, all the definitions of terms and their contexts, are given to you right at the beginning. Nothing is a mystery. You know everything back to front, which exhausts your expectation of anything extraordinary. There is no reason to be excited about vipashyana. If you are in the state of vipashyana, so what?

[page 366] On the whole, we are studying dharma so that we know how to handle our life properly. We do not just naively go along with everything, nor for that matter do we become overly paranoid. Instead, as Buddhists we have an understanding of balance. We know how to handle life, and we understand cause and effect. We do not regard our life as though we are constantly being cheated. Whether we are being cheated or not, if we extend ourselves too far or indulge ourselves, we will be cut short. If we are overly sensitive, some accommodation will be provided. That is how the world works according to the vipashyana vision of discriminating- awareness wisdom, which comes from relaxing your mind. So in Buddhism, we are doing more than purely relating to our meditation practice in the shrine hall—we are training in how to live our life.