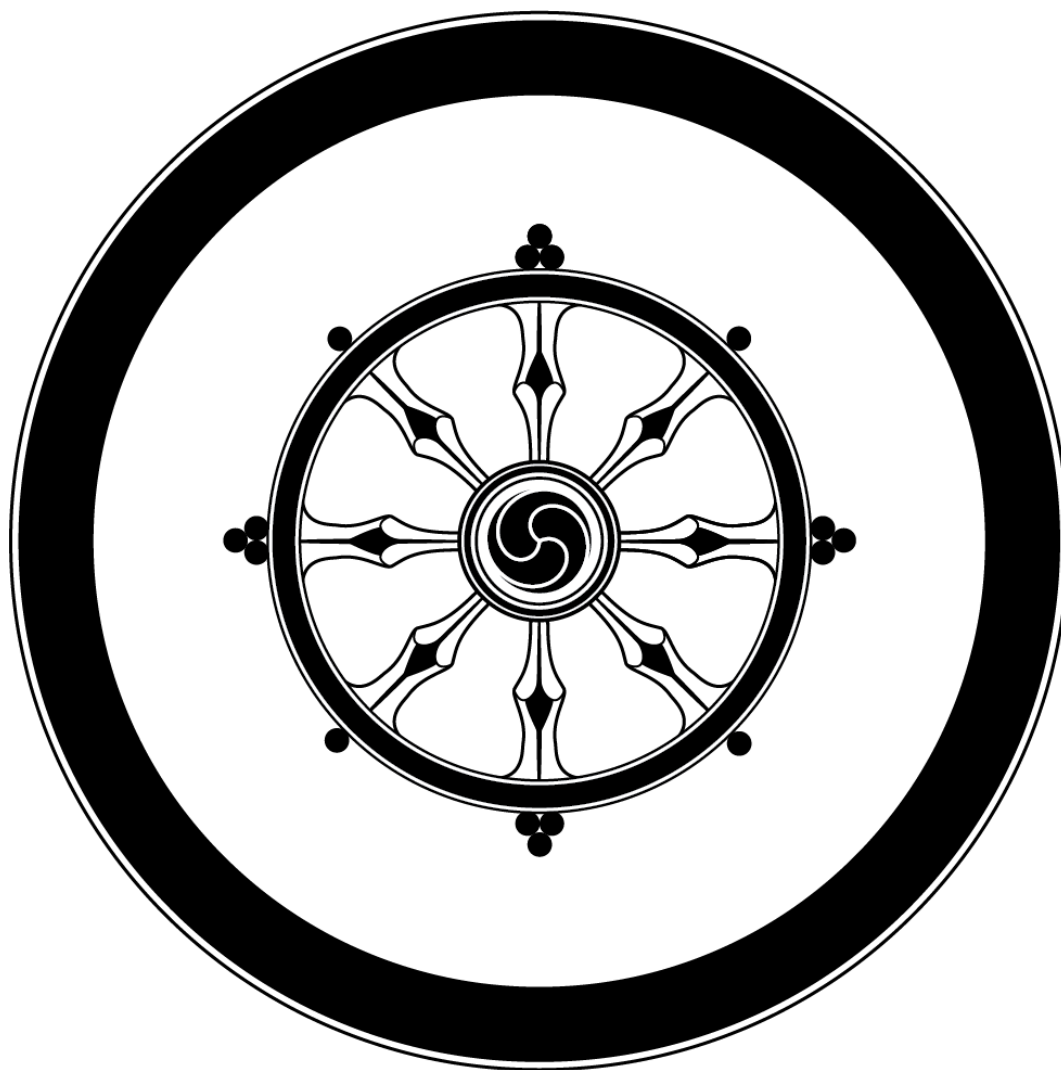


**Shamatha & Vipashyana Meditation**  
**As Presented by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche**  
**A Sourcebook of Readings**



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The Practice of Shamatha Vipashyana from Jamgon Kongtrul to Chogyam Trungpa.  
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# The Practice of Shamatha and Vipashyana As Presented by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche

## Table of Contents

### The Chapter on Shamatha Vipashyana from Jamgon Kongtrul's *Treasury of Knowledge*

- Brief Outline
- Root Text

#### 1) Shamatha-Vipashyana

- a) [Sitting or Nonsitting](#), Chogyam Trungpa, 1975 Hinayana-Mahayana Seminary Transcripts, pp. 100-105, four pages
- b) [Meditation/Samadhi](#), *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation*, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Ed. Judith L. Lief, p. 29, one page
- c) Shamatha and Vipashyana, from [Egolessness & Compassion](#), *The Heart of the Buddha: Entering the Buddhist Path*, by Chögyam Trungpa, Ed. Judith L. Lief, excerpt from pp. 107-108, one page

#### 2) The Progression of The Presentation

- a) History of Shamatha Instruction, [Meditation Instructor Training Seminars](#), by Chogyam Trungpa, Karma Choling, Winter-Spring 1975, Excerpt, one page
- b) [Talk 1: Shamatha, 1974 Vajradhatu Seminary: Hinayana-Mahayana](#), Chogyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, excerpt from page one, one page
- c) [The Basic Minimum](#), *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation*, Chapter 24, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Ed. Judith L. Lief, excerpt pp.188-189, one page

#### 3) The Overall Progression of The Practice

- a) The Evolution of Meditative Techniques, [Early Teachers' Training Sessions](#), by Chogyam Trungpa, Karme Choling, 1971, Part One, two pages
- b) Natural Dharma, [The Sanity We Are Born With: A Buddhist Approach to Psychology](#), by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Compiled and Edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian, pp. 58-60, two pages
- c) [The Buddhist Path](#), from the Introduction, *Journey without Goal*, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian, excerpt pp. 4-5, two pages
- d) Meditation Practice, from [The Bodhisattva Path](#), *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, by Chogyam Trungpa, Ed. John Baker and Marvin Casper, excerpt, pp. 167-169, two pages

- e) [The Mandala Principle and the Meditative Process](#), *The Dawn of Tantra*, Chapter Four, Herbert V. Guenther and Chögyam Trungpa, Ed. Michael Kohn, pp. 21-25, two pages

#### 4) **Types, Approach and Necessity of Meditation**

- a) [Meditation](#), *Meditation in Action*, by Chogyam Trungpa, pp. 51-64, 12 pages
- b) [An Approach to Meditation: A Talk to Psychologists](#), *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa, Volume Two*, Ed. Carolyn Rose Gimian, excerpts from pp. 441-453, twelve pages
- c) [Why we Meditate](#), *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa, Volume Ten*, Ed. Carolyn Rose Gimian, pp. 661-665, five pages
- d) [The Seven Characteristics of a Dharmic Person](#), *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation*, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Ed. Judith L. Lief, pp. 157-164, seven pages
- e) [Six Categories of Aloneness](#), *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma Vol One: The Path of Individual Liberation*, pp. 129, v3 pg. 68

#### 5) **Shamatha: The Technique:**

- a) [Pagyo](#), *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation*, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Ed. Judith L. Lief, pp. 128
- b) Shamatha: The Practice of Mindfulness, [The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation](#), by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Ed. Judith L. Lief, pp. 191-214, 14 pages
  - i) Take your Time, pp.191-192
  - ii) Upright Posture, pp. 193-197
  - iii) General Guidelines for Meditation Practice, pp. 197-200
  - iv) Breathing Out, pp. 201-202
  - v) Learning How to Let Go, pp. 202-203
  - vi) Light Touch, pp. 203-204
  - vii) Core Boredom, pp. 205-206
  - viii) Labeling Thoughts, pp. 207-211
  - ix) Touch and Go, pp. 212-213
  - x) Acknowledging States of Mind, pp. 213-214
- c) [Cutting Thoughts and Short-Circuiting the Kleshas](#), *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation*, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Ed. Judith L. Lief, excerpt, pp. 257-259
  - i) Pagyo: A Residue of Mindfulness, pp. 257-258
  - ii) Tren-she: Recollecting and Knowing, pp. 258-259
- d) [Making Friends with Yourself](#), *Mindfulness in Action: Making Friends with Yourself through Meditation and Everyday Awareness*, by Chogyam Trungpa, Compiled, arranged, and edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian, pp. 14-35, 20 pages:
  - i) How to Meditate, pp. 14-26, nine pages

- ii) The Teddy Bear of Breath, pp. 27-31, three pages
- iii) Cool Boredom, pp. 32-35, three pages
- e) [Touch and Go](#), *Mindfulness in Action: Making Friends with Yourself through Meditation and Everyday Awareness*, by Chogyam Trungpa, Compiled, arranged, and edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian, pp. 105-113, seven pages
- f) [Shamatha, Meditation Instructor Training Seminars](#), by Chogyam Trungpa, Karma Choling, Winter-Spring 1975, five pages
- g) [Discovering Basic Goodness](#), *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Carolyn Rose Gimian, ed., Shambhala, Boston & London, 1988, excerpt on pp. 36-41, four pages
- h) [A Meditation Instruction](#), *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa, Volume Ten*, Ed. Carolyn Rose Gimian, pp. 645-650, six pages

#### **6) Shamatha: Basics of the Practice:**

- a) [Excerpt on Shamatha](#), from Competing with Our Projections, in *The Lion's Roar: An Introduction to Tantra*, pp. 92-95, three pages
- b) [Trapping the Monkey](#), *The Teacup and the Skullcup: Chögyam Trungpa on Zen and Tantra*, pp. 71-80, three pages
- c) [Sitting Meditation](#), *The Myth of Freedom and the Way of Meditation*, excerpts from pp. 44-59, seven pages
- d) [Recollecting the Present](#), *The Path Is the Goal: A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation*, Chogyam Trungpa, edited by Sherab Chodzin, pp. 66-80, eight pages

#### **7) Shamatha: Progression of the Practice through the FFM**

- a) [The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation](#), by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Ed. Judith L. Lief, 13 pages,
  - i) An Element of Magic, pp. 264-266
  - ii) The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Introduction), pp. 285-287
  - iii) Mindfulness of Body: Penetrating Being and Psychosomatic Body, p. 287-289
  - iv) Mindfulness of Life: Well-Being, p. 298-303
  - v) Mindfulness of Effort: Sudden Flash--The Abstract Watcher, p. 308-311
  - vi) Mindfulness of Mind: The transcendental watcher, p. 320-322
  - vii) Five Basic Nyams, p. 323-324
  - viii) Three Fundamental Nyam, pp. 324-326
- b) [Mindfulness in Action: Making Friends with Yourself through Meditation and Everyday Awareness](#), by Chogyam Trungpa, Compiled, arranged, and edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian, 10 pages
  - i) Life Force, excerpts from pp. 76-82
  - ii) Spontaneous Discipline, excerpts from pp. 83-90
  - iii) Touching the Surface of Mind, excerpts from pp. 91-96

#### **8) Transition from Shamatha to Vipashyana**

- a) [Cognition and Deeper Perception](#), from “The Outer Mandala, in *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Vol. 3*, two pages
- b) [Cool Boredom](#), *Mindfulness in Action*, pp. 32-35, three pages
- c) [The Portable Stage Set](#), *The Path Is the Goal: A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation*, pp. 88-103, two pages
- d) [Transition from Shamatha to Vipashyana](#), from Continuing Your Confusion, in *The Path Is the Goal: A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation*, pp. 20-25, two pages
- e) [Talk 4: Shamatha and Vipashyana](#), *The Path of Meditation Seminar*, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Naropa Institute, June 12 to July 8, 1974, rough transcription, eight pages

#### **9) Introduction to Vipashyana**

- a) [Talk 9. Comparison of Vipashyana with Shamatha](#), *1973 Seminary Talks: Hinayana-Mahayana*, pp. 107-111, four pages
- b) [The Freshness of Unconditional Mind](#), *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One*, excerpts from pp. 329-331, two pages
- c) [Beauty and Absurdity](#), *The Teacup and the Skullcup: Chögyam Trungpa on Zen and Tantra*, pp. 83-87, three pages
- d) [Vipashyana](#), *Meditation Instructor Training Seminars*, Karma Choling, Winter-Spring 1975, three pages
- e) [Q&A on Vipashyana](#), *The Heart of the Buddha: Entering the Buddhist Path*, pp. 8-9, two pages

#### **10) Classifications of Vipashyana:**

- a) 44. Beyond Picking and Choosing: Definition of Vipashyana, [The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One](#), p. 337, one page
- b) [Talk 8. Vipashyana \(Lhagthong\)](#), 1973 Hinayana-Mahayana Seminary Transcripts, pp. 91-96, six pages
- c) [The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One](#),
  - i) [Glimpses of Emptiness: Systems of Vipashyana](#), pp. 348-349, one page
  - ii) [47. Investigating the Subtleties of Experience: Four Categories of Vipashyana](#), pp. 354-358, four pages
  - iii) [The Six Discoveries](#), Chapter 48. Sharpening One’s Perception, pp. 359-366, six pages

#### **11) How to Practice Vipashyana:**

- a) [Rediscovering Yourself](#), *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One*, pp. 279-280, two pages
- b) [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
- c) [Boredom-Full or Empty?](#), *The Path Is the Goal: A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation*, pp. 105-108, two pages

- d) [Me-ness and the Emotions](#), *The Path Is the Goal - A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation*, pp. 55-62, four pages
- e) [First Thought](#), from *Mindfulness in Action*, by Chogyam Trungpa, Compiled, arranged, and edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian, excerpts from pp. 61-69, four pages
- f) [Chapter 8: Cutting Ego Fixation](#), *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Vol. 2, The Bodhisattva Path of Wisdom and Compassion*, excerpts on “pp. 62-67, five pages
- g) [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
- h) [Talk Five - Vipashyana Awareness: Allowing the Gap](#), 1981 Vajradhatu Seminary Transcripts: Hinayana-Mahayana, Chogyam Trungpa, except on page 33
- i) [43. The Freshness of Unconditional Mind](#), *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation*, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Ed. Judith L. Lief, excerpts from pp. 331-336, four pages

#### **12) Vipashyana: Stages of The Practice**

- a) [Ultimate Bodhicitta Slogans](#), From *Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness*, By Chögyam Trungpa, Edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 29-45, eight pages
- b) [Alaya](#), *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation*, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Ed. Judith L. Lief, excerpt on pp. 297-300

#### **13) Vipashyana: The Measure of Accomplishment**

- a) Prajna of Meditation, [Wisdom Chapter](#), *Meditation in Action*, excerpt on pp. 71-74, two pages
- b) [The Buddhist path](#), *Journey Without Goal: The Tantric Wisdom of the Buddha*, an excerpt from the Introduction, pp. 4-5, two pages
- c) *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma: Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation*:
  - i) [Discovering a World beyond Ego](#), pp. 134-137, three pages
  - ii) [Three Levels of Samten](#), pp. 252-254, two pages
  - iii) [Chapter 49. Self-Perpetuating Awareness](#), excerpts from pp. 367-369, one page
  - iv) [Two Types of Effort](#), pp. 505-507, two pages
- d) [Beyond Present, Past, and Future Is the Fourth Moment](#), a lecture in “The Tibetan Buddhist Path” class, first summer session of the Naropa Institute, July 1974. Published in Shambhala Sun, March 2006. Excerpts, four pages

#### **14) Aspects of Shamatha and Vipashyana**

- a) *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation*, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Ed. Judith L. Lief,
  - i) [Three Stages of Vipashyana](#), pp. 349-351, four pages

- ii) [Mixing Mind with Space](#), pp. 281-283, two pages
- b) [The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume Two, The Bodhisattva Path of Wisdom and Compassion](#), eight pages:
  - i) A taste of Enlightenment, pp. 6-7
  - ii) Two Aspects of Love: Maitri and Karuna, pp. 15-17
  - iii) Cultivating Wholesomeness, pp. 51-53
  - iv) Basic Training, pp. 55-56
  - v) The Paramitas and Shamatha-Vipashyana, pp. 230
  - vi) Shamatha-Vipashyana and the Order of the Paramitas, pp. 239
  - vii) The Hinayana Version of Ego Taming, pp. 348
- c) [The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume Three: The Tantric Path of Indestructible Wakefulness](#), nine pages:
  - i) [Cognition and Deeper Perception](#), pp. 315-316
  - ii) [Shamatha-Vipashyana as Indivisible Emptiness and Luminosity](#), pp. 291-292
  - iii) [Transforming Kleshas through Shamatha-Vipashyana](#), pp. 331
  - iv) [Ngondro and Shamatha-Vipashyana](#), pp. 356-357; p. 361; p. 365
  - v) [Stability, Luminosity and Joy](#), pp. 400—403
  - vi) [The Importance of Shamatha Practice for All Four Yogas](#), pp. 612-613

#### **15) Union of Shamatha-Vipashyana**

- a) [Meditation without Technique](#), *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume Two, The Bodhisattva Path of Wisdom & Compassion*, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Ed. Judith L. Lief, pp. 131-133, two pages
- b) [Meditation and the Fourth Moment](#), *Mindfulness in Action: Making Friends with Yourself through Meditation and Everyday Awareness*, by Chogyam Trungpa, Compiled, arranged, and edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian, pp. 114-121, six pages
- c) [The Way of Maha Ati](#), Chögyam Trungpa and Rigdzin Shikpo, *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa, Volume One, Pages 461-465*, five pages

#### **16) Appendix: The Full Chapter on Shamatha Vipashyana from Jamgon Kongtrul's Treasury of Knowledge**

- a) [Summary Outline](#)
- b) [Detailed Outline](#)
- c) [The Full text](#)



**The Chapter on Shamatha Vipashyana**  
**Jamgon Kongrul's *Treasury of Knowledge***

**The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana**  
**From *The Treasury of Knowledge* by Jamgon Kongtrul**  
*Translated by Kiki Ekselius & Chrissy Zerbini with Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche*

**Brief Outline**

- 1) The Samadhi of Shamatha-Vipashyana**
  - a) The Essential Nature of Shamatha and Vipashyana
  - b) The Etymology of Shamatha and Vipashyana
  - c) The Necessity of Both
  - d) Their Progressive Order
- 2) Shamatha**
  - a) Basics of the Practice**
    - i) The Prerequisites for Shamatha
    - ii) The Progressive Classification
  - b) Progression of the Practice**
    - i) The Way to Meditate: The Eight-Fold Posture
    - ii) The Methods for Setting the Mind: The Objects of Observation
    - iii) The Progression of the Actual Meditation
    - iv) Identifying the Experiences Arising from Meditation
  - c) Fruition of the Practice**
    - i) The Measure of Accomplishment of Shamatha and its Benefits
    - ii) The Necessity of Accomplishing Shamatha
- 3) Vipashyana**
  - a) Basics of the Practice**
    - i) The Prerequisites for Vipashyana
    - ii) The Particular Types of Vipashyana
    - iii) The Classifications of Vipashyana
    - iv) Summary of the Six Investigations as Three
    - v) Twofold Condensation
  - b) Progression of the Practice**
    - i) The Way to Meditate
    - ii) The Stages of the Actual Meditation on Vipashyana
  - c) Fruition of the Practice**
    - i) The Measure of Accomplishment - Suppleness
- 4) Union of Shamatha-Vipashyana**
  - a) The Training in Shamatha and Vipashyana Conjoined
- 5) Supplementary Issues**
  - a) The Different Categories of Shamatha and Vipashyana
  - b) The Accomplishment of Shamatha and Vipashyana:
  - c) Supplementary explanation of the three stages of concentration

## **The Root Text**

### **The Necessity of Practicing Samadhi**

One should gain certainty in both shamatha and vipashyana, which comprise the ocean of samadhis of both the greater and lesser vehicles.

The essential nature of these is: one-pointedness and individual analysis which fully discriminates phenomena. Having calmed distraction, one completely abides, and the superior nature is seen with the eyes of wisdom. Just as in the example of the bright oil lamp not blown by the wind, one realizes the true nature by bringing both together. The progression is from the support to that which is supported.

### **Shamatha**

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

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

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

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

The particular method for setting the mind is to focus on an impure and a pure support. "Without concrete supports" refers to setting the mind on individual parts; on the complete form; outwardly; and inwardly on the body and on that which depends on the body.

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

There are two ways of identifying the experiences arising from these. According to the treatises, there are five faults: three types of laziness, forgetting the instructions, laxity and agitation (each with two aspects), non-application, and over-application. The eight antidotes to these are: aspiration, exertion, faith and suppleness which counteract the

first; the samadhi of not forgetting with three particularities; examination; application; and equanimity when resting in a balanced state. The nine mental abidings such as setting the mind on the object etc, arise through the six powers of listening, reflecting, mindfulness, introspection, joyous effort and familiarity. To these mental abidings correspond four mental engagements: forcible, interrupted, uninterrupted and spontaneous. In the oral tradition, the five experiences of agitation, attainment, familiarity, stability and perfection are illustrated by examples.

Shamatha is accomplished when suppleness is brought to perfection. The signs are bliss, clarity and no concepts of designations, as if merged with space. It is the foundation of all the concentrations taught in the Sutras and Tantras, and it suppresses all suffering and afflictions.

## **Vipashyana**

The prerequisites for vipashyana are to rely on a wise person and to seek the view by listening extensively and reflecting accordingly.

The types are: The non-buddhists' contemplation of the peaceful and coarse levels; the shravakas' and pratyekabuddhas' contemplation of the four noble truths and their attributes; and the paramitayana's contemplation of emptiness, which in the mantrayana is taught to be endowed with bliss.

The common preparatory stages are similar to those of the mundane path; however, those who have entered the mantrayana and the others do not strive for them.

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.

