

**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 Eight: Syllabus**

**1) Finish up transitional readings from VCTR from Class Seven**

**2) Vipashyana: The Classifications**

- a) The "four types of vipashyana investigating the essence":
  - i) Discriminating
  - ii) Fully discriminating
  - iii) Examining
  - iv) Analyzing
- b) The "three gateways":
  - i) Designations
  - ii) Thorough investigation
  - iii) Individual analysis
- c) The "six investigations"
  - i) Meaning
  - ii) Thing
  - iii) Character
  - iv) Direction
  - v) Time
  - vi) Reasoning
    - (1) The reasoning of dependence
    - (2) The reasoning of function
    - (3) The reasoning of logical proof
    - (4) The reasoning of nature
- d) Summary of the Six Investigations as Three
  - i) The meaning
  - ii) The mode of being
  - iii) The varieties
- e) Twofold Condensation
  - i) Preparatory or *analytic*
  - ii) Actual or *non-fluctuating*

## Materials for Class Eight

### 1) Classical Readings:

#### a) Essential Readings:

- i) The Classifications of Vipashyana, The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana, Jamgon Kongtrul, *The Treasury of Knowledge*, translated by Kiki Ekselius and Chryssoula Zerbini, 4 pages
- ii) Classifications of Insight, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment, Vol. 3*, Tsong-kha-pa, translated by the Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee, pp. 327-330, four pages
- iii) Equivalence with Other Systems of Vipashyana Meditation, *The Royal Seal of Mahamudra, Volume One: A Guidebook for the Realization of Coemergence*, Khamtrul Ngawang Kunga Tenzin, Trs. Gerardo Abboud, pp. 264-267, three pages
- iv) Correlating This Vipashyanā with Other Approaches, *Moonbeams: An Eloquent Elucidation of the Way, To Cultivate Mahāmudrā, the Definitive Meaning*, Tashi Namgyal, Trs. Elizabeth Callahan, pp. 255-258, three pages

#### b) Optional Materials:

- i) Categories of Vipashyanā, *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*, Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, translated by Peter Roberts, pp. 69-107, six pages

### 2) Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche Readings:

#### a) Essential Readings:

- i) Systems of Vipashyana, Glimpses of Emptiness, *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One*, pp. 348-349, one page (in class 7 package)
- ii) Talk 8. Vipashyana (Lhagthong), 1973 Hinayana-Mahayana Seminary Transcripts, pp. 91-96, six pages

#### b) Optional Materials

- i) Four Categories of Vipashyana, Chapter 47. Investigating the Subtleties of Experience, *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One*, pp. 354-358, four pages
- ii) The Six Discoveries, Chapter 48. Sharpening One's Perception, *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma: Volume One*, pp. 359-366, six 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*

## **Vipashyana: The Classifications**

### **The Classification According to the Essential Nature**

*The classification is into the four types of vipashyana investigating the essence: discriminating, fully discriminating, examining, and analyzing; the three gateways: designations, thorough investigation, and individual analysis; and the six investigations: meaning, thing, character, direction, time and reasoning, the latter being of four kinds: the reasoning of dependence, of function, of logical proof, and of nature. Through these six, discrimination is applied to each and every phenomenon from form up to omniscience.*

What is mainly taught here is not the vipashyana of the high levels and paths, but the vipashyana to be practiced by ordinary persons. There are three main types of classification for this:

1. Firstly, according to the *Sutra Unraveling the Thought*, there is a classification known as the four types of vipashyana investigating the essence. These are discriminating and fully discriminating, each of which is divided into thoroughly examining and analyzing.
  - Discriminating involves focusing on the varieties of phenomena, distinguishing them into categories such as the aggregates, the elements and the entrances, and proceeding to a detailed subdivision of each.
  - Fully discriminating involves focusing on their mode of being and realizing the absence of a self of persons and of phenomena.
  - Examining and analyzing refer to the coarse and subtle aspects of discrimination respectively.

The way of examining is described in the *Sutra Unraveling the Thought* as “fully examining, definitely examining, fully understanding and closely understanding.” This also applies to analyzing. Thus, the extensive classification involves sixteen subdivisions. The detailed presentation of these can be found in the *Levels of Hearers*:

“A classification similar to the one given in the *Sutra Unraveling the Thought* was given in the *Compendium of Knowledge*: “What is vipashyana? It is discriminating, fully discriminating, thoroughly examining and thoroughly analyzing phenomena; it is the remedy to rigidity and conceptuality, draws the mind away from the erroneous and settles it in that which is not erroneous.”

