

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 Nine: Syllabus

1) How to Perform Vipashyana Meditation

- a) The Way to Meditate
 - i) Analyzing Selflessness
 - ii) By Means of Superior Knowledge
 - iii) Cut through misconceptions regarding the object's qualities
 - iv) Rest in a state free from mental fabrications
 - v) Harmonizing shamatha and vipashyana
- b) The Actual Meditation on Vipashyana
 - i) Non-Analytical and Analytical Images
 - ii) Focusing with individual discriminating knowledge
 - iii) Examination through perfect discriminating knowledge
 - iv) Ascertaining the lack of inherent existence
 - v) Undistractedly realizing mere appearance

Materials for Class Nine

1) Classical Readings:

- a) The Way to Meditate, The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana, Jamgon Kongtrul, *The Treasury of Knowledge*, Translated by Kiki Ekselius and Chrissy Zerbini, 2 pages
- b) Methods 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, three pages
- c) The Way to Cultivate Vipashyanā in This Context, *Moonbeams of Mahāmudrā*, By Dakpo Tashi Namgyal, Trs. by Elizabeth M. Callahan, p. 220-221, two pages
- d) Evaluating whether Vipashyana has Arisen or Not, *The Royal Seal of Mahamudra, Volume One: A Guidebook for the Realization of Coemergence*, Khamtrul Ngawang Kunga Tenzin, Trs. by Gerardo Abboud, pp. 261-264, two pages
- e) The Instruction on Stillness, Occurrence and Awareness in Mahamudra, Mipham Rinpoche From *Perfect Clarity: A Tibetan Buddhist Anthology of Mahamudra and Dzogchen*, Translated by Erik Perna Kunsang, Pages 69-70, one page
- f) Cultivating Energy as the Foundation for Uncovering Insight, From *Wake Up to Your Life*, Ken McLeod, pp. 361-362, two pages

2) Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche Readings:

a) Readings in Class Seven we didn't get to:

- i) Rediscovering Yourself, *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One*, pp. 279-280, two pages
- ii) Meditation is Taking a Leap, from Simplicity and Awareness, in *Work, Sex, Money: Real Life on the Path of Mindfulness*, excerpt pp. 48-53, two pages

b) New Readings for Class Nine

- i) Boredom-Full or Empty?, *The Path Is the Goal: A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation*, pp. 105-108, two pages
- ii) Me-ness and the Emotions, *The Path Is the Goal - A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation*, pp. 55-62, four pages
- iii) Selected excerpts from "First Thought", From *Mindfulness in Action*, pp. 61-69, four pages
- iv) 38. Mixing Mind with Space, *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One: The Path of Individual Liberation*, pp. 281-283, two pages
- v) Excerpts from "Chapter 8: Cutting Ego Fixation", *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Vol. 2, The Bodhisattva Path of Wisdom and Compassion*, pp. 62-67, five pages
- vi) Kundzop and Emptiness, *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Vol. 2, The Bodhisattva Path of Wisdom and Compassion*, pp 156-158, two 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 Way to Meditate

The way to meditate is to analyze selflessness by means of superior knowledge, and then to rest in a state free from mental fabrications. Non-conceptual images are the basis for analysis; having identified the particular object, one cuts through misconceptions regarding its qualities.

If one has no understanding of the view of selflessness, whichever type of meditation one may do will be mistaken with respect to suchness; therefore, it is necessary to establish the view. On the other hand, even though one may have an intellectual understanding of the view, if one does not rest within that understanding, suchness will not have been meditated upon. Therefore, one first analyses selflessness by means of superior knowledge and then rests within the sphere of complete freedom from mental fabrications.

Furthermore, if the ability to rest in equipoise decreases due to extensive analytical meditation, one should emphasize stabilizing meditation, and thus restore the abiding aspect. If one loses interest in analysis due to too much stabilizing meditation, one should go back to analytical meditation. Thus, shamatha and vipashyana are said to be most effective when practiced equally in this way.

The method explained here, namely to analyze the object of meditation by means of discriminating knowledge and finally to rest in a state free of mental fabrications, is common to all systems of tenets. Moreover, according to the Gelug tradition, during the actual phase of equipoise, the mode of apprehending the object is repeatedly brought to mind.

The Actual Meditation on Vipashyana

When meditating on shamatha, due to the concentration of mind, many images appear which may or may not be similar to what is found in the external world. These are known as “non-analytical images.”

In the practice of vipashyana as well, such images arise due to the force of shamatha, and are then taken as the basis for individual analysis; thus, the analysis is not actually directed towards the outside, since the mind is solely turned inwards. When analyzing these images arising out of samadhi, it is necessary to begin by focusing on each object individually with discriminating knowledge, since without identifying a particular object, it is not possible to cut through misconceptions regarding its qualities. Therefore, one begins by clearly bringing to mind the object regarding which one wishes to eliminate misconceptions, and proceeds to examine it through perfect discriminating knowledge, thus ascertaining its lack of inherent existence. Then, grasping the object of samadhi (i.e. the non-analytical image) undistractedly, one should realize its being mere appearance, empty of inherent existence.

Thus, samadhi and superior knowledge are unified, being focused on the same object. As said in the *Compendium of Knowledge*: “Samadhi and superior knowledge have the same object of observation.”

Methods 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, Excerpts from pp. 69-107

The basis of vipāśyanā meditation is a state of samādhi, a meditation state without thoughts and concepts. Its primary quality is that it cuts through all the misconceptions, inaccuracies, and misunderstandings we might have. It says in the text that it is necessary to have the viewpoint of the absence of self and without this viewpoint we cannot develop genuine vipāśyanā meditation. Therefore, we have to develop this understanding of the absence of self. The text states that if we don't have an understanding of what the meditation should be directed at, we are like a person without arms trying to hold onto the side of a cliff. So the basis of meditation is the definite understanding of the absence of self. We need to first recognize this, then contemplate it until we have a definite understanding of the absence of self.

Once we have developed this understanding, then the mind must be able to rest upon this understanding—relaxed and completely unagitated. If we have the view, but just think intellectually about it, we will not be able to properly develop our meditation because we won't be able to eliminate the obscurations. Hence the text says that even if we are learned and have studied and understood the view of the absence of self, but have not meditated on it, we are like a miser with great wealth who can't use any of it because of his stinginess. Not only is all of the wealth of a miser of no use to him, but it is also of no good to others because he doesn't give it to anyone. Similarly if we have the understanding and view of the absence of self, without meditation we won't derive any benefit from it because we are not able to develop wisdom and eliminate the kleśas. We also then cannot benefit others because we are not able to follow the path and gain enlightenment.

To summarize, to develop the view of the absence of self, one has to meditate. One needs to study first the teachings of selflessness, then analyze and contemplate them so that one can develop a definite understanding of this view. Then one rests one's mind on that, focused in that view but in a completely relaxed state. This resting is like the union of stability of mind and insight, the union of śamatha and vipāśyanā. One must balance the analytic meditation that develops clarity of mind with stability of mind. Too much analytic meditation will reduce one's stability.

Therefore, one must relax the mind in a nonanalytic state of meditation. Too much nonanalytic meditation will diminish the clarity of mind and one begins to sink into dullness. So one then does repeated analytic meditation to regain one's balance. Developing both clarity and stability will make the mind very powerful. Generally, the main practice of all the schools in Tibet was first to analyze phenomena repeatedly to gain an understanding of the view and having done this, to then rest the mind in nonanalytic meditation.