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 "non-fluctuating."

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-analytical images are the basis

for analysis; having identified the particular object, one cuts through misconceptions regarding its qualities.

The nature of the percept is understood to be empty like space; the perceiver is examined as to origin, abiding, shape, etc.; discriminating knowledge itself, like a fire produced by rubbing wood, vanishes in the expanse of "not finding"; thus one rests free of grasping. When suppleness is obtained, vipashyana is said to be accomplished.

### **Union of Shamatha and Vipashyana**

Though Madhyamikas differ with respect to the method of development, they agree on what is to be developed, namely shamatha, vipashyana and the two together; these three are to be practiced in succession and the main point is non-distraction.

When practicing meditation with designations, the full discrimination of phenomena focuses on the images arising out of shamatha; this is union. When non-conceptual vipashyana is attained, they have become one essence; thus they are unified. This is the genuine samadhi, by the perfection of which non-abiding nirvana, freedom from the bondage of existence and peace, is attained.

In brief, the meditations on ugliness, love, the cycles of breath, pratyahara, nadis, prana, generating phase, mantra recitation, resting the mind naturally - all are but methods for developing the concentration of shamatha.

Analysis of definiendum, definition and example, and of general and specific character; dependent arising; the five reasons; pointing out the nature of mind by means of scripture, reasoning, spiritual influence and symbols - all are methods for developing supreme discriminating knowledge in accordance with the faculties of individuals.

Shamatha and vipashyana can be equally accomplished by either analytical or stabilizing meditation.

First by child-like concentration, one perceives signs such as smoke, etc.; By the discrimination of phenomena, the sameness of pairs of opposites is realized and supreme concentration is accomplished; By focusing on suchness, all phenomena are seen to be emptiness, which in turn is realized to be peace by nature.

This completes the first part being the explanation of the stages of meditation of shamatha and vipashyana, the basis of all samadhis.

# Shamatha Vipashyana



**Sitting or Nonsitting by Chogyam Trungpa**  
**1975 Hinayana-Mahayana Seminary Transcripts, pp. 100-105**

There is nothing very much to say. Hopefully I could review what we have discussed in the past eight talks. You might have the wrong impression of the first two yanas that we discussed. The first yana, the sravakayana, is somewhat methodical, and it is very evident that there is some sense of discipline taking place and that wisdom is pervasive in it. But in discussing the second yana, the pratyekabuddhayana, we were sort of mocking a certain type of individual with very limited vision. The notion of limited vision comes from such an individualistic style in some sense. But there is also some greater wisdom coming out of the pratyekabuddhayana, obviously, which is the discovery of the twelve nidanas. That discovery plays an extremely important part as the basis for understanding the activities of samsaric mind, which can be reversed and thereby turned into enlightened mind at the same time. So that interesting twist takes place.

More generally, the basis of hinayana buddhism is founded on the four types of discipline: a sense of joy, a sense of vision, a sense of discipline, and a sense of practice of meditation. And those four could be simplified or reduced into three categories: discipline, meditation, and prajna.

The basis of practice at the hinayana level-discipline-is the experience of causing no harm to others. Causing no harm to others and also transcending the causes of harm or its root, at the same time. So hinayana discipline is based on having that experience of causing no harm to others as well as transcending the cause of harm. That brings us to the definition of dharma, which is passionlessness, the definition of dharma which is no ground, and the definition of dharma which is enlightenment and freedom orientation.

As far as basic dharma is concerned, at this point everything is connected with the sitting practice of meditation alone. There is no area in the practice of hinayana buddhism which is the buddhism, in which people can actually attain any notion of freedom at all without understanding or realizing the great need for sitting meditation practice. The sitting practice of meditation is immensely important in all this. The logic or the reason for this is that if we are at all working with the sense of egolessness, of any sort or any direction, we have to have some training that involves letting go of our ground, letting go of our carpet. In some areas of the early pratyekabuddhayana the carpet is pulled out quite violently, by the notion of renunciation and so forth. But in the pratyekabuddhayana somehow there is a problem or confusion: the carpet does not exist at all for the very fact that the student does not want to have any teacher-student relationship. Instead he or she would like to do everything on his own, which presents



us with a problem. But at the same time, if the students of the pratyekabuddhayana are inspired, to the level of understanding the twelve nidanas, then there will be some kind of need for a teacher. Being guided is equally important. So therefore finally there is still a need for that rug to be pulled out from under our feet so to speak. And the sitting practice of meditation is the one and only way to do that. It is the only important answer, particularly in the early hinayana discipline. The sitting practice of meditation is regarded as the one and only way to attain some sense of peace.

When we use the word "peace" in buddhism, we do not mean a rewarding peace, but peace in the sense of absence of complications, the simple peace of not having extra chaos in the journey of enlightenment. It will be a peaceful journey if we have enough gasoline, if our motor car is functioning and has a good driver, and if our tires are in good shape. So it is a good peaceful journey, from that point of view, no matter what comes up. Our journey is not particularly guaranteed-occasionally elephants could jump in front of our car or there could be a sudden explosion on the street, all kinds of things could happen. But nevertheless, peace, from that point of view is just having a well-functioning vehicle. And that is why the yanas are important. The yanas have to be good ones, basically good yanas.

The practice of sitting meditation is two-fold, that is, the hinayana approach of mindfulness is two-fold: samatha and vipasyana. Samatha is the basic idea or basic understanding that your approach to life is very precise and very direct-including sitting practice, which is also very precise and direct. There is no room for confusion or chaos at all because when we sit, we sit and when we do not sit, we do not sit. So everything is very precise and direct. That is precisely similar to what is happening in this community: When we sit, we sit: when we don't sit, we don't sit-we are somewhere else. That seems to be an important point in some sense, the notion of keeping track of individuals-that when we sit, we sit and when we don't sit, we don't sit.

Related activities take place around the whole environment of sitting-partly administrative work and partly, out of love for others, compassionate activities such as somebody volunteering to be dishwasher. All that is based on compassionate activity, but still those people are not sitting. It is an interesting question, actually, how we can take care of the logistics of the whole seminary and the whole buddhist scene. But we cannot say that when you do not sit, you are still sitting because you are not sitting-you are standing and doing all kinds of other things. Even though what you are doing may be for a good cause, even though you are acting profusely to bring the buddhadharma to the West, still we cannot regard you as a good sitter, particularly. We could regard you as a good missionary or a good householder or a good serviceman of some kind. But still when you do not sit, you do not sit. So sitting practice provides immense importance to

the whole thing. If there is no sitting practice of meditation, there is no way of getting beyond the problem of ego at all.

To begin with, we have to actually recognize, realize and manifest our ego problems properly, fully, and thoroughly. And we have no way of doing that. We could join primal scream therapy or go to an encounter group or take a heavy dose of LSD, or smoke a gigantic joint, or drink a whole bottle of tequila. But whatever we do in the name of spirituality, nothing really happens because all of those things are sudden measures. They only last for a short time-the longest trip would last for only twenty-eight or thirty hours. You could not have a longer LSD trip than that. That is a problem.

So if we are going to actually make a journey of some kind, if we are actually going to be able to work with ourselves properly, thoroughly, and fully then we have to sit. That is the only way. We begin to realize all sorts of problems, of course. It is not going to be very smooth and pleasant and comfy and nicey. And at the same time, it is also going to be very painful to realize that sense of irregularity-that brings a sense of pain and confusion as well. Well, that is our problem. We have to do something about that. The sitting practice of meditation has to be considered the most important, the best, the highlight of, all our activities.

Before I got here, over at my house, we discussed the corruption that is taking place around the buddhist world. And we concluded that the most critic alone was that even Tibetans do not sit. Even the highest people who are reputed to be good sources of inspiration do not sit. Supposing communist China had not invaded Tibet-quite possibly we would then have no way of presenting the real buddhadharma in this country. Buddhism would be dead, having perished in its own graveyard. So from that point of view, we have a lot of responsibility to practice the real buddhadharma as the Buddha taught it and as the lineage has described it-that without the sitting practice of meditation, nothing can happen. So the sitting practice of meditation is very basic and very simple. I do not want to indulge you people at this point by giving you a whole discourse on how to meditate, how to do the whole thing. I think you know that already. And if you don't, too bad. You should know more. And if you want to know more, sit more.

There is no point in me running the whole thing back again and again, replaying the whole idea, spiel. If we sit, if we actually get into the practice, there is some kind of chance. If we do not, there is no chance, no hope. It is not even hopeless in the sense of the dogma of hopelessness or egolessness. But it is the hopelessness of fundamental failure-that we have heard so much and we have studied so much, but we have just made ourselves into completely super pieces of garbage. We have not actually learned

to sit enough, to sit properly. It is like we have produced a baby that cannot even cry or piss or shit. He is just this little lump of flesh, which cannot even express his expressions. It is the level of infancy which is pre-infancy in fact. We cannot refer to ourselves as infants anymore, just pieces of meat-a thousandyear old egg which has not been eaten but is still sitting in somebody's Chinatown shop. It is a very grim picture.

We have to sit if we want to hatch eggs; we have to sit if we want to cook food: we have to sit if we want to perk up. And sitting is very dull. It does not say very much. There are no encounter groups taking place and no sensory awareness or feeling each other taking place. Nothing of that nature is happening at all. It is very ordinary and very simple. And because of that, it is so highly precious. Precious. It seems to be the best idea that mankind ever came up with. And the first person who thought up that idea was Buddha himself. We feel very grateful to him that he came up with such an idea-it is a fantastic thought. Not only was he enlightened, but he was more than enlightened. He was an enlightened practical person. He knew how to handle us-even in the 20th century. So his logic never dies. It is an important thing. I have nothing more to say than that at this point.

**Meditation / Samadhi**  
***The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma,***  
***Volume One: The Path of Individual Liberation***  
**Chogyam Trungpa, compiled and edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 29**

The second training is samadhi, or absorption. In Tibetan it is *tingdzin*. *Ting* means “still;” *dzin* means “holding”; so *tingdzin* means “holding yourself still.” With *tingdzin*, you do not hang on to your particular preconceptions, but develop a state of mind that is clear, precise, and relaxed. Meditation is based on both mindfulness and awareness. Through shamatha (Tib.: *shi-ne*), or mindfulness practice, you develop concentration and one-pointedness, and with *vipashyana* (Tib.: *lhakthong*), or awareness practice, you develop expansiveness, relaxation, and a wider view.<sup>1</sup> Meditation, or samadhi, is connected with the idea of overcoming the constant search for entertainment. By overcoming that, you begin to cut through the subconscious mind, the mind that provides obstacles to meditation practice. Having done so, you begin to develop a state of absorption in the sense of complete presence. You develop a one-hundred-percent experience of being there.

In meditation, you are mixing your mind with the dharma. Once you attain that state of mind, you have no gaps in your mindfulness. You develop the potential of *vipashyana* as well, because, due to your training, you are so relaxed. You have already been thoroughly broken in, so to speak; therefore, you can hold yourself still, whether you are awake or asleep. You are seeing reality fully through the process of discipline. By means of training in the disciplines of shamatha and *vipashyana*, you have learned to control your mind. You learn how to evolve further, and not get stuck. You learn how you could be fully there, all the time.

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<sup>1</sup> *Vipashyana* means “clear seeing.” Its usage varies considerably, from intellectual analysis, to direct perception, to an open and expansive meditative state. Trungpa Rinpoche also links *vipashyana* to postmeditation practice and to the cultivation of awareness in everyday life.

**Shamatha and Vipashyana**  
**Excerpted from Egolessness and Compassion in “Sacred Outlook”**  
**From *The Heart of the Buddha***  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, pages 107-108**

...Nontheism is synonymous with the realization of egolessness, which is first discovered through the practices of shamatha and vipashyana meditation.

In shamatha meditation, we work with breath and posture as expressions of our state of being. By assuming a dignified and upright posture and identifying with the outgoing breath, we begin to make friends with ourselves in a fundamental sense. When thoughts arise, they are not treated as enemies, but they are included in the practice and labeled simply as “thinking.” *Shamatha* in Sanskrit, or *shi-ne* in Tibetan, means “dwelling in a state of peace.” Through shamatha practice one begins to see the simplicity of one's original state of mind and to see how confusion, speed, and aggression are generated by ignoring the peacefulness of one's being. This is the first experience of egolessness, in which one realizes the transparency of fixed ideas about oneself and the illusoriness of what one thinks of as “I” or “me.”

With further practice, we begin to lose the reference point of self-consciousness, and we experience the environment of practice and the world without bringing everything back to the narrow viewpoint of “me.” We begin to be interested in “that,” rather than purely being interested in “this.” The development of perception that is penetrating and precise without reference to oneself is called *vipashyana* in Sanskrit and *lhakthong* in Tibetan, which means “clear seeing.” The technique of vipashyana does not differ from shamatha; rather, vipashyana grows out of the continued application of shamatha practice. The clear seeing, or insight, of vipashyana sees that there is no more of a solid existence in phenomena than there is in oneself, so that we begin to realize the egolessness of “other.” We also begin to see that suffering in the world is caused by clinging to erroneous conceptions about self and phenomena. We perceive that philosophical, psychological, and religious ideas of eternity and external liberation are myths created by ego-mind. So, in vipashyana practice, egolessness is the recognition of fundamental aloneness, the nontheistic realization that we cannot look for help outside of ourselves.

# **The Progression of the Presentation**

## **History of Shamatha Instruction**

### **The Manual for Shamatha Instructors**

*This material is based on the two Meditation Instructor Seminars held at  
Karmê Chöling, Winter-Spring 1975*

...In the case history of my coming to this country and teaching, I presented the whole thing somewhat loosely in the beginning because, for one thing, there were no physical facilities for people to sit and practice. Retreat situations were not known, and the general sangha situation hadn't developed yet. So the techniques were presented in a somewhat loose manner, somewhat free style, but still in keeping with the shamatha and vipashyana practice. And I often taught beginners vipashyana at that point.

But the situation is changing. We have enough strength within our own students of meditation that we can inspire people. We have to bring the teaching to a more systematic procedure, which is very necessary. At this point we are making history, so to speak, in transplanting Buddhism into this country. Once we begin to do that, we had better do it properly and purely. That seems to be the important point—to do it in a very traditional way, as it has been done in the past.

## **Basic Shamatha Meditation Instruction**

### **An Excerpt from Talk One: Shamatha**

#### ***1974 Seminary Hinayana – Mahayana***

**By Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, page 1**

From tomorrow onward you will be sitting a lot--sitting practice is regarded as the heart of Buddhism, also as the heart of the nontheistic tradition of meditation. All of you have received instructions from me; we have created personal interviews and we have all talked to each other. It's amazing that there are so many "interviewees" here. In the past we discussed two approaches to sitting practice: one is the strict discipline of following the breath, and the other one is a sense of just improvising, trying to sit and feel what happens with you. These are the two categories that were developed in my interviews with individuals here as far as I can remember.

But at this point I would like to make a blanket policy, which should be much better and more workable. Also, if you are going to sit for long periods of time with such a number of people, there is more demand on your state of being, and in fact, on your basic existence. So I would like to suggest following the basic practice of *shamatha* at the beginning of your sitting period, strict *shamatha* practice--well, it's not exactly strict. Certain schools make a very primitive practice out of *shamatha*. What we are doing is not primitive practice, but strict practice; there is a lot of difference between the two. What we are going to do is not primitive practice based on the peasantry level, but strict practice, in the sense that there's no way to move around, no way to jiggle around, no way to maneuver around your practice. You do what you are told to do. That seems to be one of the basic points. If there's no way to relate with discipline then there's no way to develop yourself; you are constantly swirling around and you find yourself drifting into all kinds of situations.

The sitting practice of meditation here is basic mindfulness practice. We are not doing awareness practice as such--that might come later--we are doing mindfulness practice as opposed to awareness practice. Some of you might feel you are regressing and back to the A-B-C-D level, rather than moving on to something more advanced and glorious, but it is necessary to do it this way, to develop your meditation at the mindfulness level.



**The Basic Minimum**  
***The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma***  
***Volume One: The Path of Individual Liberation, Chapter 24***  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, Ed. Judith L. Lief, pp. 188-189**

When I began teaching Westerns to meditate, I noticed that some students were able to tune in to openness directly. So I did not give them a [page 189] technique, but encouraged direct opening, a sudden flash. However, in intensive meditation programs, that approach became a problem. Those students began to question whether that open experience was genuine or a hallucination. Although they had nothing to do but sit and let that openness happen, all kinds of thoughts began to churn up in the mind. Auditory, visual, and physical sensations began to take them over. So although such instructions are valid on their own merit, during intensive practice I feel that students should practice the more conservative approach of mindfulness of breathing. Also, there are different styles of breathing belonging to different levels of meditation practice, such as shamatha, vipashyana, *mahavipashyana*, or great vipashyana, and shunyata. However, instead of classifying the different styles of practice, I prefer to present very simply and directly what it is necessary to do to begin sitting.

# **The Progression of the Practice**

**The Evolution of Meditative Techniques**  
**Early Teachers' Training: Lectures by and Discussions with**  
**Vidyadhara Venerable Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche: Part One**  
*These discussions with a small group of students*  
*Took place at Karmê Chöling in 1971*

**A. Shamatha Meditation**

Shamatha meditation is calmness through stilling the mind, through precision. Not judging thoughts but just acknowledging them. The only way to do this is through precise attention to the details of breathing. The breath is very faithful and acute. Shamatha is taught only to a very literal person. The technique is to acknowledge thought, "I am thinking, I am thinking," and to follow the breathing.

If a person is unable to keep to the precision of that, then you introduce the watcher: "I am being mindful of breathing out, I am being mindful of breathing in. My breath is short, my breath is long." Thoughts are verbalized. The difference between shamatha and vipashyana is subtle. In shamatha you verbalize the thoughts.

**B. Vipashyana Meditation**

In vipashyana meditation you don't divide thoughts into sections but follow a more general process. You don't verbalize your thoughts and you don't teach the calmness of mind. Instead you pay attention to the acute precision of the breathing, i.e. the outgoing breath, without verbal labels.

We teach outbreath. The inbreath is considered only the turning for the next outbreath. Eyes open. Vipashyana is the process of identifying with the breath dissolving in space. It has the acute precision of breathing from the nostrils.

**C. Shamatha-Vipashyana**

We do shamatha-vipashyana meditation. Here you introduce an element of sensation, or the *feeling* of the whole thing rather than *paying attention* to the whole thing. You just pay attention to the outline of the breath rather than being faithful in any way to the precision. At this stage it is feeling without acute precision, and the student is taught to be more intelligent than necessary.

#### **D. Mahavipashyana**

We also teach mahavipashyana, which is attention to shunyata. What is special here is the *identification* with the breath. You don't have to follow the outline any more once you *are* the breath. Therefore, identification with breathing is very important and rarely taught. The other techniques are all forms of attention to the breath, and the person is conscious of the journey. It is a bit of looking still, and one is taught to be intelligent.

You identified as the breath dissolved into nothing, but this still has a clumsy quality, it still has dogma. Don't concentrate on your body. It is still awkward because you have to introduce some negativity there.

## Natural Dharma

### *The Sanity We Are Born With—A Buddhist Approach to Psychology*

By Chogyam Trungpa, Pages 58-60

To begin with, the main point of meditation is that we need to get to know ourselves: our minds, our behavior, our being. You see, we think we know ourselves, but actually we don't. There are all sorts of undiscovered areas of our thoughts and actions. What we find in ourselves might be quite astounding.

Meditation often means "to meditate on" something, but in this case I am referring to a state of meditation without any contents. In order to experience this state of being, it is necessary to practice what is known as "mindfulness." You simply pay attention to your breath, as you breathe in and out, and to every detail in your mind, whether it is a thought pattern of aggression, passion, or ignorance, or just insignificant mental chatter. Mindfulness also means paying attention to the details of every action, for example, to the way you extend your hand to reach for a glass. You see yourself lifting it, touching it to your lips, and then drinking the water. [Rinpoche takes a sip from his glass.] So every detail is looked at precisely—which doesn't make you self-conscious, particularly, but it may give you quite a shock; it may be quite real. When mindfulness begins to grow and expand, you become more aware of the environment around you, of something more than just body and mind alone. And then, at some point, mindfulness and awareness are joined together, which becomes one open eye, one big precision. At that point, a person becomes much less crude. Because you have been paying attention to your thoughts and actions, you become more refined.

Out of that precision and refinement comes gentleness. You are not just paying attention, but you are also aware of your own pain and pleasure, and you develop sympathy and friendship for yourself. From that you are able to understand, or at least see, the pain and suffering of others, and you begin to develop a tremendous sense of sympathy for others. At the same time, such sympathy also helps the mindfulness awareness process develop further. Basically, you become a gentle person. You begin to realize that you are good: totally good and totally wholesome. You have a sense of trust in yourself and in the world. There is something to grip on to, and the quality of path or journey emerges out of that. You feel you want to do something for others and something for yourself. There is a sense of universal kindness, goodness, and genuineness.

When you experience precision and gentleness, the phenomenal world is no longer seen as an obstacle—or as being particularly helpful, for that matter. It is seen and appreciated

as it is. At this point, you are able to transmute the various defilements of passion, aggression, and ignorance into a state of wisdom. For example, when aggression occurs, you simply look at the aggression, rather than being carried away by it or acting it out. When you look at the aggression itself, it becomes a mirror reflecting back to your face. You realize that the aggression has no object; there is nothing to be aggressive toward. At that point, the aggression itself subsides, but its strength or energy is kept as a positive thing. It becomes wisdom. Here wisdom does not mean the usual notion of being wise. Wisdom is egolessness, or a state of being, simply being.