2. Secondly, there is a three-fold classification of vipashyana known as the three gateways. The *Sutra Unraveling the Thought* says:

“O Bhagavan, how many types of vipashyana are there? Maitreya, there are three: the one arising from designations, the one arising from thorough investigation, and the one arising from individual analysis.

If one identifies those three in relation to meditation on selflessness, they are as follows:

- One focuses on the recognition of selflessness, concentrating on its attributes, without making use of much logical argumentation;
  - One uses reasoning in order to ascertain what one formerly could not understand; and
  - One analyses repeatedly as before the meaning which has been ascertained.
3. Finally, there is a six-fold classification of vipashyana known as the six investigations. Here one thoroughly investigates the six aspects of phenomena, which are meaning, things, character, direction, time and reasoning; this is also a case of vipashyana arising from individual analysis:

- a. Investigation of meaning entails finding out the sense of a given word or phrase;
- b. Investigation of things entails classifying them as either internal or external;
- c. Investigation of character entails identifying the general (or abstract) and the specific (or concrete) character of phenomena, referred to as common and uncommon investigation respectively;
- d. Investigation of direction entails investigating what is unwholesome by considering its faults and shortcomings, and what is wholesome by considering its qualities and benefits;
- e. Investigation of time entails considering what has happened in the past, what will happen in the future and what takes place in the present;
- f. Investigation of reasoning is of four types:
  - i. The reasoning of dependence refers to the investigation of the dependence of an effect upon causes and conditions for its arising. In this context one investigates the deceptive, the ultimate and their basis of imputation individually;
  - ii. The reasoning of function refers to the performance by each phenomenon of its own particular function: for example, fire burns, etc. Here one investigates by identifying the phenomenon, the function and their mutual relationship;
  - iii. The reasoning, of logical proof refers to establishing the validity of propositions in accordance with valid cognition. Here one investigates phenomena with respect to three types of valid cognition, namely, direct valid cognition, inferential valid cognition and the valid cognition of trustworthy scriptures;
  - iv. The reasoning of nature refers to investigating phenomena in terms of their conventional nature, e.g. fire being hot, water wet, etc.; their inconceivable nature; and, their abiding nature. One accepts these natures as such and does not look for other reasons for their being so.

Thus, by means of the six investigations, one discriminates and comprehends each and every phenomenon, from form up to omniscience, whether afflicted or pure.

***The six investigations should be known as three: the meaning, the mode of being and the varieties.***

The six investigations should be known as three: the meaning, the mode of being and the varieties. Vipashyana can also be condensed into preparatory or “analytic” and actual or “unfluctuating.”

This six-fold presentation of vipashyana can be condensed into three main categories which are what a yogi should know:

1. the meaning of words,
2. the varieties of phenomena and
3. their mode of being.

The first of these corresponds to the first investigation; the second corresponds to the investigation of things in general and of the specific character of phenomena; and the third corresponds to the last three investigations as well as to that of the general character of phenomena.

The three gateways are the entrances to the four vipashyanas explained at first, and the method of investigation was presented as six; therefore the three gateways and the six investigations are included in the four vipashyanas.

***Vipashyana can also be condensed into preparatory or analytic and actual or non-fluctuating.***

**Classifications of Insight**  
**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. 327-330**

Kamalaśīla's second *Stages of Meditation* sets forth three requisites for insight: (1) reliance on an excellent being, (2) genuinely pursuing extensive study of explanations of reality, and (3) appropriate reflection. By relying upon these three, you will discover the view—the understanding of the two selflessnesses. Then cultivate insight.

What insights should you cultivate? Here, our immediate and primary concern is not the insights of the elevated stages; we are mainly setting forth the insights that you cultivate while you are an ordinary being. For an ordinary being, complete insight is the cultivation of the fourfold, the threefold, and the sixfold insight. The fourfold insight refers to differentiation and so forth, as stated in the *Sūtra Unravelling the Intended Meaning*. Differentiation observes the diversity of conventional phenomena. Full differentiation observes the real nature of phenomena. The first [differentiation] is of two types—thorough examination and thorough analysis; and the second [full differentiation] is of two types—examination and analysis. Examination and analysis are distinguished according to whether the object is coarse or subtle. Asanga's *Śrāvaka Levels* says:

What is the fourfold insight? It is thus. Using the serenity within his mind, a monk differentiates, fully differentiates, fully examines, and fully analyzes phenomena. How does he differentiate? He differentiates by way of their diversity the objects of meditation that purify analysis, the objects of meditation of the learned, and the objects of meditation that purify the afflictions. He fully differentiates through analyzing the real nature of those three types of object. Full examination occurs when he uses conceptual attention endowed with those two kinds of wisdom to apprehend the distinguishing signs of those three types of object. When he analyzes them correctly, it is full analysis.