Emptiness is the essence of the dharma teachings because it is the way we eliminate all the mind poisons and faults. So selflessness and emptiness are very important. Emptiness can become an obstacle to our understanding of karma and our practice of good actions because we may think, "Everything is emptiness, nothing exists, so I don't have to practice dharma." So there is danger involved in this teaching on emptiness. Nāgārjuna said that we have to understand emptiness correctly, otherwise it will have a bad effect. In India siddhas would pick up poisonous snakes. Through the power of their mantras on the snake they would be able to perform miracles and increase prosperity by holding the snake. Without the power of meditation and the power of the mantra anyone holding a poisonous snake would be bitten. In the same way, if we have a good understanding of emptiness, it helps to develop our meditation, but if we have a mistaken idea of emptiness and think there is no need to do good actions, we are in danger of developing an obstacle to our dharma practice.

.....

As mentioned before, when one has developed śamatha meditation, many different kinds of thoughts and images from internal and external events appear in the mind. These are called unexamined images. This means that they are not actual external images, but are just the appearance of things, images that arise in the mind. In vipaśyanā meditation one takes these images and analyzes them to develop the conviction that they have no true existence of their own. In this method the mind is turned inward. For example, one doesn't look at a pillar and think, "Well, this is a pillar and the pillar has no reality of its own," and so on. Instead one examines whatever appears in the mind and sees that it has no existence of its own. What one needs in this meditation is discriminating knowledge so that all things are seen as distinct from each other. One needs discriminating knowledge in meditation because one needs to be able to focus on particular objects in meditation. Nothing becomes mixed or overlapping so things do not turn out to be vague, indistinct, or unclear.

.....

In vipaśyanā meditation one meditates on the mind poisons as being the inseparability of emptiness and awareness. One can also meditate on neutral thoughts. Neutral thoughts are thoughts that are neither good nor bad. There are

two kinds of neutral thoughts: creative neutral thoughts and thoughts of activity. Creative neutral thoughts are something like “I want to make dinner” and neutral thoughts of activity are something like “I must leave” or “I want to go to eat.” These thoughts are neutral but one can examine them to see who is thinking the thought “I want to eat” and where this thought is located. One discovers that the nature of neutral thoughts is that they have no reality and are the indivisibility of emptiness and awareness.

One therefore examines the internal understanding of the indivisibility of emptiness and awareness and the external understanding of the indivisibility of emptiness and appearance. The discriminating knowledge understands this indivisibility, and one realizes that the discriminating knowledge also has no reality, so that the mind rests in the percept, the perceiver, and the understanding of these two. For example, in the past one rubbed two sticks together to make a fire and when the fire was started, it burned up the two sticks as well. In the same way, the understanding of the indivisibility of emptiness and awareness, and of emptiness and appearance, also has the nature of emptiness. The practice instructions of Atīśa say the mind of the past has ceased to exist and the mind of the future has not come into existence. The present mind is difficult to examine because it has no color, shape, or location. It is just like space—it is unborn and it is not one or many things. Even though it is empty, the clarity of mind never ceases. There is this continuous clarity of mind and the mind never becomes blank or like a stone. One also can’t locate where this clarity comes from.

The meditational state of *vipaśyanā* is described as having no appearances, which means that there is the realization of the inseparability of emptiness and appearances do not have any reality of their own. In spite of this emptiness, there is the unceasing clarity of mind that has no reality of its own so the mind in meditation is free from any complications or elaborations. It is not “existent” and it is not “nonexistent” and it is not “neither existent nor nonexistent” and it is not “both existent and nonexistent.” It is free from these four complications and is neither created or something that ceases. Because if it existed, then it must be born and if it is born then it must also die (cease to exist). But there is nothing there to be born or die. Through this realization one can eliminate the defects of dullness and agitation in meditation. With these removed, there is no clinging or grasping, the mind doesn’t think “This is good and has to be kept” and “This is bad and has to be rejected.” This is what is meant by *vipaśyanā* meditation.

Evaluating whether Vipashyana has Arisen or Not
From *The Royal Seal of Mahamudra, Volume One*
A Guidebook for the Realization of Coemergence
Khamtrul Ngawang Kunga Tenzin, Trs. by Gerardo Abboud, pp. 261-264

Every time one practices vipashyana as described above, one investigates with discerning prajna. At that time, it happens to some people in whom shamatha stillness is very intense that, due to this stillness, they do not ascertain the point being examined, no matter how hard they try. Just as they start to analyze, the samadhi of shamatha arises and they are convinced that all the points of the investigation are resolved right then; thus their vision of the essence becomes deluded. Others have a very strong experience of nothingness, and due to this the lack of essential nature of all phenomena appears as that experience of nothingness; taking that as the essence they too are deluded. For a while they should apply methods for removing that shamatha experience and their clinging to it. Then, once the fog of experience is cleared from their cognizance, they should again practice vipashyana, whereby they will succeed.

It also happens that some unintelligent people with great obscurations do not see the essence no matter how much they investigate. For [page 262] some time they should exert themselves in purification and generation of merit practices. Once they have developed the sharp clarity of shamatha, at some point they should practice vipashyana. Some other people are very intelligent, so when they have a good understanding of an idea, they proudly regard that as having had the experience. Though they may be very eloquent, most scholars have no experience. As the saying goes, "You believe the person who gives explanations about herbs and roots but does not identify the medicine." Some others may not know how to put it into words, but when the opportunity arises for the experience, they gain conviction on the basis of the essence. Therefore, it is extremely important to distinguish between all these. No matter how good a meditation may be, if vipashyana has not dawned, it is simply one of the worldly non-Buddhist or common Buddhist meditations. It does not even qualify as a meditation of the hinayana, so how could it possibly qualify as a meditation of mahayana, madhyamaka or especially mahamudra? For this reason it is important to earnestly practice vipashyana.

Now, to what degree must vipashyana have arisen to be considered true vipashyana? The unmistakable vipashyana that has directly realized the truth of dharmata comes only at the time of the greater level of the yoga of simplicity. In our case, however, we are only concerned with the vipashyana that arises in the beginner's mind. For instance, the first moon of the month does not have the same function as the full moon, yet it is still conventionally considered to be the moon. Therefore here we are concerned with the vipashyana that includes one's mind and the thoughts and phenomena arising from its

radiance, as discussed earlier. All phenomena of subject and object are unoriginated, nonabiding, and unceasing. To know this crucial point and to have the experience and conviction born from deep within that they are devoid of true essence or nature is what, at this point, should be defined as vipashyana. It may happen that, for some time, vipashyana does not arise to such a degree. However, as followers of the practice lineage, we acknowledge the following beginner's vipashyana. The essence of one's mind is an unidentifiable void; it is the primordial cognizance that has not been fabricated. In the mind that is aware of itself and lucid by itself, these [page 263] two, void and cognizance, are inseparable. To gain the experience that the mind has ascertained that it is so is a beginner's vipashyana. By sustaining just that much at the beginning, we are confident that unmistakable vipashyana will gradually arise.

Why do we believe that this will happen? The evident concept-free wisdom of mind essence does not fall into any extreme whatsoever, whether of existence or nonexistence, being or nonbeing, eternalism or nihilism. It is experienced and known as inseparable from lucidity, emptiness, and awareness. Nonetheless, it cannot be illustrated and there is no way to express it verbally. It is self-existent and self-arising, and the vivid wakefulness in exactly this state is given the name "vipashyana," or "higher insight." From the state of ordinary being onward, it is never separate from oneself even for an instant, but as long as it is not embraced by the pith instructions and blessings, it is not recognized. At the time of resting in shamatha meditation, that which rests or watches whether there is stillness or not, and so forth, is precisely this vipashyana, except for the fact that it somehow does not see itself. In fact, the discursive thoughts at the time of ordinary being, which proliferate as a concrete chain, are none other than vipashyana itself manifesting as discursive thoughts. The experiences of shamatha are also none other than the vipashyana cognizance arising as bliss, clarity, nonthought, and all the rest. Nevertheless, to maintain stillness alone without knowing the original face of bare nonconceptual mind does not become a cause for enlightenment. So from seeing the original face onward, there is nothing whatsoever that does not become vipashyana or mahamudra, whether it is stillness, movement, or anything else. As Lorepa said:

No matter what arises in the field of the six senses,
If the mind does not grasp at it,
It spontaneously appears and is self-liberated.
Have you realized this distinction, all you meditators?