The whole process requires a certain amount of mindfulness and awareness throughout, obviously. But you naturally develop a habit of seeing whatever defilement occurs just as it is, even if it is just for a glimpse. Then you begin to be freed from anxiety, and you begin to achieve a state of mind that need not be cultivated and which cannot be lost. You experience a natural state of delight. It is not that you are always beaming and happy, or that you just stay in a state of mystical ecstasy. You feel other people's suffering. It has been said in the texts that the Buddha's sensitivity to others' pain and suffering, compared to the sensitivity of an ordinary person, is like the difference between having a hair on your eyeball and having a hair on the palm of your hand. [Page 60] So delight in this case means total joy, having a total sense of "isness." Then you are able to help others, you are able to help yourself, and you are able to influence the universe with an all-pervasive sense of isness which neither comes nor goes.

We follow these stages of meditation methodically, with tremendous diligence and the help of a teacher. When one reaches a state of no question [Startled laughter erupts among the audience, as a loud thunderclap occurs nearby] the natural dharma is proclaimed. [Rinpoche indicates environment with his fan.] Therefore one begins to feel, without egotism, that one is the king of the universe. Because you have achieved an understanding of impersonality, you can become a person. It takes a journey. First you have to become nothing, and then you can become somebody. One begins to develop tremendous conviction and doubtlessness, without pretense. This stage is called enlightenment, or wakefulness in the ultimate sense. From the beginning, wakefulness has been cultivated through mindfulness, awareness, and sympathy toward oneself and others. Finally one reaches the state where there is no question whatsoever. One becomes part of the universe. [More loud thunder, accompanied by tumultuous rain.]

I think that is probably enough at this point. There are various details and technicalities regarding the types and stages of meditation, but since time is short and also since it would be futile to talk about this and that too much, I would like to stop here. Thank you.

**The Buddhist Path**  
**An Excerpt from *Journey Without Goal:***  
***The Tantric Wisdom of the Buddha***  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, Excerpt on pp. 4-5**

The entire Buddhist path is based on the discovery of egolessness and the maturing of insight or knowledge that comes from egolessness. In the hinayana, we discover the nonexistence of self through the practice of meditation. Assuming a dignified sitting posture, identifying with the breath, and simply noting thoughts and feelings—basic discursiveness—we begin to make friends with ourselves in a fundamental sense.

By applying mindfulness, or bare attention, to whatever arises during meditation, we begin to see that there is no permanence or solidity to our thought process, and at some point, we begin to realize that there is no permanence or solidity to us. In Sanskrit, the meditative practice of mindfulness is called *shamatha* and in Tibetan it is *shiné (zhi-gnas)*. *Shiné* literally means the development of "peace." The meaning of peace here is precisely this sense of taming the wildness of mind so that we are alert and able to experience ourselves directly. We are not talking about peace as some kind of trance state: shamatha is the first step in waking up.

Mindfulness naturally leads to the development of awareness, which is a sense of expansion, being aware of the environment or space in which we are being mindful. Awareness brings tremendous interest in things, people, and the world altogether. We begin to develop sympathy and caring for others. The practice of awareness in Sanskrit is called *vipashyana* and in Tibetan, *lhagthong (lhagmthong)*, which literally means "clear seeing." Vipashyana is traditionally connected both with the practice of meditation and with the formal study of the teachings and postmeditation activities in general. Vipashyana provides a link between the insight that is developed in meditation practice and our everyday experience. It allows us to carry that meditative insight or awareness into our daily lives.

Through the insight that comes from vipashyana, we begin to make a further discovery of egolessness. We begin to develop a precise understanding of how mind functions and how confusion is [Page 5] generated. We are able to see how the belief in ego causes tremendous pain and suffering to ourselves and others.

From this comes the desire to renounce samsara, the wheel of confused existence—the world of ego. Renunciation is expressed as the desire to refrain from harming ourselves

and others. As well, we begin to long for the path that will liberate us from confusion. We begin to develop confidence in the Buddha as the enlightened example; in the dharma, or teachings of Buddhism, which are the path; and in the sangha, the community of practitioners who follow this path. Renunciation is utterly and absolutely necessary if we wish to practice the teachings of the Buddha. This theme runs through the entire path, from beginning to end. At the Vajrayana level, renunciation is connected with devotion to the teacher, the vajra master. Devotion to the teacher in the vajrayana demands the total surrender of ego, the complete renunciation of all clinging to self.

Because of the discovery of egolessness in shamatha and the development of interest and sympathy in vipashyana, we naturally begin to expand our sense of warmth and friendliness to others. We are less interested in "this," "I," "me," and more interested in "that." The mahayana path is based on this discovery that others are more important than ourselves. Because we have discovered egolessness, because we have discovered that *me* does not exist, we find that there is lots of room, lots of space, in which to help others. That is the basis of compassion, *karuna*. Compassion in the Buddhist tradition is not based on guilt; it is based on having greater vision, because we can afford to do so.



**Meditation Practice**  
**Excerpt from “The Bodhisattva Path”**  
**From *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism***  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, pages 167-169**

We have discussed the Hinayana meditation practice of simplicity and precision. By allowing a gap, space in which things may be as they are, we begin to appreciate the clear simplicity and precision of our lives. This is the beginning of meditation practice. We begin to penetrate the Fifth Skanda, cutting through the busyness and speed of discursive thought, the cloud of “gossip” that fills our minds. The next step is to work with emotions.

Discursive thought might be compared to the blood circulation which constantly feeds the muscles of our system, the emotions. Thoughts link and sustain the emotions so that, as we go about our daily lives, we experience an ongoing flow of mental gossip punctuated by more colorful and intense bursts of emotion. The thoughts and emotions express our basic attitudes toward and ways of relating to the world and form an environment, a fantasy realm in which we live. These “environments” are the Six Realms, and although one particular realm may typify the psychology of a particular individual, still that person will constantly experience the emotions connected with the other realms as well.

In order to work with these realms we must begin to view situations in a more panoramic way, which is *vipashyana* (Pali: *vipassana*) meditation. We must become aware not only of the precise details of an activity, but also of the situation as a whole. Vipashyana involves awareness of space, the atmosphere in which precision occurs. If we see the precise details of our activity, this awareness also creates a certain space. Being aware of a situation on a small scale also brings awareness on a larger scale.

Out of this develops panoramic awareness, *mahavipashyana* (Pali: *mahavipassana*) meditation: that is, awareness of the overall pattern rather than the focusing of attention upon details. We begin to see the pattern of our fantasies rather than being immersed in them. We discover that we need not struggle with our projections, that the wall that separates us from them is our own creation. The insight into the insubstantial nature of ego is prajna, transcendental knowledge. As we glimpse prajna we relax, realizing that we no longer have to maintain the existence of ego. We can afford to be open and generous. Seeing another way of dealing with our projections brings intense joy. This is the first spiritual level of attainment of the bodhisattva, the first *bhumi*. We

enter the Bodhisattva Path, the Mahayana Path, the open way, the path of warmth and openness.

In mahavipashyana meditation there is a vast expanse of space between us and objects. We are aware of the space between the situation and ourselves and anything can happen in that space. Nothing is happening here or there in terms of relationship or battle. In other words, we are not imposing our conceptualized ideas, names and categories on experience, but we feel the openness of space in every situation. In this way awareness becomes very precise and all-encompassing.

Mahavipashyana meditation means allowing things to be as they are. We begin to realize that this needs no effort on our part because things *are* as they are. We do not have to look at them in that way: they *are* that way. And so we begin to really appreciate openness and space, that we have space in which to move about, that we do not have to try to be aware because we already are aware. So the Mahayana Path is the open way, the wide path. It involves the open-minded willingness to allow oneself to be awake, to allow one's instinct to spring out.

Previously we discussed allowing space in order to communicate, but that kind of practice is very deliberate and self-conscious. When we practice mahavipashyana meditation, we do not simply watch ourselves communicate, deliberately allowing a gap, deliberately waiting; but we communicate and then just space out, so to speak. Let be and not care anymore; don't possess the letting be as belonging to you, as your creation. Open, let be and *disown*. Then the spontaneity of the awakened state springs out.

**The Mandala Principle and the Meditative Process**  
**Excerpt from *The Dawn of Tantra*, Chapter Four**  
**By Herbert V. Guenther and Chögyam Trungpa**  
**Michael Kohn, ed., Shambhala, Boston & London, 2001, pp. 22-25**

... The starting point is samatha practice, which is the development of peace or dwelling on peace. This practice does not, however, involve dwelling or fixing one's attention on a particular thing. Fixation or concentration tends to develop trance-like states. But from the Buddhist point of view, the point of meditation is not to develop trance-like states; rather it is to sharpen perceptions, to see things as they are. Meditation at this level is relating with the conflicts of our life situations, like using a stone to sharpen a knife, the situation being the stone. The samatha meditation, the beginning point of the practice, could be described as sharpening one's knife. It is a way of relating to bodily sensations and thought processes of all kinds; just relating with them rather than dwelling on them or fixing on them in any way.

Dwelling or fixing comes from an attitude of trying to prove something, trying to maintain the "me" and "my" of ego's territory. One needs to prove that ego's thesis is secure. This is an attempt to ignore the samsaric circle, the samsaric whirlpool. This vicious circle is too painful a truth to accept, so one is seeking something else to replace it with. One seeks to replace the basic irritation or pain with the pleasure of a fixed belief in oneself by dwelling on something, a certain spiritual effort or just worldly things. It seems that, as something to be dwelled on, conceptualized ideas of religion or spiritual teachings or the domestic situations of life are extensions of the ego. One does not simply see tables and chairs as they are; one sees my manifestation of table, my manifestation of chair. One sees constantly the "me" or "my" in these things; they are seen constantly in relationship to me and my security.

It is in relation to this world of my projections that the precision of samatha is extremely powerful. It is a kind of scientific research, relating to the experiences of life as substances and putting them under the microscope of meditative practice. One does not dwell on them, one examines them, works with them. Here the curiosity of one's mind acts as potential prajna, potential transcendental knowledge. The attitude of this practice is not one of seeking to attain nirvana, but rather of seeing the mechanism of samsara, how it works, how it relates to us. At the point of having seen the complete picture of samsara, of having completely understood its mechanism, nirvana becomes redundant. In what is called the enlightened state, both samsara and nirvana are freed.

In order to see thought processes (sensations and perceptions that occur during the

practice of shamatha) as they are, a certain sense of openness and precision has to be developed. This precise study of what we are, what our make-up is, is closely related with the practice of tantra. In the tantric tradition it is said that the discovery of the vajra body—that is, the innate nature of vajra (indestructible being)—within one’s physical system and within one’s psychological system is the ultimate experience. In the samatha practice of the Hinayana tradition, there is also this element of looking for one’s basic innate nature as it is, simply and precisely, without being concerned over the absence of “me” and “my.”

From the basis of the samatha practice, the student next develops what is known as *vipassana* practice. This is the practice of insight, seeing clearly, seeing absolutely, precisely—transcendental insight. One begins to realize that spending one’s whole time on the details of life, as in the samatha practice, does not work. It is still somehow an adolescent approach. It is necessary to begin to have a sense of the totality. This is an expansion process.

... in the vipassana practice, having established the precision of details, one begins to experience the space around them. In other words, in making a pot, the importance is not so much on making the pot itself, but on shaping the space. Just so, in the vipassana practice the process is one of trying to feel the space around the pot. If one has a sense of the space one is going to create by producing a pot, one makes a good potter. But if one is purely concerned with making a shape out of clay without having a sense of the space, one does not make a good potter; or a good sculptor either, for that matter. In this way of beginning to relate with the space, vipassana is gradually letting go, a releasing and expanding.

From this point it is then possible to get a glimpse of the *shunyata* experience. The obstacle to the shunyata experience is the split between basic being and one’s concept of it, between one’s being and one’s projections. All kinds of questions, problems and obstacles arise in relation to this division. The reason that the first glimpse of shunyata becomes possible at this point is that, having seen the details of things as they are through samatha practice and experienced the space around them through vipassana, one begins to relax. One begins to experience the needlessness of defending or asserting oneself. At this point shunyata emerges as the simple absence of those walls and barricades of defense and assertion. One begins to develop the clear and precise experience of seeing a tree as just a tree; not one’s version of a tree, not a tree called such-and-such, but a tree just as it is. The culmination of the experiential process of the development of intellect is the experience of shunyata, which is the experience of the non-existence of duality. The research work is already accomplished; the process of searching for something has been laid to rest. This is the attainment of prajna.

# **Types, Approach and Necessity of Meditation**

# **Meditation**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

### Summary

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

### Discussion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**A.** In what sense?

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

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

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

**A.** Yes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**A.** Visible things in this sense are reality. There is nothing beyond oneness, therefore what we see is reality. But because of our usual way of seeing things, we do not see them exactly as they are.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the concept of the self-made man.

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

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

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

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

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

one is concentrating, rather than actually being in a state of concentration. This becomes a vicious circle. Therefore one cannot develop concentration alone, without taking away the centralised watchfulness, the trying to be careful—which is Ego. So the Samatha practice, the awareness of breathing, is not concerned with concentrating on the breathing.

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

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

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

One should not try to suppress thoughts in meditation, but one should just try to see the transitory nature, the translucent nature of thoughts. One should not become involved in them, nor reject them, but simply observe them and then come



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

# **An Approach to Meditation: A Talk to Psychologists**

**From *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa, Volume Two***

**Edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian, pp. 441-453**

**"An Approach to Meditation," *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 5, no. 1**

**(1973): 62-74. © 1973 Diana J. Mukpo**

[Page 441] Meditation seems to be the basic theme of spiritual practice. It is a vast subject and one that is very loosely defined, so there is a tremendous possibility of distorting it, adding our own version to it. Therefore, it seems quite important to take a look at meditation scientifically in the way it applies to our spiritual practice.

There are all sorts of concepts about meditation. One involves trying to establish communication with a divine power and using exotic techniques to tune in to this power. This particular style of meditation could be defined as a religious practice. Another way of approaching meditation is as a spiritual practice rather than a religious one, working with the perceiver rather than focusing on external divine forces of any kind.

Do such things as divine forces exist or not? Does a God exist or not? The answer is that it is not certain until we work with the perceiver of that particular energy. In the Buddhist form of meditation we try to look at the perceiver of the universe, the perceiver which is self, ego, me, mine. In order to receive guests, we have to have a place to receive them. It is possible, however, that we may not find it necessary to invite any guests at all. Once we have created the place where guests are welcome, we may find they are there already.

The practice of meditation is based, not on how we would like things to be, but on what is. We often do not have a proper understanding of what we are, of what we are actually doing. Instead our attention is focused on the possible end product of the processes we are involved in. Spirituality should be taken very seriously, very honestly. This means it should not partake of that exotic quality which is filled with promises. [Page 442] From the beginning, it should be concerned with the actuality of who is involved in the practice.

In the tradition of Buddhism, each person in the lineage of teachers develops a self-understanding which adds to the tradition. The process is like handing down a recipe for bread. In each generation the bread is exactly like the original bread, but possibly more flavorful because of the added experience of the bakers involved in the handing down. In each generation the bread is fresh, delicious, and healthy.

One might say, “How can I know that these experiences are valid for me?” I can’t say that they are particularly valid for particular individuals unless I have a personal relationship and understanding with them. But certainly the process of working on one’s psychological states from a fresh point of view is valid. What I have to say about these psychological states is that they are purely one’s own experience. Studying and learning about them is more of a confirmation than new information.

There is a great need to be realistic and critical about what we are. We must not be spiritually gullible. Often we find that what we are is not attractive; we find looking at ourselves discouraging. But looking at ourselves is not finally discouraging; rather it develops the ability to be more realistic. We always ask a question when there is uncertainty. Questions would not arise at all if we did not have the creative ground of uncertainty within us. The questions we ask already contain the answers in embryonic form. In other words, they are expressions of the answers. The answer may turn out to be negative and disappointing, causing us to hate ourselves, but nevertheless, we will have discovered something real.

This self-disillusionment seems to be the starting point of meditation practice. The starting point is dissatisfaction, the absence of a dream, or wishful thinking. It is something realistic, down-to-earth, and direct.

Ego starts from bewilderment; bewilderment or dissatisfaction or not knowing how to step to the next solution. Finding a solution, we haven’t actually found it, because we’re not exactly certain to whom the solution applies. There is, therefore, a basic suspicion of the nonexistence of ourselves, a basic confusion. Somehow that basic bewilderment or confusion is the working base. From that confusion, basic bewilderment, or basic paranoia, whatever we call it, arises the attempt to communicate further in order to establish our ego.

Each time we try to establish our so-called reality, the basic paranoia [Page 443] becomes larger and larger; for establishing relationships with the apparent phenomenal world makes demands, requires energy, and the facing of overwhelming situations. When the phenomenal world becomes greater and more powerful than us, there is automatically a feeling of bewilderment. As we continually feel bewildered, we do our best to establish our pattern. In a materialistic sense, we try and become a rich, respectable, or powerful person. In a spiritual sense, we try and adapt to a basic discipline. Finding a basic discipline could be a process which enriches the ego or the self. Even if we follow a spiritual rather than a worldly life, if we don’t have the basic

understanding of why we are trying to accumulate, we are still materialistic in outlook. This is what is known as psychological or spiritual materialism.

What we do, what we collect doesn't matter. The style of the collection is based on the notion of developing a fundamental health which should be seen as basic ego trying to relate to things as sedatives. Any kind of spiritual practice based on that attitude could be extremely dangerous. One can attain a state that could be called spiritual egohood.

We have a problem there. The question is, how can we approach spirituality otherwise? Is there any possibility of approaching it in another way at all? You might say, "Please don't say no, please tell us some more." Well, that's it in a sense. Once we realize that there is no way out from this end, we want to break through something; we want to step out more, to jump. Jumping or leaping is a very dignified thing to do. It is being willing to be an explorer on the biggest scale, willing to be a samurai in the widest sense, willing to break through, to be a warrior. It seems that the question begins from that point when we actually want to break through something. That leap consists, of course, of giving up goal, aim, and object at the same time. What we are doing in this case is stepping out of even the basic bewilderment; not trying to creep around from underneath or by the back door, but stepping out completely.

We find that in spite of the willingness to explore, we still have the basic bewilderment within us and we have to work with that. This involves accepting the basic bewilderment or paranoia as it is. That is the working base. That basic psychological state consists of layers of psychological facades of all kinds. The basic bewilderment is overwhelmingly stupid and yet intelligent in that it plays its game of deaf and dumb cunningly. Beyond the bewilderment, ego develops certain patterns of [Page 444] emotions and sensations. When emotions are insufficient to fortify the ego, we apply concept, the conceptual process of labeling and naming things. Things having names and concepts attached to them help us domesticate the bewilderment or confusion. Beyond that, ego collects neurotic thoughts, neurotic not in the sense of mad, but in the sense of irregular. Thoughts in this case change direction all the time and are on very shaky ground. A single thought pattern never develops. Rather, one thought overlaps another—thoughts on spirituality, sexual fantasies, money matters, domestic matters, etc., overlapping all the time. That is the last stage of ego development. In a sense, ego is systematically well fortified.

Bewilderment, as we have said, is reinforced by processes developing at the emotional level. Emotion in this case is the basic magnetizing quality, which is passion, or the basic repelling quality, which is aggression. The next level comes in when the emotions cease to function as impulsive processes. At this point, we need an analytical mind to reinforce

them, to put them in their proper place, to confirm their right to be there. The analytical process creates concepts. Concepts are scientifically, mathematically, philosophically, or spiritually worked out.

Concepts and emotions are very crude spokes of the wheel. There is a gap between the two, an area of not knowing where we are, a fear of being nothing. These gaps could be filled with thoughts of all kinds. Discursive thoughts, grasshopperlike thoughts, drunken-elephant-type thoughts all fill the gaps of not knowing what we are, where we're at. If we want to work on that particular base, the idea is to not collect any new things, new subjects.

Further collecting would be inviting invasion from the outside. Since the whole structure of ego is so well fortified against attack, an external invasion is not going to destroy the ego at all. In fact, it is going to reinforce the whole structure because the ego is being given more material with which to work. Meditation practice is based on an undoing, unlearning process. It is an infiltration into this well-fortified structure of the ego.

Beginning meditation practice works purely on dealing with thought processes. It begins there because these thought processes are the last fringes of ego's development. Working on them makes use of certain very simple techniques. The techniques are very important and must be very simple. Presenting exotic techniques tends to emphasize the foreign [Page 445] quality rather than the familiar, "homey" quality that is most desirable. The technique most often used in the Buddhist tradition is awareness of breathing or walking. These techniques are not ways of developing concentration, tranquility, or peacefulness, for these qualities cannot be forcibly developed. All of these things are beyond achievement if they are sought after.

The other way of approaching the practice is the gamelike approach. The game is that the path and the goal are the same. You are not trying to achieve anything, but are trying to relate to the path which is the goal. We try to become completely one with the techniques (breathing, walking, etc.). We do not try to do anything with the technique but identify and become one with it. The beginning level of any of the traditions of meditation could be said to be a game, a trip of its own. It's purely imagination; we imagine ourselves meditating. It's another type of dreaming. One has to accept that dreamlike quality and work along with it. We can't start perfectly and beautifully, but if we are willing to start by accepting our neuroses and basic chaos, we have a stepping-stone. Don't be afraid of being a fool; start as a fool.