The same four paths of insight are set forth in Asanga's *Compendium of Knowledge*. The identification of them in Ratnākaraśānti's *Instructions for the Perfection of Wisdom* also agrees with the *Śrāvaka Levels*.

Regarding the threefold insight, the *Sūtra Unravelling the Intended Meaning* says:

Bhagavan, how many types of insight are there?

Maitreya, there are three types: that which arises from signs, that which arises from thorough searching, and that which arises from analytical discrimination.

What is insight which arises from signs? It is insight that attends only to a conceptual image within the sphere of concentration.

What is insight which arises from thorough searching? It is insight that attends to features which were not well understood by previous wisdom consciousnesses bearing upon the given object, so that those features may be well understood.

What is insight which arises from analytical discrimination? It is insight that attends to features that were well understood by earlier wisdom consciousnesses bearing upon the given object, so that you may feel the genuine bliss of liberation.

Regarding this, *Asanga's Śrāvaka Levels* says that those at the stage of equipoise may attend to a teaching they have studied and memorized, or to personal instructions. This is attention but it is not contemplation; nor is it consideration, evaluation, or examination. It is involved only in the signs. As you move from contemplation through to examination, you are engaged in thorough searching. To have exact analytical discrimination of what has been thus determined constitutes engaging in analytical discrimination of that for which you have thoroughly searched. Those three are the three doors of insight. To summarize, in the first you might, for example, observe the meaning of selflessness and attend to its signs, but you do not do much to come to a conclusion. In the second, you come to a conclusion in order to determine what you had not previously determined. In the third, you analyze, as before, a meaning that you have already determined.

The sixfold insight refers to the observation of six bases; it is a search procedure for the insight of thorough searching. You thoroughly search for—and, after you have sought, analytically discriminate—meanings, things, characteristics, categories, times, and reasonings.

- *Searching for meanings* refers to seeking the meaning of a given term.
- *Searching for things* refers to seeking [to determine] whether something is an internal thing or an external thing.
- *Searching for characteristics* is of two types: seeking to determine whether something is a general characteristic or a specific characteristic, and seeking to



determine whether a characteristic is shared or unique.

- *Searching for categories* is seeking to determine what is in the negative category based on its faults and defects and seeking to determine what is in the positive category based on its good qualities and benefits.
- *Searching for times* is seeking to determine how something could have occurred in the past, how it could occur in the future, and how it might be occurring in the present.
- *Searching for reasoning* is of four types:
  - (1) the reasoning of dependence is that effects arise in dependence on causes and conditions. You search from the distinctive perspectives of the conventional, the ultimate, and their bases.
  - (2) The reasoning of performance of function is that phenomena perform their own functions, as in the case of fire performing the function of burning. You search, thinking, "This is the phenomenon, this is the function, this phenomenon performs this function."
  - (3) The reasoning of tenable proof is that something is proven without being contradicted by valid knowledge. You search, thinking, "Is this supported by any of the three forms of valid knowledge—perception, inference, and reliable scripture?"
  - (4) The reasoning of reality gives you confidence in the reality of things as known in the world—e.g., the reality that fire is hot and water is wet—or confidence about inconceivable realities, or confidence about the abiding reality; it does not consider any further reason as to why these things are that way.

A yogi's understanding of the six just presented is of three types: the meaning of the terms expressed, the diversity of objects of knowledge, and the actual nature of objects of knowledge. The first of the six kinds of searching, searching for meanings, falls within the first type, the meaning of the terms expressed. Searching for things and searching for specific characteristics fall within the second type, the diversity of objects of knowledge. Searching for general characteristics and searching for the remaining three of those six fall within the third type, the actual nature of objects of knowledge.

*Asanga's Śrāvaka Levels* says:

This is the observation of the three doors of insight and the six categories within the basis. In brief, these fully encompass all types of insight.

This means those that are explained there in the *Śrāvaka Levels* encompass all types of insight.

Furthermore, the doorways to the four insights that we explained first are the three types of insight—that which is arisen from just the signs, etc. It is said that you enter them through searching with the six ways of searching from the point of view of those three doorways, so it seems that the three doorways and the six ways of searching are included within the previous fourfold division. Asanga's *Śrāvaka Levels* states that the attention of tight focus, etc.—a set of four explained above—are common to both serenity and insight; hence, insight also has these four attentions. Therefore, Ratnākaraśānti's *Instructions for the Perfection of Wisdom* says:

Thus, completing the cultivation of the fourfold insight frees you from the bondage of rebirth in the miserable realms. Completing the cultivation of the ninefold serenity frees you from the bondage of signs.