In the sutra system, it is taught that first the pliancy of shamatha is accomplished. Based on that, the power from practicing vipashyana brings about a pliancy that is considered to be the actual vipashyana, [page 264] and any vipashyana after that will be similar. In our case it is not that definite; it depends strictly on the nature of the experience and realization.

The Way to Cultivate Vipāśyanā in This Context
From *Moonbeams of Mahāmudrā*
By Dakpo Tashi Namgyal, Trs. by Elizabeth M. Callahan, p. 218-220

[page 220] This has two parts:

- a) Determining the Essence of Mind and Its Various Appearances
- b) Eliminating Misinterpretations About a Root or Basis

a) Determining the Essence of Mind and Its Various Appearances

This has three sections:

- i) The Reasons That Objectives Are Achieved by Observing Just the Mind
- ii) Determining the Essence of Mind, the Root
- iii) Determining the Essence of Thoughts and Appearances, [Mind's] Expressive Power

i) The Reasons That Objectives Are Achieved by Observing Just the Mind

In a general sense, the presentation that all phenomena are mind, the problems that ensue from not meditating on the nature of mind, and the benefits of doing so were already explained. In brief, since the troubles of samsāra and the virtues of nirvāna depend on the mind, or arise from mind, it is crucial that we focus on our mind in meditation, as the *Compendium of Dharma Sūtra* explains:

The bodhisattva Mativikrama supplicated, to which the Bhagavān responded: "Phenomena, what we refer to as 'things,' do not abide as objects and do not abide spatially. Furthermore, phenomena are simply dependent on your own mind. Thus it is that you should concentrate on your mind, take it to its limits, tame it, rest it in equipoise, and subjugate it."

It is taught that if we understand mind, we understand all phenomena, and that if mind is liberated, everything is liberated. The *Jewel Cloud Sūtra* says:

The mind comes before all phenomena. If you comprehend the mind, you know all phenomena.

The *Wisdom at the Moment of Death* states:

When the mind is realized, there is wisdom. Therefore, meditate with the awareness that buddhahood is not to be sought anywhere else.

The Great Brahman [Saraha] says:

When mind is fettered you are bound.
It can be liberated—have no doubts.

He also says:

KYE Ho. When the confused mind is realized to be mind,
it is self-liberated from all evil views.
Remaining in the sublime great bliss
under its power is the genuine siddhi.

Tilopa states:

If you sever the one root of a tree with spreading branches full of leaves,
all those many branches will wither.
The same thing happens to samsāra when you sever the root of mind.

Thus it is explained that cutting through the basis, or root, of mind cuts the continuum of samsāra.

Śāntideva teaches that when we do not understand mind, everything is a cause of suffering, and that recognizing the mind is the best protection and discipline. *Entrance to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* says:

Those who don't know the secret of mind,
what is of sublime importance in the dharma,
will wander futilely for a long time—
despite their desire to attain happiness and destroy suffering.

The Instruction on Stillness, Occurrence, And Awareness in Mahamudra

By Mipham Rinpoche

From *Perfect Clarity: A Tibetan Buddhist Anthology of Mahamudra and Dzogchen*, Translated by Erik Perna Kunsang, Pages 69-70

If you can simply practice mahamudra and experience stillness, occurrence, and awareness according to the vital instruction of that practice, you will ultimately perceive the truth of reality. This is because the nature of your mind has the sugata essence. Apply the related key instruction. The basis of all things is mind. After understanding the mind's secret, seek the vital point of your mind and you will become skilled in all things and realize the meaning of egolessness.

Since I am teaching according to the oral instructions of the realized ones, I will leave out various logical investigations. Stillness is when you look into your mind, direct yourself inward, and remain devoid of any kind of thinking. Occurrence is when various kinds of thoughts arise. Awareness is your mind being conscious of either of these. If you maintain this continuously, you will come to understand the following vital point: Various feelings such as joy and sadness arise from your own mind and dissolve back into your mind. Understanding this, you will come to recognize that all experiences are the personal experiences of your mind.

Subsequently, by looking directly into the essence of your mind, whether it is still or thinking, you will understand that it is empty and, even though it perceives many things, it does not possess any entity whatsoever. This so-called emptiness is not a blank void like space. Rather, you will come to understand that it is an emptiness endowed with all supreme aspects. This means that it does not possess any self-nature, yet it has an unceasing clarity that is fully conscious and cognizant.

When realizing this secret point of mind, although there is no separate watcher or something watched, to experience the naturally luminous and innate mind-essence is known as recognizing awareness. This is what is pointed out in both mahamudra and dzogchen.

According to Saraha, if you can sustain it, "By looking again and again into the primordially pure nature of space, seeing will cease."

As stated in the Prajnaparamita, "Mind is devoid of mind; the nature of mind is luminous."

There is nothing easier than this, but it is essential to practice.

Cultivating Energy as the Foundation for Uncovering Insight **From *Wake Up to Your Life* by Ken McLeod, pp. 361-362**

Base of Attention

Rest attention on the breath for a few minutes at the beginning of each session until attention becomes stable.

Ecstatic Practice: Raising the Level of Energy

Raising the level of energy has four steps: frame, field, expansion, and rest. It is called ecstatic practice because you experience a pleasurable shift in energy as you open to experience. It transforms the energy of experience into attention. Practice this ecstatic technique both in formal sessions and during the day.

Begin with sensory experience. Sit in front of a window or open door. The window frame or door frame is the frame. Let your gaze rest on the window until you can see the whole frame all at once. This step sets the frame.

Open to the whole field defined by the frame. The field is everything in your field of vision that falls within the frame, regardless of its distance from you.

Initially, your eyes will pick out an object in the field, and your attention will collapse down to that object. As soon as you notice that you are looking at only a part of the field, expand from that object to the whole field again. In ecstatic practice a collapse down to an object is analogous to being distracted by a thought in breath meditation.

You will soon be able to see everything in the frame simultaneously and will feel a shift. Rest in the shift. You relax, and a pleasurable feeling pervades your body and mind. Subject-object differentiation lessens.

Work first with a well-defined frame, one that is small enough that you can actually open to the whole field. Then extend your practice by using larger and larger frames until you can use the physical limits of your field of vision as the frame.

During the day, practice this energy transformation when you go for a walk, go shopping, or take a break in your workday. Shopping malls are good places to practice because they are full of visual objects, and the walls and ceilings provide natural frames. Sit in front of a waterfall until you can see every drop of water as it falls. Look at a tree, using the outline of the tree as a frame, until you can see every leaf and every branch at the same time. Look at a lawn, and see every blade of grass at once.

Once you have a sense of the shift in energy from working visually, work with the other senses. During the day, listen to a piece of music, hearing every instrument at the same time. Whenever your attention goes to one instrument or one strain, expand to include all the music and every instrument. Listen in the same way to people talking. Extend the practice to the sense of touch so that you are aware of all the clothing you are wearing, what you are sitting on, and any stiffness or tension in your muscles, all at the same time. Then include taste and smell as well.

Finally, include thoughts and feelings, until you can open to everything that arises in the moment, internally and externally, and experience it all simultaneously. This step extends the practice to emotional sensations and transforms the energy of all experience into attention.

Needless to say, you won't do all this in your first session. Over time, however, you become more adept at the practice and can open to more and more. In your formal meditation sessions, spend ten minutes doing this practice, resting in open experience and transforming energy into attention. Now you are ready to look.