The techniques of meditation practice are not designed to reduce active thoughts at all. They provide a way of coming to terms with everything that goes on inside. Once we

have accepted what goes on in our mind as neither good nor bad, but just flashes of thoughts, we have come to terms with it. So long as we regard the mind's activity as a foreign invasion, we are introducing another new element to the chaos and are feeding it more. If we accept it as part of our ego development, ego structure, and don't evaluate it or put any labels on it, we come much closer to seeing the interior.

After the thought processes, the next barrier is the pattern of concepts. We should not try to push away the concepts, but try to see them realistically. Concepts are based on irrelevant evaluations. There is nothing which is absolutely good or bad. Once we cease to plant the seed of evaluation, the conceptual processes become a neutral and open ground.

The next process is that of emotion: love, hate, etc. A problem arises when we tend to become too ambitious in terms of dealing with emotions—particularly those involved with the spiritual practice. We've been told to be kind, gentle, good people. Those are the conventional ideas of spirituality. When we begin to find the spiky quality in ourselves, we see it as antispirituality and try to push it away. That is the biggest mistake [Page 446] of all in working with our basic psychological patterns. Once we try to push the biggest problems away and look for a dramatic cure for them, we are constantly pushed back, defeated all the time. The idea is not to seduce ourselves into trying to create a Utopian spirituality, but to try and look into the details of the peak emotions, the dramatic qualities of the emotions. We don't have to wait for situations which are regarded as big and meaningful to us; we should make use of even the small situations in which these emotions occur. We should work on the small or minor irritations and their particular emotional qualities. Do not suppress or let go of irritations, but become part of them; feel their abstract qualities. The irritations then have no one to irritate. They might fade away or become creative energy. If we are able to work brick by brick with those smaller, seemingly insignificant emotions, at some point we will find that removing each brick has taken away the whole wall.

We tend to be involved with ambition in spiritual practice. There's no hope if we become too ambitious in any way. Once this occurs and we try to achieve something very quickly, we are forced to remove the awareness of knowing the situation as it is now. Ambition seduces us into thinking of something that we want to achieve in the future. We become too future-oriented, missing the point of a given situation. Our greatest opportunity is in the present moment and we begin to lose it. However, feeling that the future is an open situation is what meditation practice actually is. Relating with the present situation removes the basic bewilderment that we have discussed, the fundamental heart of the whole ego structure. If we are able to relate with the actual situation as it is, without referring to the past or future, then there are flashes of gaps,

possibilities of approaching the present situation. That freshness or sharpness, the penetrating quality of knowing the present situation, brings in a way of looking at the bewilderment with clarity and precision. If we're trying to achieve something in terms of spiritual ambition, that ambition itself becomes a hang-up.

The only way to relate to the present situation of spirituality or the neurotic state of the moment is by meditation. I don't mean sitting meditation only, but relating with the emotional situations of daily life in a meditative way, by working with them, being aware of them as they come up. Every situation then becomes a learning process. These situations are the books; they are the scriptures. You don't need more than that. Books and sacred writings become purely a source of inspiration. [Page 447] We have to realize that we already have within us the potential of developing spirituality before we read the books or regard them as part of our collection.

By undoing the successive layers of facades, we begin to discover that the precision and sharpness we spoke of is there already. We don't have to develop it or nurse it. It's just a question of acknowledging it. That is what is known as faith and devotion. The fundamental meaning of faith is recognizing that precision, clarity, and health are already there. That is the psychologically wealthy way of looking at situations. You see that you are already rich, that you don't have to search for something else or introduce a new element.

We say that the sun is behind the clouds, but actually it is not the sun but the city from which we view it that is behind the clouds. If we realized that the sun is never behind the clouds we might have a different attitude toward the whole thing.

### **Question and Answer Session**

*Audience:* For me you made it very clear—the neutral ground of our concepts. But when you talked about emotions, you introduced another word—working on the “small irritations,” which is somewhat different.... I would like to hear you elaborate on the small emotions.

*Rinpoche:* Well, the seemingly smaller irritations are not really small but “small” is a way of viewing them. We view them as being insignificant things—such as the little bug crawling up your leg or a drafty window blowing at your face. Little details like that are seemingly insignificant because they have less concepts from your point of view. But they still do have the irritating quality in full flesh. So the way to deal with it is that you have a tremendous opportunity there, because you don't have that heavy concept, so you have a very good open approach toward working with that irritation.

When I say “working with” irritation, I don’t mean to say suppress irritation or let go of irritation. But trying to become part of the irritation, trying to feel the abstract quality. You see, generally what happens when we have irritation is that we feel we are being undermined by irritation, and we begin to lose our own basic dignity; something else overwhelms us. That kind of power game goes on always. That is the source of the problem. When we are able to become completely one [Page 448] with irritations or feel the abstract quality of the irritation as it is, then irritation has no one to irritate. So it becomes a sort of judo practice, the using of the irritation’s energy as part of your basic development.

*Audience:* Could you please relate what you have just discussed with this leap into the void, or this great adventure you mentioned earlier? How do they tie in?

*Rinpoche:* Well, you see, generally there is a basic bewilderment of not knowing anything. One is uncertain how to approach, how to relate with the situation. Then there is an occasional gap within the basic bewilderment, that something is happening. It’s not an overcrowded situation but it’s more like a dark corner. Basic bewilderment is a crowded situation under light—you see so many things crowded, the situation is happening in front of your eyes. But then you begin to realize there is also a quiet corner which is still dark but you don’t know what is behind that. In such areas there is no bewilderment, only suspicion, of course. Naturally. The whole thing is based on trying to enrich our ego all the time.

So the shunyata principle, or the emptiness—leaping into the emptiness—is, one can almost say, leaping into those dark corners. And by the time you leap into dark corners they seem to be brilliant corners, not dark. Darkness, as opposed to what you see purely in front of your eyes, relating with the overcrowded situation, is dark because it is not overcrowding. That is why we begin to regard it as an insignificant or mysterious corner. It is very tricky to talk about leaps because we immediately begin to think where we are leaping from. It’s actually more a question of accepting mysterious corners, open space, which doesn’t bring any psychological comfort or security for the ego. That is why they are frightening and mysterious, because there is no security of anything at all. So once you acknowledge that complete ultimate freedom of absence of security, then suddenly the carpet is pulled out from under your feet. That is the leap, rather than leaping somewhere deliberately.

*Audience:* Am I reading you right when you say the effect of meditation begins when one empties oneself from preconceived ideas and notions, and one must empty oneself before one can be filled?



*Rinpoche:* Well, I wouldn't say that is the aim of meditation particularly, but that is the by-product of meditation. In actual practice you don't have to achieve anything, but you try to be with the technique.

[Page 449] *Audience:* We have a pattern of becoming one with whatever it is that concerns one and going with it; and in the process it is no longer a problem. I understand Buddhism also contains this thinking.

*Rinpoche:* I think so, yes. But the whole point is not trying to solve the problem. It's having a friendly, welcoming attitude to the problem.

*Audience:* I'm amazed that so many of our so-called modern concepts—breathing, etc.—Buddhism has used for thousands of years. I had the pleasure of being with a Buddhist monk in Bali and found that all my “original” thinking was already contained within Buddhism.

*Rinpoche:* Well, it's something basic, the voice of basic sanity. I mean, you can find it anywhere, in any tradition if it faces reality. It doesn't necessarily have to be Buddhist.

*Audience:* Is meditation a continuous process of dynamic living?

*Rinpoche:* Definitely. Without ambition, of course.

*Audience:* When one is liberated, when one has practiced meditation in the proper way, without ambition, and one reaches the goal, how does one live? What is the nature of his being?

*Rinpoche:* Well, the actual nature of that being is quite dangerous to talk about.

*Audience:* Why is it dangerous?

*Rinpoche:* Well, that could be a temptation.

*Audience:* An attempt to go there artificially?

*Rinpoche:* Or unwise.

*Audience:* Can't we discuss it?

*Rinpoche:* I would say the continual process of living becomes more real. You are actually in touch with more real reality, the nakedness of reality where there is natural confidence without a framework of relativity. So I would imagine that that state of being, from a personal psychological point of view, is extremely free. But not being free about anything, but just being free, being true.

*Audience:* Is there ecstasy and rapture?

*Rinpoche:* I don't think so, because then you have to maintain that ecstasy. It is a state which doesn't involve any maintenance.

[Page 450] *Audience:* What are the prerequisites before one begins to meditate?

*Rinpoche:* That you are willing to meditate, willing to go into discipline or practice—a conviction which could be a false conviction at that time, but it doesn't matter.

*Audience:* How does one go about escaping from the belief in the analytical mind in order to begin?

*Rinpoche:* Well, it seems that in terms of meditation the literal quality of the technique automatically brings you down, because there is no room for any sidetracks at all. It is quite an absurd, repetitive, ordinary technique, quite boring often; yet somehow you are put into a framework where an instinctive understanding of relating with the technique, rather than an intellectual one, begins to develop.

You see, the problem is that analytical mind cannot be freed by another aspect of analytical mind until the questions of analytical mind are dissolved. This is the same as the method of "Who am I?" in Ramana Maharshi's teaching. If you regard "Who am I?" as a question, then you are still analyzing yourself, but when you begin to realize that "Who am I?" is a statement, the analytical mind becomes confused. One realizes there is something personal about it. Something instinctive which is freed by the actual living situation. The disciplined technique of practicing meditation amounts to putting yourself into an inconceivable situation in which the analytical mind doesn't function anymore. So I would say that the disciplines of the Buddhist teachings are largely a way of freeing oneself from analytical mind. Which has a dream quality. Analytical mind is close to the clouds, while the instinctual level is much closer to the earth. So in order to come down to earth, you have to use the earth as a means of bringing you down.

*Audience:* What is the relationship between being a vegetarian and the Buddhist practice?

*Rinpoche:* Well, I think there again we've got a problem. If we regard the whole thing as introducing a foreign element into our system, then we get involved in a particular style of living and we have to maintain that style. And if we don't maintain that style, we feel threatened by it; whereas the natural living situation might present being a vegetarian as a relevant subject for the individual. In other words, the first is dogma and the latter more of a direct situation.

[451] You see, the problem is if you give up something, that automatically means that you take on something. Naturally. And you have to maintain that. And each time there is a congratulatory quality of viewing yourself that develops as well: I'm doing good today, I feel grateful and I'm going to be good tomorrow, and so on. That becomes a further self-deception. Unfortunately, no one can remove your self-deception by his magical powers. You have to work on yourself.

*Audience:* Could you give us some examples of the meditation practices?

*Rinpoche:* Generally, in the Buddhist tradition the first step is working on the breathing—not concentrating, not contemplating, but identifying with the breath. You are the technique; there is no difference between you and the technique at all. By doing that, at a certain stage the technique just falls away, becomes irrelevant. At that point, your practice of meditation is much more open to meditation in action, everyday life situations.

But that doesn't mean that the person should become absorbed in the state of meditation in the vague sense at all. You see, the basic meditation is being, I suppose we could say. But at the same time it is not being dazed by being. You can describe being in all sorts of ways. You could say being is a cow on a sunny afternoon in a meadow, dazed in its comfort. You could think in terms of an effort of being, trying to bring some effort to yourself to be being. That is to say, being with the watcher watching yourself doing. Then there is actual being—we could call it "actual"—which I suppose is just being right there with precision and openness. I call it panoramic awareness, aerial view. You see a very wide view of the whole area because you see the details of each area. You see the wide view, each area, each detail. Black is black and white is white; everything is being observed. And that kind of openness and being is the source of daily practice. Whether the person is a housewife or secretary or politician or lawyer, whatever it may be, his life could be viewed that way. In fact, his work could become an application of skillful means in seeing the panoramic view. Fundamentally, the idea of enlightenment—the notion or term *enlightenment* or *buddha* or *awakened one*—implies tremendous sharpness and precision along with a sense of spaciousness.

We can experience this; it is not myth at all. We experience a glimpse of it, and the point is to start from that glimpse and gradually as you [Page 452] become more familiar with that glimpse and the possibilities of reigniting it, it happens naturally. Faith is realizing that there is some open space and sharpness in our everyday life. There occurs a flash, maybe a fraction of a second. These flashes happen constantly, all the time.

*Audience:* If being is being in everyday life as present in the moment, then what is the tradition of monasteries in Buddhism? Are monasteries just for people who can't cope with very much stress so they have to withdraw to what can be handled? What is the role?

*Rinpoche:* Well, I would say that monasteries are the training ground. It is the same as putting yourself in a certain discipline when you sit and meditate. You are a monk for that whole time, if you like to put it that way.

*Audience:* But the goal and object would be finally to leave the monastery and—

*Rinpoche:* Teach people, work with them. Obviously, yes. That's one of the differences, I would say, between Catholic contemporary enclosure orders and Buddhist ones, that monasteries are training grounds for potential teachers.

*Audience:* I have a question about one's actual needs in meditation. From books that I've read on meditation and the spiritual way, it seems that the people begin to leave their sexual lives, heterosexual or homosexual, in a way. I'd like your feeling on this—sex, meditation, the spiritual way.

*Rinpoche:* Well, there again it's entirely relative to the situation where the person is. The brahmacharya idea—which prohibits sex—sees it as something which destroys your completeness. On the other hand, in some traditions of Buddhism, sexuality is regarded as the highest way of living in the world, as the last answer and development. But I don't think the two are contradictory to each other at all. Sex can be a destruction of completion if the person's style of living is demanding, in other words, if there is no space in the relationship at all. Then it is purely a battlefield. But if the relationship becomes dance, the essence of exchange or communication, then the whole pattern of how to perceive that develops. I would say that the situation is very much dependent on the individual person, and sex generally is supposed to be the essence of communication. [Page 453] Communication can be demanding, which could be destructive and even a way of dissociating oneself from people. Or communication could be inviting people.

*Audience:* Do you feel it is necessary to have a guru?

*Rinpoche:* I think so, yes, but at the same time, there are all sorts of dangers involved with shopping for a guru.

*Audience:* Can the willingness to meditate be differentiated from the awareness of the advantages to be gained from meditating?

*Rinpoche:* That seems to be an evolutionary pattern. You begin to see the need for it and you put your effort into it. It's like taking medicine.

*Audience:* What is your opinion about dealing with the chakra system?

*Rinpoche:* The chakra system is part of the teachings of India, both Hindu and Buddhist. However, it fits differently into the pattern of spiritual evolution of the two traditions. In Hinduism, working with the chakras is familiarizing yourself with spirituality. In Buddhism, having familiarized yourself already, it becomes dancing with spiritual knowledge. And it seems in the latter case that chakra and all those concepts come from that dancing quality which is a using of the energy you have already developed. You have prepared your ground already and you are using the energy around it. I will say that for beginners it is extremely dangerous to play with energy, but for advanced students such work becomes relevant naturally.

*Audience:* It is said that when one is ready one recognizes his guru. Is it true also that the guru recognizes his disciple?

*Rinpoche:* I think so, yes. Otherwise he wouldn't be guru.

*Audience:* Does this recognition take form on the physical plane or only on the subtle?

*Rinpoche:* Well, the physical plane is also a psychological state. So it's the same thing.

## Why We Meditate

From *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa, Volume 10*

Edited by Caroline Rose Gimian, pp. 661-665

*Shambhala Sun*, July 2014. © Diana J. Mukpo, 2014

The actual experience, techniques, and disciplines of meditation are still unfamiliar to many people. So I would like to give you a basic idea of how meditation practice works, how it operates in our everyday life situation, and how it functions scientifically, so to speak. The practice of meditation is not so much based on becoming a better person, or for that matter becoming an enlightened person. It is seeing how we can relate to our already existing enlightened state. To do that is a matter of trust, as well as a matter of openness.

Trust plays an extremely important part in the practice of meditation. The trust we are discussing is trust in yourself. This trust has to be recovered rather than developed. We have all kinds of conceptualizations and attitudes that prevent us from uncovering that basic trust. These are known as the veil of conceptualization.

Sometimes we think of trust as trusting someone else to provide us with security, or trusting someone else as an example or an inspiration. These kinds of trust are generally based on forgetting yourself and trying to secure something trustworthy from the outside. But when our approach is highly externalized, the real meaning of trust is lost.

Real trust is not outward facing, as if you were completely poverty stricken. When you have that mentality, you feel that you have nothing valuable within you, so you try to copy somebody else's success or style or use somebody else's resources. However, Buddhism is known as a nontheistic tradition, which means that help doesn't come from outside.

The Sanskrit term for meditation, *dhyana*, is common to many Buddhist traditions. In Chinese, it is *chan*, and in Japanese it is *zen*. We may use the word "meditation" in the English language, but how can we actually express its meaning, or what this approach actually is?

We have to know what we mean by meditation at all. Sometimes we use the word "meditation" to mean emptying out or letting go. Sometimes we mean relaxation. However, the point of meditation practice is actually to rediscover our hidden neurosis and our hidden sanity at the same time.

Although meditation involves training and discipline, the point is not to become a good, highly trained person who will behave in a certain enlightened style, so that you will be accepted among the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Rather, the meaning of meditation is intense lightness. Meditation is intense, because the practice is demanding, and your commitment to the sitting practice of meditation day after day is very demanding. At the same time, the practice of meditation is very light, because you have nothing to do, and nothing to accomplish, when you practice. So intense lightness or intense freedom is the meaning of meditation.

There is another tradition of practice, the contemplative tradition, which involves contemplating certain themes, subjects, or ideas. You may visualize a full moon, a flickering candle, or raindrops, or you may imagine yourself glowing with light. There are visualizations using symbols and signs of all kinds. These all fall in the category of the contemplative tradition, rather than the meditative tradition. According to the Buddha, such practice is often merely mental gymnastics, or a source of entertainment that is furthering your neurosis instead of leading to enlightenment. So according to the buddhadharma, simplicity is important. Therefore dhyana, meditation, means reliance on simplicity. That is the starting point.

Another important aspect of meditation is discipline. Discipline leads to openness, but that does not mean one's frivolity is included as part of the path. Discipline is very severe and extremely demanding, highly demanding. You are expected to take part in this severe discipline, which is the discipline to be, to sit, to practice, and to completely involve your attitude, your conceptualizations, your subconscious mind, your emotions, your domestic affairs, and every aspect of yourself in your practice. Everything in your life situation becomes part of meditation, which is an enormous demand.

Giving in to such demand eventually begins to open a huge gate or door that has been shut tight. From this point of view, developing openness is not so easy—at all. It is opening a heavy wooden door, which is stuck. Opening this huge door is enormously demanding. It is not an artificial door, but a real, heavy door. To open it, first you touch the door handle, and then you have to pull and pull and pull. Not succeeding, you have to pull further.

Then, finally, you begin to hear the sound of the wood creaking, which is the first sign that you are finally going to be able to open this door. The creaks are encouragement that something is actually happening. Slowly, slowly, it opens a little, and then more, until finally you can open the whole door. Whew! This is how discipline equals openness—it is very deliberate, extremely deliberate. Nothing comes free, and nothing comes easy, either.

Meditation is also about exerting yourself and using your inquisitive mind as part of the practice. In order to be a good student, you have to be highly inquisitive. Then information is no longer a foreign element; it becomes part of furthering your inquisitiveness.

That inquisitiveness is referred to in traditional terms as faith or devotion. Why so? You are inquisitive because you want to find out something. There is something that interests or itches you. It sucks you in and you want to find out more and more. That attraction is the basis for faith or devotion. You feel that there's got to be something behind the whole thing, so you explore more and more and more. You never tire of your experience, but you are highly inquisitive about it. Each time you discover something, you feel even more inquisitive. That faith or devotion to things is very contagious.

Another aspect of meditation is that it reveals further neurosis. Here, we are speaking of the neurosis that you've been trying to hide underneath your carpet, your pillows, your seat, underneath your desk. You don't want to look into it, so you try to slip it underneath something somewhere. You try not to think about it at all.

We have to come face-to-face with these neuroses that we've been concealing from ourselves. We usually say, "Oops, that's not very nice, but never mind. Something else will come up that feels much better. I'll take advantage of that, rather than looking at this other thing, which is so unpleasant. Let's just forget about it." We've been doing that for a long time. In fact, we've become so professional at this approach that we really don't question ourselves.

So meditation is uncovering those tricks that we've developed. In the beginning, a person who is practicing meditation usually feels extremely clumsy and embarrassed. You may even question whether you're doing something worthwhile. Meditation may seem unnecessary. You may feel that you're wasting your time, money, and effort.

Meditation is about relating with two factors. It relates you with yourself, and it also relates you with your world. Through the practice of meditation, you are able to synchronize your world and yourself together. Working with the two eventually produces a spark. It is like rubbing two sticks together or striking a flint against a stone to produce a spark. The spark of light you produce is called *karuna*, or compassion.

When you first come to meditation, you may not like yourself very much. You may feel that you even hate yourself, or hate your world. But you continue to practice and relate with your world and yourself simultaneously, both in meditation and in everyday life



situations. Doing so properly, thoroughly, and completely, some kind of warmth begins to develop. You find that the phenomenal world is workable after all. It may not be lovable yet, but at least it's workable, manageable. And you realize that maybe you too are workable and manageable.

So the practice of meditation is comprised of these three elements: working with yourself, working with the phenomenal world, and working with the warmth that develops. You begin to take a liking to your frustration, pain, and boredom. Everything is part of your world.

The practice of meditation is the only way to develop this basic trust in yourself and your world. Beyond that, meditation is the key to developing openness and the potential of enlightenment. Without this practice as the basis, you may be sidetracked by all kinds of entertaining processes. Those sidetracks may feel quite good for a few months. You can do all kinds of exotic, seemingly fantastic things. Still, when you are going through these experiences, your vessel has a hole in it, somewhere or other. Somewhere, you are still leaking. You are not able to hold things within yourself properly. Your fascination, your sense of impatience, and trying to make the best of things in the world by entertaining yourself is the heart of what I call spiritual materialism.