There are a great many texts that say the same thing; hence, insight is cultivated via the four—differentiation and so forth—as they are indicated in the *Sūtra Unravelling the Intended Meaning*. Serenity is cultivated via the nine states of mind which stabilize your attention without any discursive movement from object to object.

**Equivalence with Other Systems of Vipashyana Meditation**  
**From *The Royal Seal of Mahamudra, Volume One:***  
***A Guidebook for the Realization of Coemergence***  
**Khamtrul Ngawang Kunga Tenzin, Trs. by Gerardo Abboud, pp. 264-267**

In the Sutra That Unravels the Intent and other sutras, the four vipashyanas of distinguishing phenomena and the rest are explained. Here are the equivalences with our system:

1. To focus on what arises from the expression or radiance of the mind, the thoughts and perceptions that include all phenomena of subject and object, is the vipashyana that distinguishes phenomena. This is because after focusing on the diversity of phenomena—all knowable objects—they are completely distinguished from each other.
2. To focus on the absence of true nature in each of the aspects of subject and object is the vipashyana that utterly distinguishes, because the distinction is carried out by focusing on the “as it is” aspect of knowable objects.
3. To discern these two with fixation on inherent attributes is the vipashyana that completely discerns, because the coarse meanings of “as it is” and “as many as there are” are discerned with fixation on inherent attributes.
4. The subtle investigation deriving from these two is the vipashyana that completely investigates, because even the subtlest aspects of “as it is” and “as many as there are” are perfectly investigated. In the Shravaka Levels it is said:

In this regard, how is the distinction carried out? Full differentiation should be accomplished through the object of completely trained scrutiny, the object of mastery, the object of completely trained afflictions, and as many objects as there are available.

Also, as found in the Sutra That Unravels the Intent:

If we compare the explanations of the three vipashyanas derived from attributes, in our case the diverse objects of [page 265] observation of vipashyana are in the conceptual style; so this is equivalent to the vipashyana derived from attributes. This is because the object of observation of vipashyana is only a conceptualized image, a mental engagement. The way to bring about the realization that these have no true nature is the vipashyana derived from a thorough search. This is because it is a mental engagement that knows the object of examination

that was not realized before. The way to become familiar with the attained freedom related with all phenomena having no true nature is the vipashyana derived from discernment. This is because, once the natural condition of all phenomena is realized through discerning prajna, this vipashyana brings about familiarization with the natural condition so that one comes into contact with the perfect bliss of liberation.

The same sutra also states:

What is meant by “derived from attributes?” It is the vipashyana that mentally engages solely on a conceptual image in the field of experience of samadhi. What is the vipashyana derived from a thorough search? It is that particular vipashyana that mentally engages in order to have the excellent realization of those phenomena that have not been extremely well realized through prajna in the previous vipashyana. What is the vipashyana derived from discernment? It is that particular vipashyana that mentally engages in order to achieve freedom derived from the phenomena that have been extremely well realized through prajna, and to properly come into contact with bliss.

Apart from the classification of vipashyana thus described simply being mentioned in sutras and commentaries, the manners of establishing certainty in each have not been explained in the texts on the stages of meditation. The key points of all these forms of vipashyana are condensed in the manner of establishing certainty based upon the twofold selflessness, which is very renowned in the sutra system both in [page 266] India and Tibet. Comparing these with ours the manner of establishing certainty about the essence of mind is equivalent to the approach found in the sutras that establishes the selflessness of the individual self. In the sutra section the approach is through reasoning, and the individual is held to be the continuity of the aggregates. This apprehends itself as permanent and singular, after which it clings to and fixates upon itself as “I” or self. This is the self of the individual. To know that it has no true nature is called “the selflessness of the individual.” Likewise, in our case that which holds itself as permanent and singular and fixates as “I” or self is one’s own mind itself. This is confirmed not only by establishing that it has no true nature, but also by one’s own mind becoming the object of meditation.

Similarly to establish certainty about thoughts and phenomena is equivalent to the sutra method of establishing the lack of identity, or selflessness, of phenomena. In the sutra system, the individual self designates the aggregates, elements, etc., as phenomena. Clinging to and fixating upon them as things endowed with inherent defining attributes

is the identity, or self, of phenomena. To know them as having no true nature is the selflessness of phenomena. Likewise, here we not only establish that the mental events and external forms, sounds, etc., designated by the mind and appearing as things endowed with inherent attributes have no true nature, but we also take them as the object of our meditation.

However, the order in which the subject and object are ascertained is different. In the sutra systems it is taught that without first resolving the object grasped upon, the subject—the fixated mind—cannot be resolved. Dharmakirti stated:

Without refuting the object [“mine”], That [“I”] cannot be eliminated.