Boredom-Full or Empty?

The Path Is the Goal: A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation

By Chögyam Trungpa, pages 105-108

One of the points of basic vipashyana practice is developing what is known as the knowledge of egolessness. That is to say that the awareness that develops through the vipashyana experience brings nonexistence of yourself. And because you develop an understanding of the nonexistence of yourself, therefore you are freer to relate with the phenomenal world--the climate, atmosphere, or environment we have been talking about.

Unless there is no basic center, one cannot develop the vipashyana experience. On the practical level, this means that vipashyana is experiencing a sense of the environment, a sense of space, as the meditator practices. This is called awareness as opposed to mindfulness. Mindfulness is very detailed and very direct, but awareness is something panoramic, open. Even in following the breathing techniques of mindfulness of breathing, you are aware not only of the breathing but also of the environment you have created around the breath.

As far as dealing with heavy-handed thoughts, emotions, is concerned, there is no way of destroying or getting over them unless you see the reference point that is with them. To begin with, seeing this takes the form of awareness of the atmosphere or environment. If you are already aware of the atmosphere beforehand, then there is a possibility that you might have a less intense relationship with your heavy-handed thoughts. That is one of the basic points.

Once you are aware of the atmosphere, you begin to realize that thoughts are no big deal. Thoughts can just be allowed to diffuse into the atmosphere. This kind of atmosphere that we are talking about is, in any case, an ongoing experience that happens to us in our lives. But sometimes we find we are so wrapped up in our little game, our little manipulation, that we miss the totality. That is why it is necessary for students to begin with shamatha--so that they can see the details of such an eruption, such a manipulation, the details of the game that goes on. Then beyond that, having established some kind of relationship with that already, they begin to see the basic totality.

Thus, vipashyana is understanding the whole thing. You might ask, "What is this 'whole thing'?" Well, it's not particularly anything, really. This "whole thing" is the accommodator of all the activities that are taking place. It is the basic accommodation, which usually comes in the form of boredom, as far as the practitioner is concerned. The practitioner is looking for something to fill the gap, particularly in the sitting practice of vipashyana meditation, where the quality of nonhappening becomes very boring. Then

you might get agitated by the boredom, which is the way of filling it up with some activities.

So in this case, the background is boredom. There are different types of boredom that we usually experience. Insecurity, lack of excitement, being idle, nothing happening. In this case, in vipashyana, the boredom we are talking about is a sense of being idle, and this is unconditional boredom. The experience of vipashyana awareness has a quality of all-pervasive thick cream. It has body, at the same time it is fluid, and it is somewhat challenging. Therefore, as one's development of awareness is taking place, one doesn't become spaced out particularly, not at all.

When we talk about being spaced out, we are talking about being empty-hearted. When we are empty-hearted, then the dazzling light of emotions begins to irritate us. We can't grasp anything and we are ready to completely freak out. Whereas the vipashyana awareness is something much more tangible, in some sense, than this empty-heartedness. It is something very personal that exists. It usually accompanies any kind of activity, not only in sitting practice alone.

For example, sitting and listening to this talk, you have developed or created a certain type of attitude. You are directing your attention toward the speaker; but also you know at the same time that you and the speaker are not the only people in this tent, so there is the sense that you are sitting in the middle of the inside of this space--underneath the ocean, so to speak. And awareness brings about your relating with that particular experience, which is tangible, real, experiential.

When awareness relates to that type of experience, it is called insight. Sometimes this is spoken of in terms of light, luminosity. But this doesn't mean something fluorescent. It refers to the sense of clarity that exists in this experience. Once you feel that basic all-pervasiveness, then there is nothing else but *that* (the other), and *this* (oneself) is long forgotten.

Maybe at the beginning *this* tried to struggle, to fight with *that*, the all-pervasiveness. But though *this* might struggle, at some point the all-pervasiveness is all over the place, and a sense of suffocation begins to develop. And that subtle suffocation turns into boredom. That is the point when you are actually getting into the all-pervasiveness of the vipashyana experience.

This is just the beginning stage of vipashyana that we have been describing. And I would like to emphasize once more that we are not talking about hypothetical possibilities. You can actually experience this in your life, in your being. And in fact, potentialities of vipashyana are already prominent in our experience; they take place all the time. But we have not actually acknowledged them or perhaps even seen them.

Me-ness and the Emotions

The Path Is the Goal - A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation

Chogyam Trungpa, Pages 55-62

We are going to discuss the meaning of “awake,” which is connected with the practice of vipashyana, or insight, meditation. As a starting point, in order to work with the process of meditation, we have to understand our basic psychological makeup. That could be a long story, but to be concise at this point, let us say that mind has two aspects. One aspect is cognition. That is to say, there is a sense of split between I and other, me and you. This basic sense of split helps us to identify who we are, what we are. Conveniently, we are given names--I am called John, or I am called Michael, and so forth. In general we have no idea beyond the names. The names given to us are so convenient that we don't have to think behind them. We just accept ourselves as being named so-and-so. If someone asks you, “Who are you?” and you say, “I am Tom,” that's regarded as a very smart answer, and usually nobody asks, “Well, who and what is Tom?” But if you are asked further questions, the next thing you go to is, “I am a banker” or “I am a cab driver.” You shift to your profession. You end up jumping back and forth among those external identifications, and usually you never get back to the “me” level. That's the way we usually handle our life. But this time we are going to go beyond the names to the basic mind. We are actually going to find out who we are and what we are. This is the starting point for understanding the mind.

Our mind has this quality of “me-ness,” which is obviously not the other, not you. Me-ness is distinct from you, other, the rock, the tree, or the mountains, the rivers, the sky, the sun, the moon--what have you. This me-ness is the basic point here.

There is a general sense of discomfort when you refer to yourself as “me,” which is a very subtle discomfort. We usually don't acknowledge or notice it, because it is so subtle, and since it is there all the time, we become immune to it. There is a certain basic ambivalence there. It is like dogs, who at a certain point begin to relate to their leashes as providing security rather than imprisonment. Animals in the zoo feel the same thing. At the beginning they experienced imprisonment, but at some point this became a sense of security. We have the same kind of attitude. We have imprisoned our-selves in a certain way, but at the same time, we feel that this imprisonment is the most secure thing we have. This me-ness or my-ness has a painful quality of imprisonment, but at the same time, it also represents security rather than just pure pain. That is the situation we are in at this point. Every one of us is in that situation.

This me-ness is not painful in the sense of outright suffering, like what you get from eating a bottle of jalapeño chili peppers. But there's something behind the whole thing that makes us very subtly nauseated, just a little bit. That nausea then becomes somewhat sweet, and we get hooked on that sweetness. Then if we lose our nausea, we also lose our sweet. That is the basic state of mind that everybody feels.

When the first of the four noble truths talks about suffering, this is what it is talking about. There is that very subtle but at the same time very real and very personal thing going on, which sort of pulls us down. Of course there are various occasions when you might feel on top of the world. You have a fantastic vacation by the ocean or in the mountains. You fall in love or you celebrate a success in your career. You find something positive to hang on to. Nobody can deny that every one of us has experienced that kind of glory. But at the same time that we are experiencing that high point of glory, the other end of the canoe, so to speak, is pushed down into the water a bit. That big deal that we are trying to make into a small deal continues to happen. Sometimes when it comes up on the surface, we call it depression. We think, "I feel bad, I feel sick, I feel terrible, I feel upset," and so forth. But at the same time, it is really something less than that. There [58] is a basic, fundamental hangover, an all-pervasive hangover that is always taking place. Even though we may be feeling good about things, we have the sense of being stuck somewhere.

Often people interpret that sense of being stuck in such a way that they can blame it on having to put up with their parents' hang-ups, or on hang-ups resulting from some other part of their problematic case history. You had a bad experience, you say, therefore, this hang-up exists. People come up with these very convenient case-historical interpretations, maybe even bringing in physical symptoms. These are the very convenient escapes that we have.