That approach is always a problem, not only in the modern world but throughout history. It existed in the past, going back twenty-five hundred years to the time of the Buddha. Spiritual materialism, the desire to turn spirituality into something you can possess and the tendency to see spirituality as a thing outside of yourself, is always there to be dealt with.

With the mentality of spiritual materialism, when you feel that everything in your life is a mess, you try to find someone to blame. We might blame the president of the country, the head of the police force, or our own boss. But you are missing the point. You ignore the leak in your own vessel, the leak within yourself. Nobody regards his or her own vessel as inefficient. We miss the point: that actually *our* vessel is leaking; our pot is leaking.

Meditation, especially at the beginning, exaggerates the leaks that are taking place. You keep pouring all kinds of goodies, all kinds of interesting experiences, into your vessel, but it never fills up. Finally, through the practice of meditation, you realize that there is a leak. It's not all that magical. The leakage is distrust. You realize that you are rejecting your basic sanity, and that you think that this basic sanity is something you have to purchase from somebody else and then transplant it into yourself.

The real weakness is thinking that you are not good enough, and that there is some outside security that you have to find. If you feel that somebody else has the sanity and you are messed up, then you think that you have to become like someone else, rather than becoming yourself. When you realize that this is what you have been doing, then your life becomes real and workable—because it has been workable all along.

In summary, meditation is a means of working with oneself and the phenomenal world. Working with those two together produces sparks of warmth and trust. A sense of workability begins to develop throughout your life.

**The Seven Characteristics of a Dharmic Person**  
***The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma,***  
***Volume One: The Path of Individual Liberation***  
**Chogyam Trungpa, compiled and edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 157-164**

According to hinayana logic, being genuine is fundamental. We are trying to do everything properly, precisely the way the Buddha taught. How we can actually relate with ourselves in that vein is through the seven characteristics of a dharmic person: passionlessness, contentment, fewer activities, good conduct, awareness of the teacher, propagating prajna, and an attitude of goodness.<sup>2</sup> This traditional list of seven characteristics represents a long-standing tradition of discipline. It is how our forefathers in the Kagyü lineage fully practiced their discipline. Such lists were taught by the Buddha himself to his own monks and nuns. The seven characteristics of a dharmic person give us guidelines as to how to begin. They have to do with how we can train ourselves, how we can organize our livelihood, and how we can create a decent society. If you are going on a scout trip, you need to know how to gather wood and how to light a fire. If you are going out, you first need to shower and put on your clothes. Likewise, if you are studying Buddhism, you first have to be clean-cut and learn how to conduct yourself. That is absolutely basic.

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

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

***1. Passionlessness***

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<sup>2</sup> This discussion combines two slightly varying approaches to the characteristics of a dharmic person. The traditional list of seven is sandwiched within two more items—creating a proper physical environment, and remembering to follow all of these guidelines—to make a list of nine in all, which Trungpa Rinpoche describes as nine ways of organizing one's mind according to shamatha.

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

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

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

## **2. Contentment**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The fourth characteristic of a dharmic person is good conduct. Good conduct is quite straightforward. It is based on being willing to work on yourself, which is the logic of individual salvation, and dedicating your deeds to the benefit of all sentient beings.<sup>3</sup> Good conduct is based on mindfulness and awareness in which you see whatever you are doing as an extension of your sitting practice. Awareness is not self-consciousness; it is simply looking at what you are doing. You respect yourself and the sacredness of your being. When you have self-respect, you don't spill your [161] tea in your saucer and you don't put your shoes on the wrong feet. When you are aware, you appreciate your whole existence and the world around you. You appreciate the weather, your coffee, your tea, your clothes, your shower. There is a tremendous sense that for the first time, you have become a real human being.

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

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

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

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<sup>3</sup> A reference to the basic intentions of the two main Buddhist vows, the refuge vow and the bodhisattva vow: making friends with oneself and developing compassion for others.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

## Six Categories of Aloneness

Chogyam Trungpa, Rinpoche

*The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma Vol One:*

*The Path of Individual Liberation, pp. 129*

There are six categories of aloneness: less desire, contentment, avoiding unnecessary activities, morality, not wandering in the world of desire, and working with discursive thoughts. *Less desire* means that you have less need for security. *Contentment* means you are not always looking for something more. *Avoiding unnecessary activities* means not trying to occupy yourself or look for companionship. *Morality* means that you keep being brought back to your practice of meditation. *Not wandering in the world of desire* means that you do not constantly search for relationships. *Working with discursive thoughts* means that you are overcoming your thoughts. Instead of regarding them as entertainment, you are relating to them very simply.

# Shamatha: The Technique

## Pagyo, pp. 128

Out of *dulwa* arises what is known as *pagyo* in Tibetan. *Pag* means “a sense of good or bad,” *yo* means “possessing”; so *pagyo* means “possessing a sense of good or bad.” It can be translated as “conscientiousness,” or “attentiveness.” *Pagyo* is completely the opposite of nonmindfulness or unmindfulness. It is often referred to as decorum. The idea of decorum originated with the aristocracy, but decorum applies to everybody: in terms of decorum, everybody is an aristocrat. Decorum is the way to keep your precision, to keep your sense of dignity, your sense of head and shoulders—to maintain your being altogether. Decorum is how to be and how to relate to the world. Even while you are eating steak tartare or vichyssoise, through decorum your basic being could be transformed. You could be a genuine person rather than a fake. With hinayana decorum, whatever you do should be done simply by means of meditation practice, you make your being and your mind one-pointed. Whatever you do should be done with mindfulness and awareness.

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

**Take Your Time, pp. 191-192**

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

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

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

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

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

### **Upright Posture, pp. 193-197**

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

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

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

[page 195] You could adjust your posture if your body feels strained. However, you should not just take any old posture, because bad posture distracts you. It destroys your natural flow of breath and it interrupts your sense of ongoing spaciousness. In turn, if your breathing becomes self-conscious, that is reflected in your posture. With bad

posture, you are involved with all kinds of one-sided feelings, as opposed to having a sense of balance. So posture is important.

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

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

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

Your posture is the saving grace in synchronizing your mind and body. If you don't have good posture, you can never do anything. You become like a lame horse trying to pull a cart. You should sit like the Buddha sits. The Buddha does not sit on the edge of his seat;

he sits in the middle. When you begin to do that, you feel better. A square cushion, or gomden, is much better designed for sitting in this way than a round cushion, or zafu. With a gomden, you have your own seat, just as the Buddha had his seat under the bodhi tree. You are like the Buddha.

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

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

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

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



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

### **General Guidelines for Meditation Practice, pp. 197-200**

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

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

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

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

[page 199] The hand position I usually suggest is the relaxing-the-mind mudra, in which you rest your hands on your knees. It is a much more royal posture, and a somewhat tantric position. This mudra is also called the “double earth-witnessing mudra.” It is a good one. When the Buddha was asked who had witnessed his attainment of enlightenment, he said, “The earth is my witness. I sat on this earth; I practiced on this

earth.” Then with one hand he touched the earth as his witness, using the “earth-touching mudra.” Here, since both hands are resting on the knees, it is the double earth-witnessing mudra. You could use either the cosmic mudra or the double earth-witnessing mudra. Overall, the particular mudra or posture is not as important as the totality, or sense of unity. In meditation, you don’t do just any old thing, but there is a sense of balance.

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

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

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

### **Breathing Out, pp. 201-202**

As you meditate, your breath is going in and out. You may have ideas about your breath or think there is some problem with the way you are breathing, but you should just try to go along with the breath you have. It is important to breathe normally. Your breath will be affected by your posture, by exercise, or by whether you had a heavy meal or a light meal. Your breathing is also affected by your vision. If your vision is too focused, for instance, your breathing will begin to pick up. Along with that will come sudden

discursive thoughts: sexual fantasies, aggressive fantasies, all sorts of fantasies. So it is better not to focus your vision, but to let your vision rest. Even if your breathing is affected by such things, you still should not force yourself to breathe in a certain way, but let your breath flow naturally. And if your breathing happens to be fast, you should give it time to settle.

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

### **Learning How to Let Go, pp. 202-203**

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

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

your joints, your back, your neck, and your arms—you could regard all those as thoughts. It is all thinking.

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

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

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

### **Light Touch, pp. 203-204**

As you breathe, you should not try to reach perfect breathing; you just breathe. Even animals can do that. Breathing obviously comes from your lungs and your nose, but if you are just feeling the breathing coming out of your nostrils, you are not feeling where it actually begins and how it flows. At first, your sense of the breathing may be very general and vague, but as your mindfulness of breathing continues, you experience the

whole [page 204] process very specifically. There is a pattern as your breathing goes out, a sense of it really happening, so you do not have to focus on your nostrils. It is like hearing a noise: when you hear a noise, a sound traveling through space, you can relate with the sound rather than having to relate with your ears.

The practice of shamatha is environmental as well as technique oriented. In shamatha practice, a twenty-five-percent touch of awareness on the breath seems to be about right. In any case, you can't do more than that. Because you keep your eyes open, you see things; your ears are not clogged, so you hear things. You are aware of the way your clothes feel and of the temperature in the room. You are aware of your stomach being full or empty. If you took a shower before sitting, you feel clean. You feel your hairdo and the spectacles you are wearing. You feel whether your mouth is dry or wet. There are all sorts of little sensations like that, which leaves only about twenty-five percent of your awareness left for working with your breath.

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

### **Cool Boredom, pp. 205-206**

Mindfulness of breathing is a way of creating obstacles to subconscious dreams and mental activities. The technique of mindfulness of breathing should provide obstacles. It is a nuisance that you have to keep hassling back to the breath. However, unless you are able to do that efficiently, you will not get properly bored, and if you do not get properly bored, you will not be in tune with the power of the practice. Everything may be happening very smoothly on the surface level, but you are not in tune with the magic of meditation practice or the spiritual energy of the lineage. Boredom is important because boredom is anti-credentialed, anti-entertainment— and as we develop greater psychological sophistication, we [page 206] begin to appreciate such boredom. It becomes cool and refreshing, like a mountain river. That very real and genuine boredom, or “cool boredom,” plays an extremely important role. In fact, we could quite

simply say that the barometer of our accomplishment in meditation practice is how much boredom we create for ourselves. Cool boredom is rather light boredom: it has its uneasy quality, but at the same time it is not a big deal. Cool boredom is simply another expression of the experience of well-being. Cool boredom is like what mountains experience. With cool boredom, thought processes become less entertaining—they become transparent. Cool boredom is hopelessness at its most absolute level.

## **27 Labeling Thoughts, pp. 207-211**

The thinking process takes place all the time. That is everybody's problem. In order to solve that particular problem, you have to discover what goes on in your mind. It is very direct and personal. In sitting practice, you spend at least eighty percent of your practice dealing with thoughts, but that does not mean you are being extraordinarily naughty or terrible. Even if you are so completely occupied with your thoughts that you do not have much time left to work with the technique, don't think you are being bad. You should feel grateful that your sitting practice is not one-hundred-percent thoughts! Eighty-percent thoughts is pretty good, so don't punish yourself. You are not doing anything wrong and you are not committing any sin.

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

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

you stops, first you think about stopping, then you step on the brake, and finally you actually stop. It always works like that.

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

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

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

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

We have to accept that all experiences are just thought patterns. Buddha said that when a musician plays a stringed instrument, both the strings and his fingers are his mind. According to Buddhist psychology, there are fifty-two different types of thought

processes. Some are pious, some are political, some are domestic, some are sensible. But all of them are just thoughts. As far as meditators are concerned, that is the key. With that key, you begin to find that you can handle life as it happens around you. With so many pigeonholes, you cannot handle the whole thing. But once you begin to realize that everything is thought process, you can handle your life because nothing is complicated. Everything is thought.

The traditional technique for dealing with all those mental activities is mentally to note them and label them “thinking.” Inevitably, once you are settled into your practice—*bing!*—there will be a thought. At that point you say “thinking,” not out loud but mentally. Labeling thoughts in that way will give you tremendous leverage to come back to your breath. When a thought takes you over completely, so that you are not even on the cushion but somewhere else—in San Francisco or New York City—as soon as you notice, you say “thinking” and bring yourself back to the breath. You don’t regard yourself as good or bad. You are just you, thinking and coming back to the breath. You are not trying to push thoughts away, nor are you trying to cultivate them. You are just labeling them [page 210] “thinking.” No matter what thought comes up, don’t panic; just label it “thinking”—stop—and go back to your breath.

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

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

If you seem to be working with the breathing and having thoughts at the same time, that means you are unable to identify completely with your breath. There is some deception in thinking that you can work with the thoughts and the breath at the same time. If a thought occurs along with the breathing, you are thinking; if a sense



perception such as hearing occurs, you are thinking. You cannot hear without thinking. If you hear a sound, you know which kind of sound it is, whether it is music or a gunshot. You cannot hear without categorizing, so you are still thinking. Everything is thinking. It goes on everywhere continually. We have not yet come to any conclusion as to whose fault that is. Instead, we just label everything “thinking,” as in “I think I have a mosquito on my face.”

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

Everything that comes up in your mind is just thought process. It is thinking. Thinking might bring something else—nonthinking—but we [page 211] are a long way from experiencing that. As far as the hinayana is concerned, no mahayana exists. Everything is hinayana, the narrow path. In shamatha practice, you regard everything as thought. When you sit, you should think, “There are no nonthoughts.” Even techniques are thoughts. That is straight shamatha, without soda and ice.

### **Touch and Go, pp. 212-213**

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

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

yourself completely, halfway through the experience. The approach of touch and go is not so much trying to experience, but trying to be.

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

### **Acknowledging States of Mind, pp. 213-214**

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

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

It is possible to twist the logic, and relate to meditating and coming back to the breath as a way of avoiding problems, but such avoidance is itself a problem. You might feel good that you are sanctioned by the Buddha and you have the technique of mindfulness, which is extremely kosher, good, sensible, and real. You might think that you don't have to pay attention to all those little embarrassments that happen in your life; instead, you could regard them as unimportant and come back to the breath. However, in doing so, you are patching over your problems. You are bottling them up and keeping them as your family heirloom. Since this kind of attitude can develop, it is

very important to look at those embarrassments and then come back to the breath. However, in doing so, there is no implication that if you do look at them, that is going to be freedom or the end of the game.

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

**Cutting Thoughts and Short-Circuiting the Kleshas**  
*The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume One,*  
*The Path of Individual Liberation, Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche*  
Ed. Judith L. Lief, excerpt, pp. 257-259

**Pagyö: A Residue of Mindfulness, 257-258**

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

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

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

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

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

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

With *trenpa* you have some kind of memory or recollection, and *sheshin* is a check on those recollections. *She* means “knowing,” and *shin* means “as it is”; so *sheshin* means “knowing as it is.” *Sheshin* is the kind of knowledge that makes you feel at home in the world, rather than regarding the world as a strange place and not knowing how to handle it. *Sheshin* functions within the environment of *trenpa*. Once you have a memory, you check it with what is happening in the present. It's like renting a car: if you rent a new car, you automatically refresh your memory of how to drive; you check out the gearshift, the brakes, the lights, and the steering wheel. *Trenpa* is the possibility of working with what is happening, and *sheshin* is actually dealing with what is happening.

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

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

*Tren-she* is not concentrated awareness; it is a more general sense of awareness. For instance, if you are wearing a bright red coat, you are aware of the redness and brightness around you, and whether your coat is made of wool or cotton. Likewise, you are aware of your posture, your head and shoulders, and whether you are wearing your glasses or not, a watch or not, stockings or no stockings. That intrinsic awareness we always generate is like antennae. We know that “I have a beard” or “I have earrings on”

or “I have a safety pin in my trousers to hold them up.” We are aware of things of that nature, beyond simply being aware of the in-breath and out-breath.

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

**Making Friends with Yourself**  
**From *Mindfulness in Action* by Chögyam Trungpa**  
***Compiled, arranged, & edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian***

**How to Meditate, pp. 14-26**

**Attitude**

If you are going to make bread, you need both flour and water for the dough. The practice of meditation is like the water, while your daily mindfulness and awareness, or your practice of mindfulness in action, is like the flour. To make the dough you combine the two. In this book, meditation is our starting point. Later on we will talk more about applying mindfulness in everyday life and about how meditation and the post-meditation situations work together.

The basis for the practice of meditation is appreciation. Every breath we take is a gift, naturally pure and good. We appreciate every pebble in the riverbed, every apple on the tree. Ordinary activities are in themselves powerful and worth appreciating. From this point of view, there is no such thing as a contaminated or polluted situation. When we begin to view the world in this way, seeing every situation as part of a natural process, we [page 15] bring this attitude to our practice of meditation. We see meditation as a process of natural evolution rather than seeing it as a highlight or something extraordinary.

We might say that the practice of meditation is a process of developing faith—not faith in something greater or beyond, but having faith in the immediate situation. We have faith and trust in the activity of meditation itself. Our approach is not frivolous at all. We are here to practice meditation, not to indulge ourselves.

**Taking Your Seat**

With that attitude you take your seat in meditation in an ordinary but deliberate way. As you approach your seat, you should feel that it's good, trustworthy. You should arrange your chair or your meditation cushion carefully. If the space has already been arranged for you, check to be sure that your chair or cushion is in the right spot and that you have what you need, including extra cushions or things of that nature. Then sit down and experience yourself sitting there. Every time you sit down to practice, it should begin in the same way, with an attitude of appreciation.

How you sit down and begin your practice is very telling. Sometimes when you go into a restaurant you storm through the door. There's a sign that says, "Seat yourself." You can sit wherever you like. You walk to your table with a garish swagger and sit down with a big plop. Hopefully, the chair or the booth doesn't collapse under you. You slump in your seat, and as you look at the menu, you blot out the world completely.

Taking your seat in meditation is quite different. You choose your spot with respect. You bend down gently to sit on your cushion or chair, keeping that sense of respect. As soon as you put your weight on the seat, you feel that good posture is possible, and almost automatically you are inspired to sit up straight.

When you are meditating, whether you are alone or sharing [page 16] the space with others, you always hold your seat properly. Then you feel that you are doing the practice with dignity. When you sit down to meditate, you are making a connection with the earth, whether you sit in a chair or on a cushion. It's almost as if a message is coming from the earth, encouraging you to hold your seat properly.

## **Posture**

Posture is very important in the practice of meditation. This is equally true in everyday life, whether you are meditating or not. You may be driving a car, sitting in your living room, or reading a magazine in the dentist's waiting room. Your posture should always reflect an uplifted presence, wherever you take a seat.

Your posture in meditation can actually produce a psychological change in you. You begin to understand that your purpose is already accomplished, just by taking the posture of wakefulness. In a certain sense there's nothing more to do! You don't need a future goal. You can accomplish your goal on the spot, simply by sitting with good posture.

### *Posture in a Chair*

When you practice meditation, you can sit in a chair or you can sit on a cushion on the floor. If you sit in a chair, your feet should touch the ground, or you should put a cushion under your feet. This provides a sense of touching the earth or being grounded, having some foundation for your posture. Also, if possible your knees should be slightly lower than your thighs. Depending on the chair, you may need to sit farther forward or you may need a cushion under part of your bottom. If you can, sit up straight so that your back is not leaning against the back of the chair. This will give you a more upright posture and will [page 17] place less strain on your back and neck. It's also better not to



use armrests unless absolutely necessary. You want your arms to be able to hang loosely from your shoulders.

### *Posture on a Cushion*

When you sit on a meditation cushion, you cross your legs very simply. Your knees don't have to touch the ground, but it's helpful if they are at least slightly lower than your thighs. Otherwise, it causes a lot of strain on your lower back, and it's difficult to maintain an upright posture. If you find it difficult to lower your knees below the thighs, you probably need a higher cushion.

Once you have taken your seat and adjusted your legs, you straighten your back, not to the extreme but in a deliberate fashion. If you usually have a tendency to hunch over—which could give you a hunched outlook—in meditation you may find that you can straighten up. You sit well balanced in the middle of your seat, not leaning too far forward or back. You feel that you are sitting up straight, almost as though there were a thread attached to the top of your head, which tugs on your head if you aren't sitting up straight and encourages you to sit upright. At the same time, you have a slight concave curve in your lower spine, which helps you to have a solid base where your hips and buttocks touch the cushion. You relax your belly. Your shoulders and your neck are also relaxed but held beautifully in place, so that there is no strain. You tuck your chin in just a little bit.

The quality of your posture in meditation is similar to how you might hold yourself if you were going to ask someone to marry you. Your approach would be semi-relaxed, friendly, and slightly seductive, but also somewhat formal. That's how your posture should be here.

I've noticed that when people see something very interesting or exciting in a movie, they all sit up with perfect posture. [page 18] When the movie gets even slightly dull and uninteresting, people begin to slump and do all kinds of things with their hands and feet. But at first they have perfect posture. In meditation, we should feel like the moviegoer at the beginning of an engrossing scene. It is happening, it is your life, you are sitting up, and you are breathing. It is personal and direct. You are sitting upright, and with your head and shoulders you assume a dignified posture. Posture is extremely important.

### *Placing Your Hands*

Whether you are sitting in a chair or on a meditation cushion on the ground, your hands should rest lightly but deliberately, palms down, on your thighs, a little bit above or just touching your knees. Placing your hands is a statement of deliberateness, and it, too, brings a feeling of dignity. This is sometimes called the mind-relaxing posture. Your hands are somewhat open—not clenched—and your fingers are not held tightly together. There’s a little space between them. The tips of your fingers are a little ways back from the bend in your knees. You want your arms to be relaxed, not pulled forward nor held too close to your hips. You may have to experiment to find the right spot to place your hands.