Aryadeva said:

If the object is seen as lacking inherent identity,  
The seed of existence is obliterated.

[page 267] In our case, we believe that proceeding in that way leads to a lot of difficulty in resolving the fixating mind. Therefore we first resolve the fixating mind, whereby the object of grasping becomes resolved by being self-liberated. By cutting a tree from the root, its branches, leaves, and petals all dry up. Tilopa applied this analogy in his teaching and the same has been taught in all the instructions of essential truth.

**Correlating This Vipāśyanā with Other Approaches**  
**From *Moonbeams: An Eloquent Elucidation of the Way***  
***To Cultivate Mahāmudrā, the Definitive Meaning***  
**By Tashi Namgyal, Trs. Elizabeth Callahan, pp. 255-258**

[page 255] A correlation [of the vipāśyanā presented here] with the explanation of the four types of vipāśyanā, such as the differentiation of phenomena, found in *Unraveling the Intent* and elsewhere, is as follows:

- Here, our focus on the quantitative aspect of the phenomena of percepts and perceivers, which are included within the thoughts and appearances arising as the mind's expressive power, is the vipāśyanā that differentiates phenomena because, by focusing on all phenomena—that is, the quantitateness of all knowable objects—they are differentiated.
- Our focus on all things that are perceived or are perceivers as lacking an essence of their own is the vipāśyanā that differentiates thoroughly because, by focusing on the qualitateness of knowable objects, they are differentiated.
- Our discernment of those two [the quantitative and the qualitative aspects] with an apprehension of their characteristics is the vipāśyanā that discerns completely because discerning coarse qualitateness and quantitateness along with an apprehension of their characteristics is discernment.
- Our careful analysis of those two [the quantitative and the qualitative aspects] is the vipāśyanā that analyzes completely because it is the correct analysis of the most subtle aspects of qualitateness and quantitateness.

The *Śrāvakabhūmi* teaches:

How is differentiation done? Differentiation is conducted with the quantitative aspects of the objects of meditation for purifying behavior, objects of meditation for expertise, and the objects of meditation for purifying mental afflictions. Thorough differentiation is conducted with the qualitative aspect [of those three objects].

When attention endowed with prajñā joins with discernment to apprehend the characteristics [of those three objects], that is complete discernment. When

there is correct discernment, that is complete analysis.

[page 256] A correlation [of the vipaśyanā presented here] with the explanation of the three types of vipaśyanā, such as that which arises from characteristics, found in *Unraveling the Intent*, is as follows.

- Here the way we discern the objects of vipaśyanā is the vipaśyanā that arises from characteristics because that only brings to mind conceptual representations as the objects of vipaśyanā.
- The way we understand that all such [phenomena] lack an essence is the vipaśyanā that arises from thorough investigation because it is the attention comprehending an object of understanding that was not previously understood.
- The way that we attain and become familiar with the liberation in which all phenomena lack an essence is the vipaśyanā that arises from discernment because, by realizing the abiding state of phenomena with our discerning prajñā, we feel true bliss through liberation and become familiar with that.

*Unraveling the Intent* explains:

What is the vipaśyanā that arises from characteristics? It is that which only brings to mind a conceptual representation for its sphere of samādhi.

What is the vipaśyanā that arises from thorough investigation? It is that which brings to mind dharma topics that were not well understood by the prajñā [that was directed] at them in order that such [topics] be understood.

What is the vipaśyanā that arises from discernment? It is that which brings to mind dharma topics that were well understood by the prajñā [that was directed] at them, in order that [bodhisattvas] may feel bliss through liberation.

Although those classifications of vipaśyanā are listed in the sūtras and *Unraveling the Intent*, the texts on the stages of meditation do not explain the way to determine each of them specifically. However, since their key points are contained within the determination of the two absences of self-entity and that approach is well known in the Sūtra context in both India and Tibet, those [two absences of self-entity] will be correlated with [the vipaśyanā presented here] as follows.

[page 257] Here the way the essence of mind is determined is similar to the way the

absence of a self of persons is determined in the Sūtra context. In the Sūtra context, the person is considered to be what holds the continua of the skandhas with awareness. [Belief in] the self of persons is that that [“person”] takes itself to be permanent and singular, and believes itself to be “I” and “me.” [Recognition of] the absence of a self of persons is to know that to be without any nature. Here, what holds itself to be permanent and singular, and believes itself to be “I” and “me” is the mind itself. We determine that to be without any nature.