But really there is something more than that involved, something that transcends one's case history. We do feel something that goes beyond parents, beyond a bad childhood, a bad birth, a difficult cesarean--whatever. There is something beyond all that taking place, a basic fuckedupedness that is all-pervasive. What Buddha calls it is ego, or neurosis.

That is the first of the two aspects of the mind we mentioned. It's something we carry with us all the time. I'm afraid it is rather depressing.

The second aspect of mind, which comes out of this one, is what is popularly known as emotions. This includes emotions of all types, such as lust, hatred, jealousy, pride, fear--all kinds of things. However, the word *emotion* is questionable. By calling them

emotions [59] we come to look at them as something special, “my emotions,” which brings a rather unhealthy way of looking at ourselves. We think, “If only I could get rid of my emotions, my outrageousness, then I could function peacefully and beautifully.” But somehow that never happens. Nobody has yet achieved a state without emotions and still had a functioning mind.

From the Buddhist point of view, this second aspect of mind is not emotion as such; rather these eruptions that occasionally take place in our mind also are regarded as thoughts. They are part of the thinking process; they are a heavier instance of the thinking process, rather than a phenomenon of a different type, as though there were a special disease, like smallpox or something, called emotions. They are just a heavy-handed flu.

This first aspect of mind is mainly occupied with duality, the basic split, the sense of being fundamentally alone. This second aspect goes beyond that; it is highly occupied, extremely active. It produces daydreams and dreams and memories and stores them in the “akashic records,” or whatever you would like to call it. It stores them all over the place, and it reopens them and reexplores them whenever we run out of material, whenever we have a conflict or a confrontation with the other. We are constantly trying to work out our relation to the other. It’s like your dog meeting somebody else’s dog. There is a growl, a sniff, a step forward, a potential rejection, or maybe an acceptance. That kind of thing is constantly taking place. Dogs do it very generously. As far as we human beings are concerned, obviously we are more subtle, but we are less generous because we have more me. But still this process goes on constantly--we do that when we confront our world.

This cannot just be called emotion; it is something greater, more overall. The thought process escalates to a level of high intensity--so-called emotion. But this second mental faculty is actually a confrontation process, a communication process that goes on all the time. And that confrontation and communication consists of thought patterns alone--nothing else. Sometimes your thought looks, sometimes your thought speaks, sometimes your thought listens, sometimes your thought smells, sometimes your thought feels. It’s a thought process that takes place.

This is also connected with the process of sense perception. According to the Buddhist tradition, there is a sixth kind of sense perception, which is actually mental. It is the fickleness of mind, the sixth sense, which acts as the switchboard that all the wires come into--from your ears, from your nose, your eyes, your tongue, your body. These sense organs report their messages to the central headquarters, the switchboard, and the switchboard delegates certain activities by way of response.

So that is basically the way the whole mental process works, which does not give us any grounds for separating [61] thought process from emotions. All these aspects are part of the same process that takes place.

In studying vipashyana, we are going to discuss dealing with those thought processes in the practice of meditation. But first it is necessary for you to understand the basic ground, what the basic mechanism is: who is going to meditate, and what we are going to meditate with. We are going to be talking about the way of working with thoughts, with the second aspect of mind. We have very little resources at this point for working with the first aspect of mind, the basic fucked-upedness. That mentality of dualism, or the split, cannot be handled directly, I'm afraid. But hopefully it can be uplifted by dealing with its products.

We could say that the thought process, including the so-called emotions, is like the branches of a tree. By cutting step by step through the elaborate setup of the branches, we come to the root, and at that point the root will not be difficult to deal with. So the thought process seems to be our starting point.

You might say, "Wouldn't a good strategist cut the root first?" Obviously, he would; but we are not in a position to do so. Actually, if we started by trying to struggle with the root, the branches would keep on growing, and we would be completely and helplessly engulfed by the rampant growth of the branches and the fruits dropping on our heads.

So Buddha's psychological approach is a different one. We start dealing with the leaves and branches. Then once we have dealt with that, we have some kind of realization of the naked truth, of the reality of the basic split. Then we begin to realize the first noble truth, which says that the truth is suffering, the truth is that hang-up, that problem.

In order to understand the first noble truth, we have to understand how to live with "emotions." We will have a certain amount of time to discuss that in this present seminar. Now perhaps we could have a discussion.

Selected Excerpts from “First Thought”

**From *Mindfulness in Action: Making Friends with Yourself
through Meditation and Everyday Awareness***

By Chögyam Trungpa, Edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian, pp. 61-69

It is often said that meditation is concerned with taming and training the mind, but what do we mean by that word *mind*? Many philosophical, psychological, and spiritual preconceptions arise when we try to define mind or consciousness, and they can get in the way when we’re working directly with the practice of meditation. If we want to find out more directly what meditation is and what happens when we meditate, we might want to ask, “*Who* is meditating?” This will get us into the nitty-gritty of what we mean by mind. To understand what we are doing when we meditate, the seed or the fundamental question is “Who are we?”

Ask yourself that question, “Who am I?” You may find that you don’t have an answer. From that non-answer, that simple gap or open space, you may experience a flash of who you are. I refer to that glimpse as “first thought.” That first thought may be a realization of confusion or neurosis, not necessarily a pleasant or highly evolved thought. It is an unconditioned reaction or thought. There’s a gap, and then there’s this first thought.

That first thought is not regarded as a particularly enlightened thought, but it *is* a true thought. It is your raw-and-ruggedness. It might reflect confusion or insight. This first thought may be shocking, or it may be quite complimentary. Don’t ask too many questions about it. Just let it be there as your first thought.

.....

The only way to find out who we are is to just look. There you are. You might hate what you see or you might love it. So what? That’s it. That’s you. That’s good old you. That is the basic mind that we’re talking about. Look at you and find out about you. Just look. What you find doesn’t particularly lead to ecstasy or depression. You know yourself already anyway. The basic point is to have an attitude of openness toward who you are, what you are. You might want to ask me or someone else whether what you discover is good or bad. My response is “No comment.” We haven’t gotten to the level of good and bad. We have to find out who we are at the beginning. We really have to look into that.

.....

When we look inside ourselves and examine what we feel, we might discover that there is something in ourselves that feels “I am myself.” You feel yourself so powerfully, so strongly. It seems that there is no other choice: “I feel that I am what I am, beyond even my name. I feel my thing-ness inside me. I feel me!”

.....

You have this first strong flash of who you are, acknowledging yourself before you do anything further. Then you might try to be generous to another person. You might say, “Maybe you would like to say something about me? Please come and say it!” You become more ingratiating, but that’s largely an afterthought. We try to show interest in what others think about us or even think about themselves. That interchange, however, just whets your appetite to talk more about yourself with your friends. You want to get together with someone again because the discussion makes you feel very powerful. To continue the dialogue, you might try to make a deal: “You can make me happy, and I will make you happy!” Or, “You can make me feel wretched, and I’ll make you feel wretched.” Or, “Let’s have a duel, a fight to the death.”

What is that really about? It is about discovering *this*, this particular point, *this*, this thing that is highly strung like a wild horse or a paranoid dog. *This* is in us; this is us. It is so tough and so seductive. It is sometimes extremely good and sometimes extremely wicked. We have this thing, we talk about this thing, and this thing that we are talking about is *mind*, obviously. We are not talking about our body or our situation in life. We are talking about our mind.

The definition of mind being used here is “that which experiences the sense of separateness.” As long as that attitude of this-ness is involved, there is also the otherness, automatically. *That* could not survive without *this*, and vice versa. We are always hanging on to something or other; that something is called mind. Mind in this sense also has a quality of heart, actually, because our emotions and connections to others are involved.