### *Gaze*

Your eyes are open, but you are looking somewhat down, about four to six feet in front of you. A traditional description is that you look ahead as if you were holding a plow yoked to a team of oxen. Your eyes might even be half closed, so that they’re relaxed, but it is not a spaced-out approach. You are just there, looking [page 19] ahead with an attitude that combines humility and positive pride, if you can imagine that.

Sometimes if you pay too much attention to visual details and colors, you develop tightness in your neck and a headache. In ordinary life we walk and move and look around quite a lot, so the whole process is balanced. In this case, you sit without moving around. Often there’s not much noise, either, so everything is concentrated visually. This may result in visual tension, which can become a problem. The idea is not to focus too intently on the visual situation, but just to open your eyes without focusing too precisely on anything. Your gaze should be somewhat soft. In your practice you can experiment and discover for yourself what this means.

### *Mouth and Tongue*

When I was at the dentist recently, she encouraged me not to grind my teeth and not to hold my jaw too tightly. She gave me a technique to help with this, which is to rest your tongue on the roof of your mouth. That coincides with the approach we take in meditation. The instructions for meditation encourage you to open your mouth slightly when you meditate, which helps you to relax. If you rest your tongue on the roof of your mouth, you can relax your whole face and jaw. You aren’t clenching your jaw. The tip of the tongue is lightly placed on the roof of your mouth, just behind your teeth. That way your mouth is relaxed. Your mouth is slightly open, as though you were saying the syllable “ah.”

### **Mindfulness of Breath**

Once you establish your seat, all the aspects of your physical posture help you to focus your mind on the breath. Having a good seat and good posture almost automatically brings mindfulness of the breath.

[page 20] The ground beneath you is solid and it supports you. Once you settle in your seat, the main thing that is happening is your breathing and a unified sense of your body and its systems all working together. Everything falls into place, into its *real* place. It feels so good. You find that you fit perfectly into the jigsaw puzzle of the awakened world. There is no struggle or artificiality involved. The situation feels good and precise—almost ideal.

Your breath is constantly going in and out. You can feel yourself inhaling and exhaling through your mouth and your nostrils. Just pay attention to your breath, your natural breath. It might be rough or deep if you had to run to get to the meditation hall. Or your breathing might be quite shallow. It doesn't really matter. Just feel your existing natural breathing. Sit quietly and listen to your breathing. To begin with, just listen to it. In that way you can settle down for a few minutes.

When you feel a little familiar with the breath, without straining too much, put your attention on the outbreath. Go out with the outbreath. Outbreath is an experience of the life force. In the Lamaze method of natural childbirth, they talk about breathing out and letting go as you are giving birth. This is a similar approach. The outbreath in meditation is like giving birth to the universe. You just let go.

You follow the outbreath very simply. Go along with it. Don't particularly try to feel the temperature of the breath in your nostrils or anything like that. Just breathe out, and as your breath goes out, you go out, very simply.

Then you are automatically willing to breathe in. You breathe out, and then you have a gap. Without extra effort, you will breathe in naturally. When you look at a beautiful flower, you take in what you see, and then eventually you blink. That's like the gap at the end of the outbreath, which goes along with how you perceive your world. You project out, you perceive something, and then you give yourself a break: you blink. The break [page 21] allows your brain to sort out and integrate your perceptions. So the whole process is project, perceive, and take a break. That's how we experience our phenomenal world altogether.

Don't try to be too rigid and solemn about working with the breath. Keep everything simple and to the minimum. Working with the breath is a straightforward practice that is direct, real, and also revealing. You are simply being there, naked.

## **Working with Thoughts**

When you are in that space, holding your posture and following your breath, your mind will start to raise its own questions: "Now what?" "What does this mean? What does that mean?" When all those questions arise, you are reacting to hearing the sound of emptiness resounding in your mind. It is empty in the sense that there is no content in meditation. I'm not speaking literally about hearing a sound but about a reaction to slowing down and emptying out.

Your reaction, or the echo of emptiness, may take the form of anticipation, anxiety, or questioning. You are sitting without an object, without an agenda. You have nothing to do. Your mind begins to question what is going on because it's not used to the stillness. It will start to manufacture all kinds of entertainment.

You begin to realize that you have all sorts of thought patterns. What are you going to do about those? So many thoughts of past, present, and future will arise in your practice of meditation [page 22]: thoughts about your life, your future plans, conversations with your friends and your relatives, all sorts of self-conscious gossip.

Let all these things come through. Let them just come through. Don't try to say whether they are bad or for that matter whether they are particularly good. Just let them come through, as simply as you can. That approach brings a sense of openness. You don't find your thoughts threatening or particularly helpful. They just become the general gossip, the traffic of your thoughts. If you live in a city, you hear the traffic coming through your windows: there goes a motorcycle, there goes a truck. There goes a car, and then there's somebody shouting. At the beginning you might get involved in or distracted by the noise, but then you begin to think, so what?

Similarly, the traffic of your thoughts and the verbosity of your mind are merely part of the basic chatter that goes on in the universe. Let it go through. You relate to sound, smell, sight and every experience that you have in the sensorial world with exactly the same mindful approach. You see things simply and directly. You're just there, with them and with your breathing.

### *Labeling Thinking*

It doesn't matter what comes up. You don't have to analyze anything when you are meditating. You can simply maintain your dignified posture and pay attention to your breath. The technique is that you look at the thoughts as they arise and say to yourself, "thinking." Whatever goes through your mind is purely thinking, not mystical experience. Label it thinking and come back to your breath.

So you are there. You are thinking. You don't try to get away from your thoughts, but you don't stick with them or encourage them either. Thought patterns are just ripples on the surface of the pond. They come and they go. They merge into each other, and you take the attitude that they are not a big deal.

### *Aches and Pains* [page 23]

Bodily aches and pains and physical irritations also come and go. They may seem more problematic than your thoughts. But in meditation practice you regard physical sensations as also thought patterns. Label them thinking. Aches, pains, pins and needles—all thinking. This keeps everything simple and straightforward, so that you can appreciate everything as part of one natural process. There might be a loud noise outside, the sound of a train, traffic, or a jet engine. For that matter, you might be sweating or you might feel cold and chilled. It's all thinking, from this point of view.

When you begin to simplify everything in this way, it allows you to relax. However, often you come up with further complaints. You probably know the story of the princess and the pea. She couldn't sleep because there was a pea under her mattress. You may have a similar experience when you are meditating. You might think there is a little metal ball stuck in your cushion or on your chair that is causing you a lot of pain. Or you feel as if someone is sticking a knife between your shoulder blades. All kinds of discomforts arise. It doesn't matter. The discomfort comes and goes. Just be precise, label it thinking, and return to the breath.

If you take this too far, you could strain your leg, your back, or some other part of your body. So don't ignore the discomfort entirely. Rearrange your posture if it is necessary; it's good to do that at some point. But at the same time it's a thinking process, so relate to it as a thinking process.

### **Irritation and Exertion**

Even though everything is quite simple and straightforward in the practice of meditation, you are still likely to develop irritation. You are getting the best of the best, but you still think that there is something better, something more. It can be very [page

24] frustrating. At that point, you need to apply exertion. You have to stick with what you have already. You can't ask for more. There's nothing more to give you, in any case! So you have to be content with what you have.

## **Group Sitting**

Many people will receive their initial instruction in a group and may begin their practice of meditation in a group setting. One very helpful thing about practicing meditation with others is that it shows you that you can actually sit for a longer period of time than you imagined. Sitting with a group encourages you to keep going. You find that you can do the meditation, and you can enjoy it, even when it's difficult! When you meditate with a group, the length of the session will be determined for you. Many groups schedule daily or weekly meditation sessions for the same set period of time: twenty minutes, half an hour, forty minutes, or an hour.

I have found that during group retreats of several hours, days, or weeks, it can be helpful to vary the length of the meditation sessions. Not always knowing the length of the sessions can also be good training for you. For example, you might know that you will be practicing meditation from 9 a.m. until noon at your group retreat, but you don't necessarily know how long each meditation session will be. Sometimes you will sit for only fifteen minutes. Other times you might meditate for an hour. This unpredictability encourages you to sit with fewer expectations, and it will help you find out just what your expectations are.

## **Sitting by Yourself**

### *Daily Practice*

If you meditate by yourself, especially when you are trying to establish or maintain a daily meditation practice, it's helpful to have a set time to meditate, usually at the beginning or the end [page 25] of your day. It's also helpful to have a separate space for meditation in your home or workplace, if you can. The length of your meditation session may vary from day to day, and the length of time may have a lot to do with family and work obligations. If you can only set aside ten or fifteen minutes a day to sit, start with that. You may find that you can set aside more time on the weekends or when you have time off of work. Although the amount of time you sit from day to day may vary, before you start your session each day, it's important to decide how long you're going to sit, and keep to that. If you don't give yourself a set goal, you might give up after five minutes. So decide before you start how long you're going to sit. If you have a meditation instructor, you can also discuss your daily sitting practice with him or her,

and come up with a plan to increase the amount you practice each week. Or if you don't have an instructor, you can make your own plan to start with fifteen minutes a day and work up to an hour.

### *Personal Retreats*

You can also do an “in-house” retreat by yourself, where you set aside part of a day or a longer period of time that you can devote to sitting practice. Before you start your retreat, you can write out a schedule for your meditation sessions. If you do an in-house retreat for several days, you can also include meal breaks, readings, and free time in your predetermined schedule. It's good to push yourself a little, in terms of how long you sit, but don't be too ambitious. Be kind to yourself! This is usually something you would only do after you have been practicing meditation for some time.

There is more information on group meditation practice throughout this book. See especially chapter 16, “Touch and Go.” For a discussion of personal and group retreats in relationship to aloneness, see chapter 7, “Rhinoceros and Parrot.”

[page 26] Altogether, meditation teaches us that we can handle ourselves—our bodies and our minds—properly. Meditating in this way is thoroughly enjoyable. For the first time we are doing something real, something that is totally free from deception.

## **The Teddy Bear of Breath, pp. 27-31**

The practice of meditation is a process of taming and training. This does not mean immediately calming ourselves or curing our problems. This process is more like training a wild horse or plowing very rocky, hard soil. We should expect lots of challenges, and we have to be willing to go through the whole process.

In order to tame ourselves, body and mind have to be synchronized. First, when you meditate cross-legged on the ground or upright in your chair with a straight back, the body becomes much more workable. Then, once the body has assumed this posture, we have to convince the mind to go along with it. Mind is basically restless and uncertain. So there is a tendency for our minds to shift around a great deal, jumping from one thought to the next.

When this happens, the best way to tame the mind is to give it a toy. The best toy we can provide is something that is similar to the mind. It's not mind itself, but it feels familiar to the mind, almost like a portrait of it. It is like giving a child a [page 28] doll or a teddy bear, which is small and cuddly and somewhat like the child. It's not too big nor

too small, and you can take it to bed with you, or you can throw it around and play with it. You can dress it up and have a tea party with it. It's like an image of yourself, almost like a surrogate.

In meditation, the teddy bear is your breath. Just like the mind, your breathing is by no means still. Of necessity it is somewhat restless. Once you breathe out, you have to breathe in. Once you breathe in, you have to breathe out. That restlessness is similar to how our mind operates, constantly looking for alternatives, constantly generating content. Breathing has a very similar energy to the way the mind operates.

So this toy of breathing is given to the mind. I was taught that only about 25 percent of your concentration should be put on the breath when you're meditating. This is just a rough estimate, so please don't fixate on the percentage. The point is that in this approach, working with breath is just touching the highlights of the breathing. You don't remain completely one with it all the time.

This is very much like a child playing with her teddy bear. When the child is restless or unhappy, she is cheered up by her teddy bear. Then she once again becomes interested in other things. However, there is always something to come back to—her teddy bear. That is your breath.

Putting more attention on the outbreath, which I recommend, is like going down a slide. You slide down, and then you have to walk around and climb the stairs back up the slide, and then you can slide down again. Going down the slide is similar to riding the breath out. When you finish your ride, there's a gap, and you breathe in, which is like climbing back up the slide. Then you ride the breath out again, and there's another gap. This process occurs over and over.

Breathing occupies the mind quite easily. Out and in and in and out happen constantly. Breathing also encourages you to step beyond the emphasis on the body. Your outbreath takes you [page 29] out into the world. Then naturally you breathe in. Then you want to step out again into the world, so you breathe out. There is a constant process of going in and out. In my tradition this is known as mixing mind and breath together.

The practice of mindfulness meditation is also a way to sharpen your mind. In many cases we are so stunned by the speed and the demands of reality that our minds have become dull. We have lost a lot of our mind's precision, and our perception is somewhat foggy and unclear. Our mental faculties have been overused, overtaxed. Jumping back



and forth with thoughts of all kinds and trying to integrate a million thoughts at once makes us numb.

The practice of meditation helps to sharpen our minds and allows us to see and experience things much more directly, by going along with the breathing and getting extraordinarily bored. There is nothing else happening when you practice, other than your breath and your body and the flickering of thoughts and visual entertainment. Even those flickers eventually become somewhat uninteresting.

When the mind has no outside entertainment, interestingly enough, it becomes much sharper. If a child only has one toy, just one teddy bear, then he will know it from top to bottom, from outside to inside. He will completely investigate and memorize the look and feel of every inch of that toy. If you entertain him with hundreds of toys, he'll lose interest in all of them. He'll become cranky and demanding and throw tantrums. So having one thing at a time is better.

When a person begins to work with the outbreath, without any other entertainments, the connection between mind and body becomes very real. Your mind becomes precise and sharp.

The outbreath is like a whetstone, and the mind is like the knife or sword that is being sharpened on that stone. When you sharpen a knife, you draw the blade of the knife across the sharpening stone. Following your outbreath is like drawing the [page 30] blade of mind across the breath. Then you breathe in, which is like bringing the knife blade back so that you can draw it across the stone again. You always sharpen the blade in the same direction, which is like placing the emphasis on the outbreath over and over again.

When you sharpen a knife, you need a light touch. If you put too much pressure or incorrect pressure on the knife when you draw it across the stone, you may actually dull the blade. Similarly, in working with the breath, trying too hard to stick with mindfulness of breathing can result in feeling hypnotized by the breath or alternatively feeling unable to follow the breath at all. This is one reason that the recommendation is to place only 25 percent of your attention on the breath. You need that kind of light touch to sharpen the mind.

Working with mind, body, and breath in this way is training ourselves in mindfulness. We sometimes think that being mindful means being critical of ourselves and very watchful. We think that meditation provides us with a big brother who is going to watch over us or whip us into shape if we do something wrong. But mindfulness practice is not

about punishing yourself when you lose track of your breath or your thoughts. Mindfulness does not criticize or set conditions for you. Nor is it about rewarding you. Rather, it is helping you to discover the alertness that already exists in your mind, by dispelling the dullness that has covered it up.

Working with the breath in your practice of meditation is very important training. It might seem insignificant at first. We might say, “Who doesn’t know how to breathe? What’s the big deal?” However, sharpening our minds through working with our breathing develops tremendous precision. We often say that meditation practice is about the development of peace. By peace, we mean this experience of being precisely on the dot, which cools down the jumpiness of our minds and the heat of our emotional neurosis. Experiencing this precision is analogous to sitting under a waterfall [page 31] and letting a cool mountain stream pour onto us, washing away our dirt and sweat. We need to take this shower and relate with the water pouring onto our body from head to toe. That is how we develop peace in meditation.

### **Cool Boredom, pp. 32-35**

In everyday life, we habitually try to conceal the gaps in our experience of mind and body. These gaps are a bit like an awkward silence around the table at a dinner party. A good host is supposed to keep the conversation going with his or her guests, to put them at ease. You might talk about the weather or the latest books you’ve read or what you are serving for dinner. We treat ourselves similarly. We occupy ourselves with subconscious chatter because we are uncomfortable with any gaps in our conversation with ourselves.

The purpose of the practice of meditation is to experience the gaps. We do nothing, essentially, and see what that brings—either discomfort or relief, whatever the case may be. The starting point for the practice of meditation is the mindfulness discipline of developing peace. The peace we experience in meditation is simply this state of doing nothing, which is experiencing the absence of speed.

Often, in considering the practice of meditation, the question arises as to what you are meditating *on*. In this approach, [page 33] meditation has no object. You do work with your body, your thoughts, and your breath, but that is different from concentrating wholeheartedly on one thing. Here, you are not meditating upon anything; you are simply being present in a simple way.

The practice works with what is immediately available to you. You have your experience of being alive; you have a mind and you have a body. So you work with those things. You

also work with whatever is going through your mind, whatever the content is, whatever the current issues are, whether painful or pleasurable. Whatever you are experiencing, that's where you begin. You also use your breath, which is part of the body and is also affected by mind. Breathing expresses the fact that you are alive. If you're alive, you breathe. The technique is basic and direct: you pay heed to breath. You don't try to use the mindfulness of the breathing to entertain yourself, but you use the mindfulness of breathing to simplify matters.

You develop mindfulness of the rising and falling of the breath. You go along with the process of breathing. In particular, you go along with each exhalation. As the breath goes out, you go out with it. And when the outbreath dissolves, you feel that you are also dissolving. The inbreath is a gap, a space, and then you breathe out again. So there is a constant sense of going out and slowing down.

At the beginning, the technique may be somewhat fascinating, but it quickly becomes boring. You get tired of sitting and breathing, doing nothing again and again and again—and again. You may feel like an awkward fool. It is so uninteresting. You might resent having gotten yourself into this situation. You might also resent the people who encouraged you to do this. You may feel completely foolish, as if the cosmos were mocking you.

Then, as you relax a little bit, you start to call up past experiences, memories of your life as well as your emotions, your aggression and passion. Now you have a private cinema show, and you can review your autobiography while you sit. Then, [page 34] after a while, you might come back to your breath, thinking that you should try to be a good child and apply the technique.

In meditation we have the opportunity to meet ourselves, to see ourselves clearly for the first time. We have never met ourselves properly or spent this kind of time with ourselves before. Of course, we take time for ourselves; we go off to the country or the ocean for a vacation. But we always find things to do on vacation. We make little handicrafts or we read something. We cook, we talk, we take a walk, or we swim. We never just sit with ourselves. It's a difficult thing to do.

The practice of meditation is not merely hanging out with ourselves, however. We are accomplishing something by being there properly, within the framework of the technique. The technique is simple enough that it doesn't entertain us. In fact, the technique may begin to fall away at some point. As we become more comfortable with ourselves and develop more understanding of ourselves, our application of the technique becomes less heavy-handed. The technique almost seems unnecessary. In the

beginning we need the technique, like using a crutch to help us walk when we're injured. Then, once we can walk without it, we don't need the crutch. In meditation it is similar. In the beginning we are very focused on the technique, but eventually we may find that we are just there, simply there.

At that point, we may think that the efficient system we've organized around our practice is breaking down. It can be disconcerting, but it's also refreshing. We sense that there is more to us than our habitual patterns. We have more in us than our bundles of thoughts, emotions, and upheavals. There's something behind this whole façade. We discover the reservoir of softness within ourselves.

At that point, we begin to truly befriend ourselves, which allows us to see ourselves much more honestly. We can see both aspects, not just the bright side of the picture, how fantastic and good we are, but also how terrible we are. Good and bad somehow [page 35] don't make much difference at this point. It all has one flavor. We see it all.

As your sympathy toward yourself expands, you begin to appreciate and enjoy simply being with yourself, being alone. Or at least you are not as irritated with yourself as you used to be! As you become ever more familiar with yourself, you find that you can actually put up with yourself without complaint—which you have never done before. Your thought patterns, subconscious gossip, and all of your mind's chatter become much less interesting. In fact, you begin to find them all very boring. However, this is slightly different than our normal experience of boredom, because behind the boredom, or even within it, you feel something refreshing: cool boredom. You're bored to death, bored to tears, but it is no longer claustrophobic. The boredom is cooling, refreshing, like the water from a cold mountain stream.

Hot boredom is like being locked in a padded cell. You are bored, miserable, and irritated. You will probably experience lots of that in your meditation practice. Beyond that, however, with cool boredom, you don't feel imprisoned. Cool boredom is quite spacious, and it creates further softness and sympathy toward ourselves. In that space, we are no longer afraid of allowing ourselves to experience a gap. In other words, we realize that existence does not depend on constantly cranking up our egomaniacal machine. There is another way of existing.

## **Touch and Go**

**From *Mindfulness in Action* by Chögyam Trungpa**  
***Compiled, arranged, & edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian, pp. 105-113***

At this point in our discussion I'd like to introduce some further instructions for the practice of meditation. These instructions could be especially useful in relation to the discussion of working with the emotions in this section of the book. The touch-and-go instructions were first introduced to be used by people attending a month-long practice retreat or a three-month practice and study retreat, so these instructions are attuned to issues that arise in the intensive practice of meditation. However, they are also applicable to daily practice and they help us in working with our daily lives, or mindfulness in action.

### **Attitude**

As we've already discussed, in the practice of meditation there is an attitude that brings about possibilities of mindfulness. This attitude is not a matter of forming an opinion. Rather, it is directly cultivating the awareness of mind, which is precisely what mindfulness is. You are aware that your mind is aware of [page 106] yourself. In other words, you're aware that you're aware. You are not a machine; you are an individual person relating to what's happening around you.