The way [the natures of] thoughts and appearances are determined is similar to the way that the absence of a self-entity of phenomena is determined in the Sūtra context. In the Sūtra context, phenomena [in this instance] refers to the skandhas, dhātus, and so forth that are imagined by the self of persons. [Belief in] a self-entity of phenomena is to believe those to be objectively existent things. [Recognition of] the absence of a self-entity of phenomena is to know those to be without any nature. Here we determine all objectively existent appearances—the mental events imagined by the mind itself and external forms, sounds, and so forth—to be without any nature.

Despite those similarities, the sequence of how [the nature of] objects and perceiving subjects are determined is different. In the Sūtra context, it is taught that without first determining [the nature of] objects (what are perceived), [the nature of] mind (the perceiving subject) will not be determined. As Dharmakīrti observes:

Without invalidating the object  
it is impossible to eliminate it.

Āryadeva adds:

When you see that the object has no self-entity,  
the seed of existence is destroyed.

Here it is thought that approaching it that way makes determining [the nature of] the perceiving mind later on much harder, whereas determining the perceiving mind first makes it easy to determine perceived objects—it will be as if they are self-liberating. It is analogous to the way that cutting the root of a tree causes its branches and leaves to wither, as taught [page 258] by Tilopa. This is what appears in all the instructions on the ultimate essence.

That completes the explanation of the instructions in vipaśyanā.



**Talk 8. Vipashyana (Lhagthong)**  
**1973 Hinayana-Mahayana Seminary Transcripts**  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, pp. 91-96**

**Definition of Vipashyana**

The next subject we have to study is vipashyana, which is often translated as "insight". The Tibetan word for that is *lhagthong*: *lhag* is clear or perfect, *thong* is seeing; so clear seeing, perfectly seeing. Lhagthong could be regarded as a meditative practice or contemplative practice. There are two types of lhagthong. The one is called *je gom*, which means contemplating on a certain aspect of the meaning of reality and meditating upon it. The other type is called *jog gom*, which means simply rest, and meditating on the abstract or intuitive level. So there are two types of meditations particularly involved with lhagthong.

Then there is *lhagthong dagme togpai sherab*. Lhagthong is again the clear seeing. *Dag* is the self, ego; *me* is negation. So *dagme* is "egoless". *Togpa* is realization, and changing *togpa* to *togpai* makes "of"; *sherab* is "knowledge". So "knowledge of egoless understanding", which is equated with the idea of discriminating-awareness wisdom. Whenever we begin with the idea of lhagthong or vipashyana, there is a sense that we are including intellectual as well as intuitive knowledge in the teaching, bringing them together. So lhagthong is regarded as extremely important. The vipashyana practice is not purely sitting meditation practice alone; it has the scope of pre-prajna. We could say that infant prajna, or embryonic prajna is lhagthong. One of the definitions of lhagthong is "the flame that burns the fuel of conceptual ego-mind."

Let me set you some kind of guidelines as to how to relate with these subjects. Each time we discuss a particular issue like shamatha or vipashyana, whatever, traditionally the definition is given in terms of an example, imagery. And from the definition there are categories of different types of subjects that contain different qualities, different attributes.

So the definition of lhagthong is that which burns the ego mind—that is the basic statement of what lhagthong is all about. Therefore it would be a misunderstanding to regard vipashyana as a technique in meditation practice after shamatha alone; it is something more than that. It has been said that lhagthong is that which brings together knowledge and the meditative state of mind; prajna and samadhi. That which brings prajna and samadhi together is the lhagthong experience; clear thinking and complete awareness.

[Page 92] Thus far, when we have discussed the vipashyana aspect of the practice of meditation, any kind of awareness that we practice is more mindfulness than awareness. The sense of being there and sense of bare attention to what's happening psychologically, physically, emotionally, whatever—fully being there. Those are all mindfulness practice. But from vipashyana practice onward, any kind of meditative experience, meditative concentration that we might use is regarded as awareness practice—being *aware* rather than being mindful.

The definition of mindfulness, absolute ideal mindfulness, is like a burning candle uninterrupted by wind: there is a sense of stillness, and a sense of ongoing accuracy; everything is noted, perceived. And everything is recycled, so to speak. The practitioner is not looking for external material to reinforce the effort or the methods that he applies to the practice. Rather than getting a supply from outside, it is self-contained. Therefore it is like a candle burning undisturbed by wind, self-contained. It is being mindful and relating with the eight types of consciousness, and just simply being there precisely.

In the case of lhagthong practice, it becomes slightly more adventurous, because now we begin to include the intellectual aspect in our psychological makeup. The clear seeing begins to bring about a sense of relationship. The intellectual messenger, the conceptualizer, begins to become active and begins to develop discriminating awareness.