The fundamental idea of mind here is “that which feels the need for something”—the need to reinforce your existence. We are eagerly looking for enemies and lovers in life, to different degrees. That’s what it boils down to. Your enemy is not necessarily someone you hate to the nth degree. You don’t even have to feel totally sick of that person. On the other side, you don’t have to be in love with everyone you like. There are large areas of love and hate, and sometimes it’s a mixed bag. The borderlines are mixed up. The main emphasis is your need to reinforce your strength. You can show your enemies or your friends that you are a powerful person. If you strike somebody,

literally or metaphorically, that person has to acknowledge you, and you hope that he or she will give in to you. Or a person could be seduced and come into your territory and begin to give in to you that way, in the realm of passion or desire.

This description of mind relates to a psychological description of ego or egotism. The term *ego* can be used to describe ego-mania, which is self-indulgence and a style of self that is looking for security and survival, trying to establish the certainty of one's existence. That is the confused and aggressive part of ego, which is completely blind. However, there is also another view of ego as intelligence and being assertive in a positive sense. When we speak of mind here, we're not only talking about the negative side of ego. Mind is just awareness that exists within our being. It is awareness that is capable of relating with reference points of all kinds. Passion and aggression, love and hate, are included in those reference points, but the basic idea of mind here is that which is capable of experiencing reference points altogether. It is just a mechanical thing.

Mind in this sense is like using your antennae. It is a basic mechanism, although the idea of mind being mechanical dilutes its power somewhat. It is basic intelligence, something constant, which exists in us all the time. *Then* we begin to color it, by saying that if that or this is the case, we want to change ourselves in *this* way or *that* way. After the first thought, you begin to change your mind—which is second thought. You begin to make it into something else, rather than acknowledging what you have actually seen. When we use the word *mind* as a noun, it sounds static, somewhat isolated from action. The verb form *minding* expresses the sense of mind as a continual activity. Your mind is minding constantly. It is constantly looking for a reference point, looking for a connection to something. Why is that? Fundamentally, in spite of all our assertions of “me-ness,” we fear that we may not exist. We feel inadequate. We don't feel so good about ourselves, basically.

Your sense of self is like a hat you see in a store window. You think it looks fantastic and you want to buy it, so you go into the store and ask the salesperson to show it to you. When you can actually hold it, try it on, and look at it up close, it turns out that it's not so great. You feel that you were conned. You change your mind about that fantastic hat. Similarly, you may say, “I'm having a fantastic life. I'm doing lots of exciting things and having a great time. I feel terrific; I feel like a new person.” Sure. Still... Why do we have to keep telling ourselves those things again and again? Why? If everything is so amazing already, there is no reason to say so and to reflect back, again and again, on those highlights. Why do you need to reassure yourself? That need for reassurance is precisely the point: We feel that something is leaking, but we don't want to acknowledge it as such. There is a hole somewhere in our life that we try to plug up. All our posturing is a

sign that we are just about to realize that we don't exist in the way we thought we did. We actually know that intuitively. Yet we keep on trying to prove ourselves to ourselves, to ensure that we will survive.

In the practice of meditation and contemplative discipline in general, it is important to admit at the beginning that this fortress, or shrine, of our self-existence doesn't hold true. If we are honest with ourselves, we may realize that we are trying to turn a sand castle into a permanent structure. It keeps getting washed away, but we make many attempts to rebuild the castle, hoping to reassure ourselves. Many people use meditation to make themselves feel better or more uplifted. Some people like the idea of a spiritual search because if we are searching for something, at least we have purpose in our lives. But *search* here is a euphemism for uncertainty and panic.

You may tell yourself that you'll find something, once you begin to search. You *can* exist. You don't have to give anything up after all. You will get something out of your search. You slowly sneak in the back door of your existence so that you can retain your hard-line individuality. You say to yourself, "I can stay on top of the world. I can become a little dictator in the name of my achievement of mindfulness."

To avoid that problem, we have to look very closely into what mind is and how our minds function. There are all kinds of holes in us. Even when we acknowledge them, we might still try to create a patchwork to cover them up. You think you've exposed yourself and become a completely pure, clean, and reasonable person. You've penetrated all the deceptions. You've seen all the holes in your logic. But if you then try to sew patches over the holes, it becomes an endless game.

The alternative is first thought: continually looking closely and acknowledging exactly what is happening. When you practice meditation, you need to understand your motivation and look at what you are doing. How are you going to work with yourself? Exposing oneself to oneself without pretense and without patches is the real working ground and the genuine motive for practice.

38. Mixing Mind with Space

The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma
Volume One: The Path of Individual Liberation
By Chögyam Trungpa, pages 281-283

In the Kagyü tradition, we employ a special practice technique, which is the experiencing of *chung ne dro sum*. *Chung* is where the thoughts arise, *ne* is where they dwell, and *dro* is where they go, so *chung ne dro sum* is where the thoughts arise, dwell, and go. Those three are accompanied by the practice of *ying rik sewa*. *Ying* means “space,” *rik* means “conscious mind,” and *sewa* means “mixing”; so *ying rik sewa* means “mixing the conscious mind with space.” Sometimes it is called *lung sem sewa*: “mixing the mind and breathing.” *Lung* means “wind” or “air,” *sem* is “mind,” and *sewa* again means “mixing.” In either case, the idea is to experience space. You do not need to deliberately try to mix the mind with the breathing with a solemn effort. Instead, you are simply in contact with the breathing. It is similar to the way that you feel the well-being of your body.

In being mindful of where the thoughts come from, where the thoughts dwell, and where the thoughts vanish, it is not that you are supposed to manufacture a thought and then let it come, let it dwell, and let it go. You have thoughts in any case, and you can be with them. As one thought vanishes, the next thought begins to arise; and by the time the next thought has arisen, the previous thought has already disappeared. You cannot usually experience the vanishing of a thought purely by itself, because to be aware of that thought you sustain it, so you do not really see the vanishing. The vanishing of a thought is seen in terms of the contrast of another idea coming up, at which point the previous thought has already subsided. The arising and dissolving of a thought is not exactly simultaneous, but the beginning, middle, and end happen very fast. When you acknowledge thoughts, they arise; in the process of acknowledging them, they dwell; after you acknowledge them, they drop. Acknowledging the dwelling of a thought does not mean staying with it for a long time, but just experiencing it as your thought. It is very simple.

Thoughts are generally connected with one or another of the eight types of consciousness, which are the working base for the practice of meditation. In meditation practice, you do not exaggerate the different levels of consciousness or disrespect them, but you have balance and respect. Generally, you begin with your physical well-being. You begin with your posture and your sense of discomfort or comfort. Your sense perceptions—the visions, sounds, sensations, tastes, smells, and thoughts that you experience—act as the fuse for your practice. Then, when those sense consciousnesses begin to wear themselves out a little bit, you become slightly bored with them and turn

to the subconscious mind. Conversations are replayed, or particular events in your life are projected back to you in the form of a cinema show. Then there is a gap—a little gap where things don't happen and nothing occurs in the mind.

Physically, you may be comfortable and at rest with the sounds you hear and the visions that you see around you. You may be somewhat settled down. But then you dig up further excitement by looking into your personal relationships and emotional involvements with people. Are people being nice or nasty to you? Maybe you remember a particular scene, and experience the jealousy and passion you felt in that context, or maybe you plan your future. All kinds of thoughts begin to come up—and all of them should be experienced. If I say that you should be aware of the thoughts, then you will get into the area of being watchful, which is a project, and you will find that you are becoming a slave of your own awareness. That approach to practice does not work—it is too self-conscious—so I prefer the word experience to awareness.