### **Touch and Go**

We could use the phrase "touch and go" to describe the cultivation of mindfulness and awareness. Mindfulness in this case is being mindful of the sense of being. The *touch* part is that you are in contact, you're touching the experience of being there, actually being there, and then you let *go*. This approach applies to awareness of your breath in the practice of meditation, and it also applies to awareness in your day-to-day living situation.

In the practice of meditation, touch and go works with how we directly *feel* our experience. The idea of *touch* is that you feel a quality of existence; you feel that you are who you are. When you sit down to meditate in a chair or on a cushion, you *feel* that you are sitting on your seat and that you actually exist. You are there, you are sitting, you are there, you are sitting. That's the *touch* part. The *go* part is that you are there, and then you don't hang on to it. You don't sustain your sense of being, but you let go of it.

With touch and go, there's a feeling of individuality, a feeling of yourself as a person. We are here; we exist. We feel this, directly and simply. Then, we let go, which is a sense of carelessness, of not feeling too much concern.

### *Working with Emotions*

Then, there is a further *touch* that is necessary, which applies not only to awareness of a sense of being but also to the mindfulness of emotional states of mind. That is, one's mental state of aggression, lust, or whatever you are feeling has to be acknowledged. Those states should not just be acknowledged and then pushed off. You should actually look at them. This is an important [page 107] point. There should be no suppression or shying away. You have the experience of being utterly aggressive and angry, or being utterly lustful, envious, jealous, or whatever you feel. You don't just say, "Oh, it's okay. This is what's happening." Or, very politely, "Hi. Nice seeing you again. You are okay. Good-bye, I want to get back to my breath." That is like meeting an old friend on a train platform, someone you haven't seen in a while, who reminds you of the past, and saying to him or her. "Well, excuse me, I have to catch the train to make my next appointment." That attitude is somewhat deceptive.

In this approach to practice, you don't just sign off. You acknowledge what's happening in your state of mind, and then you *look at it* as well. The point is that you don't give yourself an easy time so that you can escape the embarrassing and unpleasant moments, the self-conscious moments of your life. Such moments might arise as memories of the past or the painful experience of the present. Or you may feel the pain of future prospects, what you're going to do after this. All those thoughts and feelings happen, and you experience them, you look at them, and only then do you come back to your breath.

This is extremely important to do. Otherwise, there is the possibility that we could twist the logic all around. If you feel that sitting and meditating, coming back to the breath, is a way of avoiding problems, that *is* the problem. You might feel your practice is extremely kosher, good, sensible, and real, and you don't have to pay attention to all those little embarrassments that happen around your life. You can regard them as unimportant and just come back to the breath. If you do this you are creating a patchwork; you are bottling up problems and keeping them as your family heirloom. Instead, it is important to look at those embarrassments and only then to come back to breath. And even then, after you have looked at them, there's no implication that, if you look at them, it's going to free you and provide an escape from one painful point to another, or that it's the end of the story.

[page 108] In fact, most of the problems in life do not arise because you are an aggressive or lustful person. The greatest problem is that you want to bottle those things up and put them aside or patch over them, and you have become an expert in deception. That is the biggest problem. Meditation practice is supposed to uncover any attempts to develop a subtle, sophisticated, deceptive approach. It is designed to uncover those patches.

### *Working with the Breath*

The attitude toward breathing in meditation is also related to working with touch and go. Once you are set properly in your posture, you begin to naturally focus on the breath going out of you. As the breath is going out, become the breathing. Try to identify with the breath, rather than watching it. This is the *touch* part. You are the breath; the breath is you. Breath comes out of your mouth and nostrils, goes out, and then dissolves into the atmosphere, into the space. You touch that process; you put a certain energy and effort toward that.

Then, as you breathe in, you boycott your breath; you boycott your concentration on the breath. That is the *go* part. As your breath goes out, let it dissolve. Then, just abandon it; boycott it. So breathing in is just space. Physically, biologically, one does breathe in, obviously, but you don't make a big deal of it.

Then another breath goes out—be with it. So the process is: out, dissolve, gap; out, dissolve, gap. It's constant opening, abandoning, boycotting. In this context *boycotting* is a significant word. If you hold on to your breath, you are holding on to yourself. Once you begin to boycott the end of the outbreath, it's as though there were no you and no world left, except that the next outbreath reminds you to tune in. So you tune in, dissolve, tune in, dissolve, tune in, dissolve. This is another way of saying touch and go, touch and go, touch and go.

### **Labeling Thoughts**

[page 109] As we know, many thoughts arise in the midst of practice. "Well, back at home, what are they doing?" "When should I do my homework?" "What should I write about next?" "What should I paint?" "What's happening with my investments?" "I hate that guy who was so terrible to me." "I would like to make love." "What's the story with my parents?" All kinds of thoughts arise naturally. If you have lots of time to sit, endless thoughts occur.

We have already talked about labeling thoughts as part of the practice of meditation. It is a very simple technique: we reduce everything to thinking. Having discussed relating to the emotions in terms of touch and go, we should address the importance of also labeling emotions as thinking. Usually if you have low-level mental chatter, you are willing to label this as thought. But if you have deeply involved emotional chatter, or fights and struggles in your mind, you call those *emotions*, and you want to give them special prestige. Acknowledging emotional states of mind through the technique of touch and go does not mean that emotions deserve special privileges in our practice. We might say to ourselves, "I'm actually angry, it's *more* than my thought." "I feel so horny, it's *more* than my thought." That can easily become self-indulgence or a means of avoidance, a way of avoiding the realm of actual mind. In the practice of labeling our thoughts, it's important to view whatever arises as just thinking: you're thinking you're horny; you're thinking you're angry. As far as meditation practice is concerned, none of your thoughts are regarded as VIPs. You think, you sit; you think, you sit; you think, you sit. You have thoughts, you have thoughts about thoughts, and further thoughts about those thoughts. Call them thoughts. You are thinking, you are constantly thinking, nothing but thinking. Everything is included in the thinking process, the constant thinking process: thought, nothing but thoughts and thought patterns.

## **Walking Meditation**

[page 110] Up to this point we have been focusing entirely on the sitting practice of meditation. However, there is also a practice of walking meditation. If you take part in a group retreat, it's very likely that you will be introduced to walking meditation as a practice that you do between sessions of sitting meditation. You may also do walking meditation practice at home by yourself, between sessions of sitting meditation, when you want to practice for a longer period of time.

In group situations, sometimes people treat walking meditation as an opportunity for dramatic display, to compensate for the fact that when you sit, you can't do very much, whereas when you stand up and walk, you can at least exercise your self-existence. That is regarding walking meditation as comic relief, a time to do something extraordinary, or self-exploratory, self-expressive. That is not advisable.

Walking practice is still practice. Instead of paying attention to your breath, you work with the movement of your legs and the overall awareness of walking. Your body still has good posture. You raise your right leg, taking a small step forward. Then you touch the sole of your foot to the floor, and then your toes. Then the left leg takes a step: your heel presses down, then the ball of your foot touches the ground, and then your toes;



then the right leg steps forward again, and it continues like that. It's a very natural, ordinary walk.

Your eyes are open while you're walking, of course, but generally you lower your gaze, rather than looking up or looking around at everything. Usually, during walking meditation, you are moving in a circle with other people around the room. Sometimes people walk quickly, almost racing relative to everybody else, or a person may walk *very* slowly. So you have to maintain an awareness of those in front of you and behind you.

In walking meditation you fold your arms at the level of your belly, with the right hand over the left. You tuck the fingers [page 111] of your left hand in, making a fist around your thumb, and the fingers of your right hand cover your left fist. So your arms aren't just swinging or hanging at your sides.

Walking practice relates to your everyday life situation much more closely than sitting practice. It involves movement, and it is a transition from the sitting practice of meditation to what will happen at the end of meditation, when you rise from your meditation cushion and begin to move into walking in the street, speaking, working, and so on. So walking practice is an important link to post-meditation and mindfulness in action. However, it's still part of formal practice. Regarding it that way, as part of your mindfulness practice rather than as a break, you have to pay heed to it. You can do it somewhat deliberately but at the same time freely.

## **Group Retreat**

### Awareness between Sessions of Sitting

If you plan to do a group retreat for an entire day or over a period of several days or more, you may have questions about how to handle yourself during the periods when you are not sitting. Should you just tiptoe around as if you were walking on eggs, still trying to hold on to your meditation experience? Or should you make a big splash in your interactions with people? Or should you be somewhat dumb and hesitant and try to play along with other people's energy? You will undoubtedly be given instructions for how to behave between meditation sessions. You may be asked to observe silence. Even when silent, however, you are still interacting with others and responding to situations. The point is not so much that you should tiptoe, or make a big splash, or be hesitant. Instead, you should try to recollect the sense of meditational awareness that has developed in your state of being; just continue that way. This doesn't mean especially working with the breath or working with your walking during the breaks, but there is a

*flash* of awareness, the [page 112] *memory* that you sat. This was discussed in the chapter “Recollection.”

Also, remember your commitment to this particular course, this retreat. You have set your intention in being here. The attitude is not particularly moralistic or a question of behaving like good boys and good girls. It’s a basic recollection of why you are here. And you *are* here; you have sat and meditated; it’s simple and factual.

Another general recommendation for group retreat situations—one that I strongly recommend, as a matter of fact—is to minimize unnecessary chatter. This means you should refrain from conversing or commenting among yourselves. You limit your verbal statements to what is purely functional and necessary. For example, one might say, “Pass the salt,” or “Close the door.” Of course, you may be doing your retreat in complete silence. Functional talking is a kind of middle ground between that and just chattering away. It can be more challenging than silence, because you have to decide what is functional!

Another challenging aspect of a group retreat is the mealtimes, even if they’re conducted in silence. Mealtimes, I have observed, are often seen as a moment of release, a moment of freedom—which is unnecessary. I think we can approach this differently. One problem during meals can be unnecessary chatter, but even if that is not taking place, there can be a quality of meals as time off, a gap, a vacation. You are eating and drinking—no doubt having a relatively pleasant time—and you regard it as completely outside of what you are doing in the meditation hall. There’s a dichotomy, a shockingly big contrast, which is unnecessary. If you cultivate such an approach during the mealtimes or during personal time—thinking that this is your free time, your time to release energy—then obviously your sitting practice is going to feel like imprisonment. You are creating your own jail.

You might feel that the meditation hall is where serious practice takes place, and when you get out the door, everything’s [page 113] free, back to normality or something like that. The physical environment may be somewhat isolated and restricted in a retreat setting, but you still may feel that you can indulge in your own freestyle during your personal time and proclaim your individuality in some way, even if you do so silently. By doing that, you might develop a negative reaction toward the meditation hall, considering it a jail, while the other places, away from practice, comes to represent freedom and having a good time. The suggestion here is that we could even out the whole thing and have a good time all over the place. *This* is not so much a jail, and *that* is not so much a vacation, freedom, a holiday.

Everything should be evened out. That is the basic approach: if you sit, if you stand, if you eat, if you walk—whatever you do is all part of the same good old world. You are carrying your world with you in any case. You cannot cut your world into different slices and put them into different pigeonholes.

We don't have to be so poverty-stricken about our life. We don't have to try to get a little chocolate chip from just one part of our life. All the rest will be sour, but here I can take a dip in pleasure! If your body is hot and you dip your finger in ice water, it feels good. In actual fact, it's painful at the same time, not completely pleasurable. If you really know the meaning of pleasure in the total sense, this dip in pleasure is a further punishment and an unnecessary trick that we play on ourselves.

In sum, practice of meditation is not so much about a hypothetical attainment of enlightenment as it is about leading a good life. In order to learn how to lead a good life, a spotless life, we need continual awareness that relates directly and simply with life.

# Shamatha

## Selected Excerpts from *The Manual for Shamatha Instructors*

*This material is based on two Meditation Instructor Seminars  
held at Karmê Chöling, Winter-Spring 1975.*

### Taming: Basic Principles of Technique

The first one is obviously the shamatha practice which is referred to as a process of taming. In this case taming, as a definition of shamatha, does not necessarily mean a process of calming or curing or of any kind of meditation or treatment. The idea in this case is just simply plowing. That is Milarepa's metaphor. You plow through the ground of ego. As you tame your wild horse, or as you plow the tough ground, there are obviously going to be a lot of challenges. That is expected and one has to be willing to go through it.

So this toy of the breathing is given to mind. It has been said in the books that only twenty-five percent of one's concentration should be put on the breathing and no more than that. Only twenty-five percent. So working with the breathing is just touching the highlights of the breathing. You can't completely become one with it. It's like a child playing with a teddy bear. When a child has gone through a process of restlessness, then he is occasionally cheered up by the teddy bear. In the meantime, the child is interested in other things. But there is something to come back to—your teddy bear. And it's much easier to work with in a lot of cases. For one thing, because breathing occupies mind. There is out and in and out and in which happens constantly.

Another point is that the sense of breath also brings a suggestion of stepping out of the body into a world of dream. Then the dream becomes an empty dream, so that finally you are stuck there. In the meantime you breathe in, and then you want to step out into the dream world again, so you breathe out again. There is a constant stepping out process. According to Gampopa that's known as mixing mind and breath together. Working with outbreath is like getting on a slide and you slide out. Then you have to walk up and then you slide out again. So the process is going along with riding the breath. And then you finish with your ride. Then there's a gap. You ride again, and then there's a gap. Then you ride again and then there's a gap.

As for the question of thoughts, when thoughts arise just let them arise. At the same time a deceptive twist often goes on. One thinks, "If I let thoughts be, then they will go away. Then everything is going to be okay. If I don't reject them and don't accept them, I can be sure that something's taking place. I'm doing good."

## Sharpening: The Beginning Stages of Shamatha Development

One aspect of shamatha is that it is the way to make your mind sharper than ordinary. What has happened to us is that we have become so involved with reality or whatever [laughter] and, in a lot of cases, we are so stunned by the whole thing that our mind becomes dull. We lose a lot of the precision in our mind and are unable to receive any clear idea of the reality of anything. Our mental faculty has been overused and therefore one tends to get very vague. We jump back and forth with thought processes of all kinds and try to sum up a million thoughts at once, which makes us extraordinarily numb and hazy. So the shamatha practice makes you sharper and more direct.

Before we get into further things, one's mind has to be really sharp and direct, capable of receiving whatever you might learn. So the preparation to be a good student at this point is the shamatha practice. There is no other way of sharpening one's mind by giving someone a quick and effective trick at all. The only way to do it is to go along with the breathing and let the mind get extraordinarily bored. This is the first point—to get extraordinarily bored so that there is nothing else but your breath and your body and your occasional flickering of visual and audio entertainment. But even those flickers become somewhat dull and uninteresting. When you give more boring things to your mind, mind becomes sharper, because there is nothing else to relate with.

So that when a person begins to work with outbreath the sense of body becomes very real, but still there will be thought process coming up. This is by no means a state of tranquility, but at least letting one's mind learn to be precise and direct. Before you develop any sense of awareness your mind has to become sharp.

So the idea is making yourself extraordinarily sharp and direct. You become more and more sensitive, and consequently hidden neurosis of all kinds begins to come up to the surface. You begin to remember your childhood memories, your hopes and fears, and your relationship to your friends, enemies and parents. Things begin to come onto the surface and those are the result of being sharp. Once you're more sharp and you have less toys to play with, then you get more and more precise and direct and consequently up to being actually capable of developing mindfulness practice. So taming the mind is providing sharpness, at the first stage. That seems to be the basic idea. There is constant pain that takes place because of the basic split and the basic sense of bewilderment and uncertainty. There is some desire to be sharp at the same time that you want to be occupied and entertain yourself, to take your mind off the undesirable truth that might reveal something.

So the sharpness of shi-ne or shamatha practice brings the realization of pain much more—the fundamental pain and *duhkha*. It also brings a sense of journey. At the beginner's level that journey is not a journey forward especially; it seems like a backward journey. You are almost regressing constantly. You rediscover all kinds of things that you realize you have ignored. Nevertheless the sense of regressing is just a kind of illusion that one goes through. To realize the backwardness of it is the journey forward. So the shamatha practice tames the mind and provides a sense of sharpness by using identification or letting go through the breathing awareness. What that actually does to you is that you become extraordinarily sensitive so that you will be able to work with your mindfulness practice. But at the beginner's level, even the mindfulness practice hasn't occurred.

### **Mindfulness (T. *Trenpa*; Skt. *Smrti*)**

When you develop the sense of complete precision and are able to see all the mental activities and also to see through the techniques, then natural mindfulness begins to occur. Not necessarily obvious, but natural mindfulness, which becomes obvious to do. There is a Tibetan word for mindfulness, which is *trenpa*. *Trenpa* literally means memory, or recollection. And this means not recollection in the sense of path or recognition of anything particularly, but recollection in the sense that there is an organic process of emptying one's lung when you breathe out completely. Then you have a natural automatic process of filling your lung.

So mindfulness already exists and you can be available to it. The idea is that mindfulness is not a process of application in terms of growing yourself, but a process of undoing yourself. There is a sudden sharp jerk, a gap of undoing, ceasing to act. When you cease to act, then the mindfulness enters into your system of being. That seems to be the basic meaning of recollection. There is something in the past, not as memory, but experience that is there already in an embryonic state; you create your apertures to it, are open to it. I think that's the definition of mindfulness.

There are two levels: mindfulness comes early on in shamatha, and awareness comes much later in the level of vipashyana. Again, I would like to point out to everybody—so you will know the basic geography and basic priorities in the practice—that shamatha always comes first. That is the first step of meditation practice as a starter, as a beginner in the Buddhist tradition. You do the same thing according to the Buddha; you start with shamatha, whatever school it may be. After that the awareness comes in the vipashyana practice later on. In this case when we talk about actually identifying with the breath, we are talking about shamatha, basic shamatha practice. When we are talking about mindfulness it also includes shamatha experience expanding to the potentiality of

vipashyana. But it hasn't quite begun. And I have already discussed the details of the shamatha experience in the four foundations of mindfulness talks.

The whole thing sometimes could seem like a great bank of energy. Nevertheless, there's no vibrating power particularly. It's a kind of self-existing nonexistence. Of course, if you are trying to relate this to new students [laughter] probably they wouldn't make head or tail of it. The point of working with the breathing is very important, because then you begin to pick up some kind of flow of that particular energy that occurs out of nothingness. Depending on your mood of the day or night, sometimes breathing is like a current of air flowing out and in. And sometimes breathing turns out to be like a big tube of plexiglas stretching out from your nostrils. Sometimes it's like a spray of water, a sprinkler system. These very detailed experiences of breathing are not matters of importance. We should just let them go as they are, simply.

### **Labeling as Simplifying**

At the mindfulness level you begin to see things very clearly, which doesn't mean to say quiet and calm particularly. From that you begin to develop a sense of completely unworkable details coming through your mind—sort of overlapping of overlapping of overlapping of various degrees of thoughts of a heavy or light type. So it would be very difficult to name everything. In fact, that would encourage further confusion. So the idea is just basically to acknowledge and name them as thought, and by doing that somehow the clarity on the breathing becomes more real. It's like you see that your life's dull, therefore you think you need to sharpen it. It's a double accent—coming back to the breathing is simplifying and labeling is also simplifying, which I think is the heart of shamatha and very necessary. And, in fact, because only twenty-five percent of mindfulness is on the breathing, that leaves room for the labeling. At the same time a letting-go process—after labeling you don't just hold tight; you are just touching the verge of the breathing as breathing comes and goes. So there is a natural harmony of pull and push together, which creates a kind of crystal-clear background.

### **Mindfulness and Awareness: Sharpness and Alertness (Trenpa and Sheshin)**

We could go back to discussing the difference between awareness and mindfulness. When we talk about mindfulness we are talking about experience which is alert—I suppose the closest word is alert—and has some sense of sharpness. Alertness is kind of a general alarm system, whereas sharpness is able to discriminate from one situation to another situation. In the case of shamatha practice, sharpness is provided by the actual breath—the insight and the sense of special qualities about being mindful of the breath. It's very definite and direct. As for alertness, that's the general situation in which your

particular situation is allowed to be sharp. So alertness is a general sense of perking up. Then with particular details, once you are perked up already, you keep that alertness together by using the breath or whatever. That is very special, and very, very personal.

But quite possibly you could be shocked by some other situation, while you are being mindful of your breath. Someone could pounce on your back and you'd probably jump. And that's kind of a one-dimensional situation. Mindfulness has a front and a back and faces to certain areas, in particular directions. Awareness, from that point of view, is somewhat vague and doesn't have a special concept or idea. On the whole, awareness is not being aware of particular problematic situations. It is fundamental alertness—you are being alert. At the same time this kind of alertness is like walking into a cool atmosphere. The elements begin to wake you up. It's not that you're trying to be alert from this end.

The external situations begin to come to you, in part because you have ceased to use your particular object of concentration, like the breathing, heavily. You have begun to deal with the whole thing without any particular one concentration point. That tends to bring you out to the atmosphere. It's like eating a delicious meal, sitting in a drafty room with a lot of cool air coming through the cracks in the walls. The drafts approach you rather than just relating, one-to-one, to your meal. That's why it is called *lhakthong*, clear seeing. That does not just mean something visual. but clear feeling altogether. In order to feel clear, you have to have some sense of totality, which does not have a face. It does not have one-dimensional communication, but it's all pervasive. In the case of awareness, nobody can pounce on you from behind your back and shake you. It's an all over situation. So your openness is completely all pervasive.

When we talk about mindfulness and awareness, we are not looking out in terms of being careful, watching out for danger. It is possible, if we're fully and thoroughly able to interest ourselves in the day-to-day living situation of the sense-perceptual world, that we could pay immense attention to the world. We could develop some wakeful qualities generally. This wakeful quality doesn't have to be particularly dedicated to warding off danger or shortcomings. So a fundamental point is that, in fact, mindful awareness comes from a sense of relaxation, a sense that you can afford to open and let go. Because of that, an aware situation can occur. Because of that, you can practice twenty-four hours a day.