We should be very careful about that particular term or idea of discriminating. It is not discriminating in the sense of throwing away or rejecting certain things, like racial discrimination, which is the idea of rejecting what is seen to be inferior as opposed to the superior. In this case when we talk about discriminating, it means that everything is seen precisely and clearly and nothing is rejected. Everything is included, but not in a vague, happy together way, the ordinary notion of an ecumenical spirit of some kind. Everything is included, but on its own merit—whether it is worthy or unworthy, destructive or creative, whatever; everything is seen clearly as is. But at the same time, they have their names, categories and concepts. Everything is placed very clearly and fully; so things become very precise. And that is why the idea of bringing together prajna and samadhi is the characteristic of lhagthong.

So the example of lhagthong is like a flame burning fuel, the knowledge and the clarity burning the fuel of ego-mind. And the characteristic of lhagthong is the combination of knowledge and the meditative state. We might ask: how come there is a meditative state if the whole thing is entirely based on the discrimination-awareness principle which is busy labelling and trying to pinpoint things? The basic notion of the meditative

[Page 93] state of lhagthong is a sense of vastness, a sense of spaciousness because you no longer have to be mindful, but you can be *aware*. So we could say that mindfulness is a journey from the outskirts to the central point. In mindfulness practices, you find mental activities, whatever, and you begin to note the mental contents as being active; and then you focus your attention and you begin to develop a sense of well-being by observing, seeing things as they are in their own light, which is a journey.

In the case of the awareness practice of lhagthong, it is direct in the sense that it does not take journey or preparation to find the subject matter; it doesn't necessarily demand putting your effort into it at all. You just perceive things simply, directly, whether you perceive mental contents or whatever. That perception itself is the expression of lhagthong. We could say quite safely—as has been said by Taranatha, and all the great teachers who have experienced lhagthong—that lhagthong is like riding an elephant: you think you are riding the elephant, but in fact the elephant is carrying you. So there is a sense of lhagthong coming upon you rather than you working towards it. It does not need cooking up, so to speak.

Jamgon Kongtrul and the great teachers of the Kagyu and Nyingma lineages always try to make a point of the superiority and importance of lhagthong by saying that lhagthong experience sows the seed of the highest intelligence in our state of mind. It awakens the intelligence to realize that the literal interpretation of the Dharma is no longer important; the real interpretation of the Dharma becomes more important. That is one of the important points. The Dharma is not purely technical and doctrinal any more. One begins to realize that the essence of Dharma can be felt rather than simplistically memorizing ideas and categories written in books in a technical, scholarly way.

So from that point of view, lhagthong is that which awakens the intuitive understanding of the practice and the teachings. Without lhagthong, without vipashyana practice, there is no way we could prepare ourselves to comprehend the subtleties of the teachings. So lhagthong practice goes from the Hinayana level up to the Maha Ati level of Vajrayana. It is regarded as an extremely important starting point for the development of discriminating-awareness wisdom.

### **Attributes of Vipashyana**

There are several attributes of lhagthong experience largely based on intellectual sharpness developed by practicing vipashyana meditation, rather than on meditative experience itself.

**The first one** is relying more on the sense of the teachings than on the word. Thus, there is some trust in oneself as we begin to realize that we have the potential of wisdom, knowledge, in us. We begin to realize that it's a question of waking up rather than painfully cultivating.

**The second one** is that a person also begins to understand extrovert and introvert in terms of relationship and communication, and sees the importance of going out and giving out, over the introverted notion of holding back, which is [Page 94] called the search for reality.

**The third attribute**, the search for the basic nature of reality, is developing a very logical knowledge that is not confused about logic; basic logic. One can simply figure out or discover the origin of thought patterns in communication. The practitioner of lhagthong is not completely freaked out because someone is rude or aggressive to him, because of their face value. He would be able to look beyond to the causal characteristics of that person's reactions.

**The fourth attribute** is the ability to detect that which is not suitable, that which is a hindrance to the path, negative, positive or whatever.

**The fifth attribute** is, having developed lhagthong, a person will be able to seek the wisdom, seek the good attributes. That is to say, the person is able to have some sense of allegiance, or some sense of natural instinct as to what is right for one and what isn't. He is able to tune himself instinctively into the appropriate situations.

**The sixth attribute** is being not confused by past, present, and future, and complex patterns of thought process. Past is past, present is present, and future is future. So a person has developed clear thinking. Intellectually and intuitively a person is not confused by the time duration of the way things work.

**The seventh one** is that a person has also developed relative reference mind. He is not completely confused by an issue; that issue is workable because it has connection with relative reference. This is developing the ultimate logical mind.