The meditation technique universally used in all Buddhist traditions is mindfulness of the breathing, because breathing is an expression of being. For instance, you check whether a person is dead or just completely passed out by feeling whether the person is breathing or not. There is nothing particularly mystical about breathing. For instance, I do not think the early Buddhists thought about breathing in terms of prana, or life force; they were just breathing.

Traditionally, just being there is the outcome of the breathing technique. However, in the Tibetan tradition of formless meditation, you can also meditate without focusing on the breathing. The *shikantaza* practice of “just sitting,” from the Japanese Zen tradition, is similar. Some people find it easy to do formless meditation without focusing on the breathing. If they are provided with a short session of sitting practice, it is easy for them to just be there because they do not have to hassle with any technique. However, for long-term sitting practice, it would be advisable to start with the mindfulness of breathing. Later, the awareness of breathing falls away, and at that point you just go along without it. That seems to be the best, most systematic approach.

In terms of both breathing and formless meditation, one of the problems meditators experience is that there is a slight, almost subconscious, guilty feeling that they ought to be doing something rather than just experiencing what goes on. When you begin to feel that you ought to be doing something, you automatically present millions of obstacles to yourself. Meditation is not a project; it is a way of being. You could experience that you are what you are. Fundamentally, sitting there and breathing is a very valid thing to do.

Excerpts from “Chapter 8: Cutting Ego Fixation”
The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Vol. 2,
The Bodhisattva Path of Wisdom and Compassion
By Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, pp. 62-67

The Nature of Ego

As a would-be bodhisattva, you are expected to be an ideal hinayanist already. You are expected to understand egolessness. But in order to develop your understanding of egolessness, you first have to understand the notion of ego altogether. In the hinayana, you dissect your ego and divide it into its components. You divide the ego into five skandhas, and study the case history of ego in the form of the twelve nidanas and the notion of interdependent origination.

But there is a problem with that approach. Even though you could become proficient in the logic of the five skandhas and know the nidanas inside out, your ego could continue to function as usual. So simply learning about the five skandhas does not particularly help; you have to work on each individual skandha, step-by-step.

You are also taught that in order to free your mind of desire, you should reflect on the different parts of the body. You reflect on your lover’s body, thinking of it in terms of flesh, bones, mucus, hairs, internal organs, and so forth. However, although that approach might have worked at onetime, in modern times it is problematic. Highly accomplished physicians know the body inside out; nonetheless, they do not stop falling in love. So working with desire is not all that simple.

The question of what ego is all about can only be solved by understanding the mahayana view of ego. According to the mahayana, and buddhadharma in general, ego is the tendency to hold on to your own survival and to defend it against anything that might interrupt it. Ego or egotism is known in Tibetan as dagdzin. Dag means “oneself,” and dzin means “grasping,” or “holding”; so dagdzin is “holding on to oneself.” In the English language, we do not usually use the term egomaniac to refer to ourselves; we use it to refer to somebody who is extremely egocentric. But from the Buddhist point of view, whenever we are holding on to ourselves, we are expressing egomania. So we are all egomaniacs; we are all holding on to ourselves.

Ego is an instinct that we share with the animals, but on a slightly more sophisticated level. Instead of barking, we talk, and instead of perching, we sit, but there is not much

difference beyond that. Ego is a kind of basic crudeness that exists in us. Usually it is the very first thought that arises. Whenever there is any challenge, any incomprehension or dismay on a smaller or larger scale, we always think, "How am I going to deal with this?" We always begin with "me." It doesn't have to be large-scale warfare. Even if it is only a small inconvenience, like running out of hot water or running out of toilet tissue, our first thought is, "How am I going to wipe my bottom? How am I going to take my bath?" That is the first thought, but it is not particularly the best thought. In fact, it is the worst thought. Whenever the slightest edge occurs in our life, we think of ourselves first. We think "me."

This does not mean that we should stop taking care of ourselves. The point is to recognize that there is a quality of psychological panic, which starts with "this," "here," "me," "my-ness." It starts with apprehension, with bewilderment or confusion, and quite possibly leads us to resort to aggression. When worse comes to worst, that is our only choice. Aggression is what we resort to, even in the most sedate situations in our lives. When we find that things are not convenient, when things don't happen according to our expectations, we complain to the manager, or we make a phone call, or we write a letter of complaint. We would like to just jump up and strangle somebody, if we could. We have preconceived ideas of how things should be, and when things do not happen as we expect, we begin to feel doubtful. Roughly speaking, that is what is known as the survival mentality of ego.

With that mentality, you see the idea of compassion as a threat to your personal territory. You think, "If I follow the mahayana, will I have enough freedom? If I give up my privacy and surrender my whole being for the benefit of others, it might be like joining the Salvation Army, or even worse." You question how far you are willing to go—and your first thought is about how to preserve your own comfort. But once you become involved in the mahayana path, you should not be thinking about comfort at all. In the hinayana, there may be some comfort in the precision of shamatha and vipashyana. But in the mahayana, your own comfort is but of the question. You do not actually have such a thing as privacy or personal comfort, but you are purely dedicated to the welfare of others.

Your parents, psychiatrist, and other responsible people will say that you should be careful, that you should try to build up your ego and have self-respect. In fact, Buddhism has received complaints and criticism from people who say that it is a nihilistic religion, and that you have to give up your self-respect. But we still continue to teach about egolessness, which is more respectable than self-respect, if I may say so.

Twofold Egolessness

When you enter the mahayana, you are expected to have already developed an understanding of what is called one-and-a-half-fold egolessness. The first fold is the egolessness of self. Having understood that, you go on to the second fold, the egolessness of external phenomena, or dharmas. But at this point your understanding is only partial, so it is referred to as one and-a-half-fold egolessness. You have realized the egolessness of external phenomena, but not the egolessness of the perceiving itself. So you have not completely cut your belief in the world's crude manifestation. At the mahayana level, you need to be willing to open up and work with other sentient beings much more vividly than is prescribed in the hinayana. You need to be willing to take a step further into twofold egolessness*

At this point, we are talking simply in terms of inspiration, which plants a seed. There may not be a one-hundred-percent experience of egolessness. Perhaps just tokens of such a possibility are happening. But talking alone does not help, even though you might have theories about it, and sitting practice does not help all that much either. You need to have the experience of dealing with day-to-day life situations in the world. The point is that in entering the mahayana, a good understanding of twofold egolessness goes a long way, because then you could teach yourself and hear the teachings at the same time.

** The realization of twofold egolessness is divided in to three stages. First is the egolessness of self, the first fold. Second is the egolessness of phenomena, described as a partial understanding of the second fold. Third is the egolessness of the perceiving itself, which completes the second fold.*

Functioning without Ego

In the hinayana, you are provided with the idea of shamatha and the meritsof mindfulness. Once you have developed mindfulness, then you are able to go further, to the development of vipashyana, or awareness. The combination of shamatha and vipashyana brings you greater intelligence, or prajna. With that intelligence, you begin to realize the hideousness of believing in your self. You see how your habitual patterns make you thick and stupid, and you realize the problem of ego.

The problem of ego even shows up in our language. In the English language, you may be about to say something intelligent, but your first word has to be I, as in "I am about to say something intelligent." In order to be grammatical, you have to use this word I, so at the grammatical, verbal level, your intelligence is already obscured. If you say, "I have a

good idea, "where did that good idea come from? Should there be "I" in it at all? Why can't you just say, "There is a good idea"? So the problem of ego seems to be inherent in our English language and our grammar.

In the early stages of human linguistic life, we are also taught to say "me" and "mine." That may be all right in terms of learning to speak the language, but beyond that there are continual problems with the notion of possession. The point of mahayana is to overcome that notion of possession and the ongoing impulse that things should belong to you first, and only afterward to others. According to the mahayana, things do not have to belong to you in order for you to enjoy them.