So those are the results of the clear thinking of lhagthong vipashyana experience, the process which sees very precisely and clearly. In fact, lhagthong vipashyana experience is the heart of Buddhism from that point of view. It sets the general tone of the psychology of Buddhism: that a Buddhist has clear thinking and an objective view of the world, able to see and use relative logic. So there is no chance that he will be swayed into any other trips or extremes anymore; everything becomes very precise, very direct.

## Approaching Vipashyana Practice

I suppose we could fully discuss the techniques of lhagthong tomorrow. Today, I would like to go through it briefly. According to Matripa, who was a teacher of Marpa, if a person is able to hold his discriminating mind in its own place, that is the perfection of lhagthong. That is to say, there is no suspicion as to a person's involvement in lhagthong experience. He is completely satisfied and feels completely at home with the lhagthong experience—or possibilities of lhagthong experience for that matter. That person has no tendency to shop around for other techniques anymore. When a person's mind is clearly set on that discriminating-awareness wisdom, then he is a good student of lhagthong practice.

If we look clearly, there is a contradiction there: we are supposed to develop the highly discriminating, very powerful mind of lhagthong but at the same time we are not supposed to have any doubt, none whatsoever. We could say there is something wrong there—that you're not [Page 95] supposed to have any doubt, but at the same time you are supposed to have discriminating-awareness wisdom. Seemingly there is a contradiction, but actually there is none whatsoever. In fact, it is complementary in many ways. The contradiction only comes if we relate with lhagthong experience as something which brings a result or reward of some kind. As long as there is a notion of getting a reward from somewhere by practicing this, then it ceases to become the practice of discriminating wisdom. We are not discriminating with the sharpness of our intellect anymore; we are only concerned with "if I practice, will I get a reward," which is non-discriminating neurosis. In fact, we are already bogged down into the usual samsaric pattern. So you can't say that is being very clever and smart any more.

The attitude of a lhagthong practitioner is to not have a goal. When you don't have any notion of a goal at all, then you have nothing to lose and nothing to gain. And the only thing is that the mental plays, intellectual plays happening in your state of mind are colorful and provocative. That seems to be the point: the sense of trust and sense of faith is in you, in some sense, in individuals, and if you give up the notion of goal and achievement, then one develops discriminating wisdom and faith simultaneously. Usually, when we talk about faith, ordinary blind faith, we talk in terms of getting a reward; that is the basic notion of faith: "If I have faith in you, will you save me?" If lhagthong practitioners have no need for reward, but simply go and practice, it does not need any confirmation any more. Therefore lhagthong practitioners have developed the highest form of devotion and faith, because there is no need for a reward from that point of view.

The first level of lhagthong practice is called the practice of the infant. That is the awareness technique which we probably should discuss tomorrow. The practice of the infant is at the level of the first path of the Path of Accumulation; we begin from that level. That is to say that a person is just about to commit himself into his own intellect. He no longer throws away his intellect as being an obstacle to the path, but begins to make a relationship with intellect for the first time, having gone through the shamatha experience of precision and the sense of well-being, the sense of mindfulness, and so forth. We could discuss that tomorrow.

What we discussed today includes the idea of the practice of the infant and also the higher practice of developing discriminating wisdom. And the general notion is that starting on vipashyana experience is definitely a much bigger step than that of shamatha. In fact, it is much closer to the basic sanity of Buddhism than general spiritual practice. That is definitely, clearly stating that now we have gone through our basic mental trainings and are ready to launch ourselves into the next area of cutting through ego, or egolessness. So a very powerful statement of Buddhism is vipashyana lhagthong experience.

### **Discussion:**

I think actually lhagthong traditionally is supposed to operate on the level of the seventh one completely, and that's why it is very powerful: it cuts the underlying, confused, dualistic notions, discriminating notions, and introduces very clear and superior dualistic notions. In fact the Path of Accumulation at the ordinary person's level, before we become Aryans, has three categories, as I'm sure you have read in Gampopa: not seeing, wrongly seeing and partially seeing. And all of those are included in the Path of Accumulation at the ordinary level: a person has possibilities or a person has no possibilities, or a person has some possibilities but misunderstands. All of those are included in the seventh consciousness level, the unconscious level. Otherwise there is no movement any more.

The sense consciousnesses are what you work with in the shamatha practice. Mindfulness is limited and has the quality of waiting for something; it involves *very* subtle expectation. And awareness is almost one-shot. It doesn't have to wait for anything, but is being at that point on the spot. It is expectation in the sense of confirmation of some kind. The journey that you take in your mental development or psychological development during your practice is very fast and the waiting as well as the getting what you want are very fast, but still there is some kind of conditional thing happening.