When you realize the obstacles that arise from the belief or habit of ego, you also begin to realize the opposite possibility of overcoming those obstacles and working with them. You realize that you actually possess a state of being that is not centralized in "me," in "my" beliefs, in "my" profession, in "me" as an ego-person. You see that there is another side to you, that you have the potential to experience gentleness and peace. You begin to discover your soft spot. That discovery comes from the experience of vipashyana, or awareness.

We could quite safely say that everybody possesses a soft spot, and everybody can function without ego. We all possess a basic soft spot, which is not ego. Some people might think it strange if you tell them that you are practicing a discipline known as egolessness. They probably think you are on your way to becoming a vegetable. But according to enlightened vision, it is possible to live fully without ego. Ego is, in fact, stupidity. It is fundamental thickness. It sets up obstacles or veils that prevent you from developing any form of intelligence at all.

By understanding the implications of egolessness, you develop a quality of genuine sympathy and softness. You begin to feel relaxed and easy. That combination of sympathy and egolessness makes you a perfect candidate to enter the bodhisattva path. Why? Because at each and every step you are losing your ego, and as you shed more layers of ego, you realize that there is something beyond that. So your fixation on ego, or ego-clinging, no longer plays an important part in your life. You have no idea why or how it happens, but further intelligence and greater possibilities are taking place in you.

With the understanding of egolessness and the help of the spiritual friend, you experience a feeling of great sadness. You feel humbled and sad that something has been lost. In ordinary life, you may have gained all sorts of charisma, but now all that charisma is gone because it was based on aggressively conquering territory. It was an expression of twofold ego. When you begin to lose that, you develop depression and a

feeling of loss. You begin to panic, thinking, "Now what? Where am I? What am I?" When you have lost your grasp on the ego of dharmas and the ego of individuality, you begin to feel empty.

When you have understood the first egolessness, the egolessness of self, you are said to have understood grasping but not fixation.* In terms of twofold egolessness, when "you" begin, not to exist anymore, you are halfway through; and when you realize that, there is a yearning for the egolessness of dharmas. There is a yearning to go beyond struggle—to go beyond hunger, thirst, duty, and the idea that some kind of relief or letting go will take place. Although you may not yet have a complete understanding of twofold egolessness, you have expanded beyond the level of individual salvation. You realize that the individual salvation you have experienced so far has become tenuous, and you have developed greater sympathy for other people. Where did that come from? It came from realizing that fixation on dharmas does not help.

When you begin to lose the ego of self and the ego of phenomena, you start to feel that you are not professional at anything. You are not a professional con man and you do not need to sell yourself, but you transcend salesmanship. You could still have your little business ventures, but the salesmanship of selling your ego is impossible. As a student of the mahayana, or a would-be bodhisattva, you take the bodhisattva vow because you have a yearning to go beyond such salesmanship and charisma.

The approach of individual salvation is very simple. You know what you are, and you know how to save yourself. Your only dependence is on an elder, a learned person who tells you what to do. But that is only little help; you can do most of it yourself. Shamatha-vipashyana can be conducted in years of solitude. You can just keep doing it, with occasional references to that wise person. Your relationship with the elder is like consulting your grandfather about your business, or paying respects to your grandmother. There's not much surrendering involved.

If you tried to carry the approach of individual salvation into the mahayana, it would be like immigrants who keep taking care of their families back home. When you enter the mahayana, grasping and fixation are transcended, and you go beyond the hinayana attitude of individual salvation. From the clarity of individual salvation, you develop further, so although you are getting into completely new territory, you are no longer dealing with such immigration problems. Instead of clinging to the past, you develop a better, healthier problem, the problem of having expectations.

**Twofold ego can be described in terms of grasping on to a self and fixating on phenomena.*

Kundzop and Emptiness

From *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Vol. 2*
By Chögyam Trungpa, Edited by Judith L. Lief, pp 156-158

The shunyata experience of the bodhisattva path comes from shamatha, vipashyana, and *egolessness*. The shamatha possibility of shunyata comes from kundzop experiences presenting themselves colorfully, but without any personal, emotional attachment being made. There is no *clinging* to the phenomenal world, although the phenomenal world continues to be colorful and vivid. That lack of fixation brings in the element of absolute truth as well. It brings about harmony and gentleness, because we do not have to fight for anything. That is the first point, the shamatha experience of shunyata.

With vipashyana, you begin to understand how to see things as they are in a very simple, nonaggressive way. You begin to see things as an illusion. This does not mean that you are being fooled or seeing a mirage, but that you are seeing things as a self-existing game that does not apply individually or personally to you or others. You are beginning to realize the mirage-ness of the situation in a very simple way; you see that things are not all that good, not all that bad, not all that entertaining, and not all that nonentertaining. Things are being seen as they are on a very basic and fundamental level.

On the whole, there is no substance, although there is seeming substance. If somebody is not helping you to pay your phone bills, or if somebody doesn't give you your dinner, or the dinner is badly cooked, such things may be touchy situations for you. But at the same time, it is because you are so touchy and intensely emotional that new possibilities begin to occur to you. When you have powerful emotional threats and extreme messages of all kinds being presented to you, as extreme as such events become, that is how much shunyata could be experienced. Because things are so extraordinarily intense; therefore, they are so ordinarily a mirage because of the intensity. In other words, human beings are unable to experience shunyata as the enlightened ones experienced it a long time ago. The enlightened ones just experienced it on the spot, but we can experience shunyata only by contrast.

You might have thought that shunyata would be purely a meditative experience, but that is not quite the case. Actually, according to the traditional Kagyu-Nyingma teaching of our lineage, it is said that shunyata is also a postmeditation experience. Extreme situations happen all the time. Somebody steals your last dollar, and you can't do anything about it.

Somebody runs away with your girlfriend or boyfriend, and you are left so despairing, so lonely. For that matter, somebody scoops out a huge spoonful of ice cream from your dish, so you don't have much left to eat. But what is there to do about it? How much can you blame the phenomenal world for playing tricks on you? Because you have fixated so very powerfully on one thing or another, and then somebody comes along and takes that thing away from you, that tends to bring about some kind of flash between two contrasting situations. That experience of contrast actually makes a lot of difference.

The contrast between immense grasping and immense loss of that grasping brings about a feeling of loss and gain at the same time. So when you begin to realize shunyata, there's a twist in that realization. You feel that you have lost, but at the same time you feel that you have gained. It is simultaneously absolute loss and absolute gain, simultaneously hot and cold. At that point, you can no longer tell the difference. It is not just on the cheap or simpleminded level that you can't tell the difference between good and bad, and it is not because you are so freaked-out. Rather, it is because there is an intelligence that experiences the departing situation and the coming situation as one experience. That experience cuts through the birth of crude and subtle fixations altogether by allowing you to realize the truth of the dharma.

Usually this experience comes in a sequence. First there is loss; then when you realize that you have lost, it becomes gain; and finally there is both loss and gain at the same time. It takes three steps: one, two, three. This is an ongoing process, and the stopping point is not experienced except at the vajrayana level. At the mahayana level, this process is said to develop genuine devotion and sympathy, so that you finally manage to fall in love with all sentient beings through your dedication.

In looking at how to bring about or click into shunyata, we could refer back to the hinayana and the experience of the blind grandmother. You realize that you cannot teach your blind grandmother the dharma, and you cannot talk her out of her opinions. Whatever you try with her doesn't help. She's blind, she's on her way to being deaf, and she loves you a lot. She not only loves you a lot, but she possesses you. She regards you, her grandchild, as her possession completely. So how can you let go of that blind grandmother? By feeling good, feeling happy, or any way at all? There is no way. The only way is to abandon your blind grandmother, to let her go by not feeding her any further food of neurosis. The absence of that blind grandmother is the shunyata experience.