**Excerpt from Discovering Basic Goodness**  
**From *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior***  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, Edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian, pp. 36-41**

The practice of meditation was taught by the Lord Buddha over 2,500 years ago, and it has been part of the Shambhala tradition since that time. It is based on an oral tradition: from the time of the Buddha this practice has been transmitted from one human being to another. In this way, it has remained a living tradition, so that, although it is an ancient practice, it is still up to date. In this chapter we are going to discuss the technique of meditation in some detail, but it is important to remember that, if you want to fully understand this practice, you need direct, personal instruction.

By meditation here we mean something very basic and simple that is not tied to any one culture. We are talking about a very basic act: sitting on the ground, assuming a good posture, and [page 37] developing a sense of our spot, our place on this earth. This is the means of rediscovering ourselves and our basic goodness, the means to tune ourselves in to genuine reality, without any expectations or preconceptions.

The word meditation is sometimes used to mean contemplating a particular theme or object: meditating *on* such and such a thing. By meditating on a question or problem, we can find the solution to it. Sometimes meditation also is connected with achieving a higher state of mind by entering into a trance or absorption state of some kind. But here we are talking about a completely different concept of meditation: unconditional meditation, without any object or idea in mind. In the Shambhala tradition meditation is simply training our state of being so that our mind and body can be synchronized. Through the practice of meditation, we can learn to be without deception, to be fully genuine and alive.

Our life is an endless journey; it is like a broad highway that extends infinitely into the distance. The practice of meditation provides a vehicle to travel on that road. Our journey consists of constant ups and downs, hope and fear, but it is a good journey. The practice of meditation allows us to experience all the textures of the roadway, which is what the journey is all about. Through the practice of meditation, we begin to find that within ourselves there is no fundamental complaint about anything or anyone at all.

Meditation practice begins by sitting down and assuming your seat cross-legged on the ground. You begin to feel that by simply being on the spot, your life can become workable and even wonderful. You realize that you are capable of sitting like a king or

queen on a throne. The regalness of that situation shows you the dignity that comes from being still and simple.

In the practice of meditation, an upright posture is extremely important. Having an upright back is not an artificial posture. It is natural to the human body. When you slouch, that is unusual. [page 39] You can't breathe properly when you slouch, and slouching also is a sign of giving in to neurosis. So when you sit erect, you are proclaiming to yourself and to the rest of the world that you are going to be a warrior, a fully human being.

To have a straight back you do not have to strain yourself by pulling up your shoulders; the uprightness comes naturally from sitting simply but proudly on the ground or on your meditation cushion. Then, because your back is upright, you feel no trace of shyness or embarrassment, so you do not hold your head down. You are not bending to anything. Because of that, your shoulders become straight automatically, so you develop a good sense of head and shoulders. Then you can allow your legs to rest naturally in a cross-legged position; your knees do not have to touch the ground. You complete your posture by placing your hands lightly, palms down, on your thighs. This provides a further sense of assuming your spot properly.

In that posture, you don't just gaze randomly around. You have a sense that you are *there* properly; therefore your eyes are open, but your gaze is directed slightly downward, maybe six feet in front of you. In that way, your vision does not wander here and there, but you have a further sense of deliberateness and definiteness. You can see this royal pose in some Egyptian and South American sculptures, as well as in Oriental statues. It is a universal posture, not limited to one culture or time.

In your daily life, you should also be aware of your posture, your head and shoulders, how you walk, and how you look at people. Even when you are not meditating, you can maintain a dignified state of existence. You can transcend your embarrassment and take pride in being a human being. Such pride is acceptable and good.

Then, in meditation practice, as you sit with a good posture, you pay attention to your breath. When you breathe, you are utterly there, properly there. You go out with the outbreath, your breath dissolves, and then the inbreath happens naturally. [page 40] Then you go out again. So there is a constant going out with the outbreath. As you breathe out, you dissolve, you diffuse. Then your inbreath occurs naturally; you don't have to follow it in. You simply come back to your posture, and you are ready for another outbreath. Go out and dissolve: *tshoo*; then come back to your posture; then *tshoo*, and come back to your posture.

Then there will be an inevitable *bing!*—thought. At that point, you say, “thinking.” You don't say it out loud; you say it mentally: “thinking.” Labelling your thoughts gives you tremendous leverage to come back to your breath. When one thought takes you away completely from what you are actually doing—when you do not even realize that you are on the cushion, but in your mind you are in San Francisco or New York City—you say “thinking,” and you bring yourself back to the breath.

It doesn't really matter what thoughts you have. In the sitting practice of meditation, whether you have monstrous thoughts or benevolent thoughts, all of them are regarded purely as thinking. They are neither virtuous nor sinful. You might have a thought of assassinating your father or you might want to make lemonade and eat cookies. Please don't be shocked by your thoughts: any thought is just thinking. No thought deserves a gold medal or a reprimand. Just label your thoughts “thinking,” then go back to your breath. “Thinking,” back to the breath; “thinking,” back to the breath.

The practice of meditation is very precise. It has to be on the dot, right on the dot. It is quite hard work, but if you remember the importance of your posture, that will allow you to synchronize your mind and body. If you don't have good posture, your practice will be like a lame horse trying to pull a cart. It will never work. So first you sit down and assume your posture, then you work with your breath; *tshoo*, go out, come back to your posture; *tshoo*, come back to your posture; *tshoo*. When thoughts arise, you label them “thinking” and come back to your posture, back to your breath. You have mind working with breath, but [page 41] you always maintain body as a reference point. You are not working with your mind alone. You are working with your mind and your body, and when the two work together, you never leave reality.

The ideal state of tranquility comes from experiencing body and mind being synchronized. If body and mind are unsynchronized, then your body will slump—and your mind will be somewhere else. It is like a badly made drum: the skin doesn't fit the frame of the drum, so either the frame breaks or the skin breaks, and there is no constant tautness. When mind and body are synchronized, then, because of your good posture, your breathing happens naturally; and because your breathing and your posture work together, your mind has a reference point to check back to. Therefore your mind will go out naturally with the breath.

This method of synchronizing your mind and body is training you to be very simple and to feel that you are not special, but ordinary, extra-ordinary. You sit simply, as a warrior, and out of that, a sense of individual dignity arises. You are sitting on the earth and you realize that this earth deserves you and you deserve this earth. You are there—fully,

personally, genuinely. So meditation practice in the Shambhala tradition is designed to educate people to be honest and genuine, true to themselves.

In some sense, we should regard ourselves as being burdened: we have the burden of helping this world. We cannot forget this responsibility to others. But if we take our burden as a delight, we can actually liberate this world. The way to begin is with ourselves. From being open and honest with ourselves, we can also learn to be open with others. So we can work with the rest of the world, on the basis of the goodness we discover in ourselves. Therefore, meditation practice is regarded as a good and in fact excellent way to overcome warfare in the world: our own warfare as well as greater warfare.

## **A Meditation Instruction**

**From *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa, Volume 10***

**Edited by Caroline Rose Gimian, pp. 645-650**

***A Meditation Instruction.*” Shambhala Sun, March 2012. Based on talks one and two from *Meditation: The Way of the Buddha*, a seminar at Naropa Institute, 1974. © Diana J. Mukpo**

Doubtlessly, meditation practice is one of the most important and at the same time most confused subjects that we experience. It’s confusing because of our own expectations that the practice of meditation should bring about a certain sense of tranquility, equilibrium, and spiritual “high.”

I would like to emphasize that the practice of meditation as it was presented by the Buddha is no more and no less than working with yourself—sitting with yourself, alone, without entertainment, without further feedback and encouragement.

The sitting practice of meditation is one of simplifying one’s basic psychology and one’s basic problems. Simplifying in this case means having no expectations about the technique, not expecting that the technique is going to liberate you or provide flashes of excitement or mystical experiences. In keeping with how the Buddha taught, I would like to present the situation of meditation extremely simply, without metaphysical or philosophical overlay.

To benefit from meditation, you need more than just a glimpse. You need to make a commitment to training yourself in meditation. Otherwise, there will be a lot of gaps and missing the point, and you will experience unnecessary confusion. So it’s important to stick with the practice and follow the instructions that you receive. It might be best to look at meditation as a way of life.

If you stick with the practice and go along, with exertion and patience, you will have a chance to realize yourself, to understand yourself. Such understanding may be extremely boring. Such understanding may be seeing something you don’t want to see. Nevertheless, we can’t reject ourselves before we know what we are. So I encourage you to be brave, from that point of view. Please don’t chicken out and either reject yourself or congratulate yourself. Rather, try to work with the techniques and the tradition that is presented to you.

The practice of meditation in Buddhism is a very simple technique that was recommended by Lord Buddha himself. I myself have been trained in this technique.

Meditation in the Buddhist tradition is connected with the idea of *bhavana*, a Sanskrit word that refers to spiritual exertion or discipline altogether. That is the basic point of meditation: unless you are inspired to discipline yourself, it is hopeless. If you only discipline yourself halfway and then give up, that will create congestion and indigestion for yourself.

From that point of view, meditation can be very demanding. If you stick with it, however, if you sit regularly and follow this discipline, you will develop understanding and become skilled in the clarity of the practice. Your experiences won't be dramatic, by any means. The practice will purely lead to discovering yourself, I'm afraid. You won't see cherubs and gods, heavenly realms, colorful mantras, or *yantras*—none of those.

Meditation is very simple and extremely down-to-earth, to the extent that it's *irritatingly* down-to-earth. Through the down-to-earth practice of meditation, you can see the colors of your own existence. The earth begins to come back to you rather than that you are getting messages from heaven, so to speak.

Altogether, meditation in Buddhism is extremely severe. I don't want to convert you to this particular style or approach necessarily. But I think it is worthwhile to apply your exertion to the practice of meditation; that is necessary if you want to learn something from the practice. I have personally learned from this practice. I don't mean this as a testimonial, particularly, but I feel I should share with you that I have gained wisdom and clarity myself from this practice. I'm giving it to you as I have learned it, as I received this myself. The only difference is that you don't speak Tibetan.

According to the Buddha, meditation is a threefold process. The first stage is what is called *shamatha*. The second process is *vipashyana*, and the third is the combination of the two: *shamatha-vipashyana*. Shamatha, which I am presenting here, means the development of mindfulness. It can be practiced in group situations or individually. The meaning of mindfulness is up to you to discover.

This particular approach to meditation practice is paying attention to what is happening. It focuses mainly on your breath, your ordinary breathing. If you've been running and then you stop and sit down, the first thing you do is to try to regain your breath. At that point, you pay attention to your breathing. Or if you are doing things and then you want to relax, then you sit down and say, "Phew." So breathing plays an important part in ordinary experiences. Breathing is quite natural. It's a natural situation, part of what we naturally associate with relaxation.

*Shamatha* literally means the “development of peace.” Peace in this case doesn’t mean a state without war. It has nothing to do with politics. We also are not talking about a psychedelic sense of getting off on peace. Here, we are simply talking about peace as nonaction. If you are having an intense time with your friends, your parents, or with your business, you might sit down and say, “Phew!” Peace is that kind of flopping down. But please don’t misunderstand what I’m saying. You can’t get this kind of peace instantly. You have to apply exertion and patience.

In the practice of meditation, we speak of peace in a very particular, extraordinary, and eccentric sense, as it was taught according to the Buddha. The Buddha was a very eccentric person, in that he attained enlightenment, which is extraordinary. Initially, we can’t actually understand what it means that he attained enlightenment—but he did. We are also on that path. We have no choice. In one of the sutras, the Buddha says that those who practice dwelling in peace, or *shamatha*, are building a staircase toward enlightenment.

That is what we are doing in the practice of meditation: constructing a staircase toward enlightenment. It requires very precise measurement of the boards to build the steps properly. All the angles have to be properly considered, and you have to use the right nails and hammer them in carefully, because this staircase has to bear the weight of people walking up it. *Shamatha* practice is building a staircase very deliberately, according to the Buddha. A staircase to what? To enlightenment? What is that? It doesn’t really matter. Just building the staircase may be good.

No promise, no blame. Let us simplify the situation. Let us build this staircase very simply and directly.

When you practice meditation, don’t make a big deal about it. Just sit down, relax, and straighten your back, not to the extreme but in a deliberate fashion. Your posture is a bit like how you would hold yourself if you were going to ask your lover to marry you. Your approach would be semirelaxed—friendly and somewhat seductive, but straightforward. That’s how your posture should be here. Then you place your hands on your knees, which is known as the mind-relaxing posture, or in whatever position you have been instructed in.

Then you should just feel your breath, your natural breath. It might be rough or deep if you have to run to get to the meditation room. Or your breathing might be quite shallow. It doesn’t really matter. Just feel your existing natural breathing. Sit quietly and listen to your breathing. To begin with, just listen to it for a few minutes. In that way, you can settle into the practice.

Then you can begin to discipline your state of awareness, your state of inquisitiveness. When you have nothing to do but sit and breathe, you begin to wonder, "What can I do with myself?" Those thoughts are fine, but then try to focus everything on your breathing. Listen to your breathing, feel your breathing, completely, properly, as much as you can. But don't force yourself. Don't hold yourself too tight, like an Englishman with a stiff upper lip. Here, you are dealing with your breathing very naturally. It's just natural breath. You sit there as though you're about to address your lover. You just sit there and go along with your breathing.

You follow the breathing, very simply. Particularly pay attention to the out-breath. Go along with it. Don't particularly try to feel the temperature of the breath in your nostrils or anything like that. Just breathe out, and as your breath goes out, you go out with your natural breath, very simply, extremely simply.

In terms of the staircase you are building, it requires enormous precision and enormous subtlety to build these steps. That is related to working with the out-breath. There's a general sense that you're there. You are not trying to become frigid or rigid and solemn about the whole practice. You are simply being there. When you sit, you actually sit. There's no room for speculation. You sit. You actually sit. You actually do breathe. The sense of simplicity is almost to the level of naiveté. You do things completely, wholeheartedly. You do things as they are. You actually get into things as they are, completely, correctly.

Your breath goes out and dissolves into the atmosphere, the space around you. Don't try to follow it out too far. Let it be. Then, there's a gap, some uncertainty maybe, and your breath comes in automatically, as a natural physiological function. At that point, don't try to bring your attention back into your lungs and your body particularly. Just let it be, let it drop. So your attention is dropped, your breath is coming into your lungs, and then another breath goes out and you go out with it again. It's very simple. There should be a sense of simplicity to the whole thing.

While you're meditating, all kinds of thoughts arise: thoughts about your life, your future plans, conversations with your friends and your relatives. All kinds of things come through the mind. Let them come through. Let them just come through. Don't try to say whether they are bad or for that matter whether they are particularly good. Just let them come through, as simply as you can. By letting them come through, you find that there's a sense of openness. You don't find your thoughts threatening or particularly helpful. They just become the general gossip, the traffic of your thoughts. If you live in a city, you hear the traffic coming through your windows: there goes a motorcycle, there



goes a truck. There goes a car, and then there's somebody shouting. At the beginning, you might get involved in or distracted by the noise, but then you begin to think, so what? Similarly, the traffic of your thoughts and the verbosity of your mind are just part of the basic chatter that goes on in the universe. Just let it go through.

Whether you sit and practice alone or in a group situation doesn't make any difference. If you find it difficult to meditate and want to stand up and walk out of meditation, the group situation does help you not to chicken out. It also provides a sense of fellowship.

At the same time, whether you are sitting in a group or physically alone, you are always sitting alone. You might have been told that even if you don't have a solid commitment to meditation, the good vibrations in the room will pick you up. The energy will uplift you in any case. But that's not possible. The sanity that one person experiences in the sitting practice of meditation is not transferable. That kind of cosmic hitchhiking doesn't exist. Everybody's in their own little vehicle, which is called a body. There's no room for anybody else in that particular body. Everybody has their own car, their own body, so that in fact you can't hitchhike. You need to acknowledge that, and the sooner, the better, because then you won't have unrealistic expectations. You will realize that you have to pull yourself together, rather than waiting for somebody to rescue you.

Sitting practice is independent and individual and a very lonely journey. Aloneness is the basic point. Whether you sit in a group or individual situation, there is a sense of loneliness. Sometimes you might feel completely isolated and cut off in your experience. But sometimes you might experience this aloneness as the basis of heroism. In the positive sense, you are making a journey, and nobody's telling you to make this journey. You are making the journey alone. The only help that somebody can give you is to tell you that others have made this lonely journey and that you could do so as well, in the same way.

This might seem like a very severe process, very strict. But it is very cheerful, because there's a sense of conviction that you aren't going to hitchhike; you are going to do this yourself. There is a powerful sense of celebration in this, which is the heart of the practice of meditation. The sitting practice of meditation is the expression of celebration, rather than falling into a trap or imprisonment. You no longer have to go through exaggerated sociological, psychological, or bureaucratic trips that we create for ourselves. You could get into the practice simply and directly, starting with the breath. Get into it, simply go along with it, and work with it. That's the basic point of shamatha.

Having done that deliberate practice of relating with one's awareness, simply and directly, without question, then you begin to relate to sound, smell, sight, and every

experience that you have in the sensorial world with exactly the same awareness. You see things simply and directly. You're with them and with your breathing. You're simply there, very simply and very directly there. There are no interpretations: Is this going to be good enough? Am I making mistakes? No such questions arise if you are being simple enough. The questions come from looking, questioning, lying back, analyzing, trying to make sure. Questions only arise on the basis of how to secure your basic ground as ego. If there is no ego-oriented question, there are no other questions. Instead, your practice is a statement, somewhat. It is extremely direct and deliberate. The basic point of shamatha is this sense of deliberateness. You are actually doing something. You are getting into this particular process, without making sure that what you're doing is okay. Things are actually taking place almost of their own accord, very simply and directly. That is meditation.

**Excerpt on Shamatha**  
**From the chapter “Competing with Our Projections”**  
**From *The Lion's Roar: An Introduction to Tantra***  
**Chögyam Trungpa; Edited by Sherab Chödzin, pp. 92-95**

[page 92] The meditation practice in the hinayana goes right along with what we have been describing philosophically. Meditation practice at this level is establishing a relationship with yourself. That is the aim of meditation. There are various techniques for doing that. It is not a question of achieving a state of trance or mental peace or of manufacturing a higher goal and a higher state of consciousness at all. It is simply that we have not acknowledged ourselves before. We have been too busy. So finally we stop our physical activities and spend time—at least twenty minutes or forty-five minutes or an hour—with ourselves.

The technique uses something that happens in our basic being. We just choose something very simple. Traditionally, this is either the physical movement of walking or sitting or breathing. Breathing seems to have the closest link with our body and also with the flux of emotions and mental activities. Breathing is used as the basic crutch. This is the hinayana way of relating with oneself to begin with.

When we talk about making a relationship with ourselves, that sounds quite simple. But in fact it is very difficult. The reason we are unable to relate with ourselves is that there is fundamental neurosis that prevents us from acknowledging our existence—or our nonexistence, rather. We are afraid of ourselves. However confident or clever or self-contained we may be, still there is some kind of fear, paranoia, behind the whole thing.

Neurosis in this case is inability to face the simple truth. Rather than do that, we introduce all kinds of highfalutin ideas--[page 93] cunning, clever, depressing. We just purely bring in as much stuff as we like. And that stuff that we bring in has neurotic qualities. What “neurotic” finally comes down to here is taking the false as true. The illogical approach is regarded as the logical one. So just relating with ourselves in meditation practice exposes all this hidden neurosis.

That may sound fantastic. We might think there has to be some secret teaching, some semimagical method—that we can't expose ourselves just by doing something simple like breathing or just sitting and doing nothing. But strangely enough, the simpler the techniques, the greater the effects that are produced.

The sitting practice in hinayana is called *shamatha*. This literally means “dwelling on peace” or “development of peace,” but let us not misunderstand *peace* in this case. It does not refer to tranquility in the sense of a peaceful state. *Peace* here refers to the simplicity or uncomplicatedness of the practice. The meditator just relates with walking or breathing. You just simply be with it, very simply just be with it.

This technique is especially designed to produce exquisite boredom. It is not particularly designed to solve problems as such. It is very boring just to watch one's breathing and sit and do nothing; or walk, not even run, but just walk slowly. We may think we have done that many times already. But usually we don't just breathe and sit and walk. We have so many other things happening at the same time, millions of projects on top of those things. But in this case we relate to the boredom, which is the first message of the nonexistence of ego.

You feel as if you are in exile. You are a great revolutionary leader. You had a lot of power and schemes and so on, but now you are in exile in a foreign country and you're bored. Ego's machinations and administration have no place in boredom, so boredom is the starting point of realization of the egoless state. This is very important.

Then at some point, within the state of boredom, one begins to [page 94] entertain oneself with all kinds of hidden neuroses. That's okay, let them come through, let them come through. Let's not push neurosis away or sit on it. At some point, even those entertainments become absurd—and you are bored again. Then you not only draw out the discursive, conceptual side of hidden neurosis, but you begin to become emotional about the whole thing. You're angry at yourself or at the situation you managed to get yourself into. “What the hell am I doing here? What's the point of sitting here and doing nothing? It feels foolish, embarrassing!” The image of yourself sitting on the floor and just listening to your breathing—that you let yourself be humiliated in this way—is terrible! You are angry at the teacher and the circumstances, and you question the method and the teaching altogether.

Then you try more questions, seeking out another kind of entertainment. This involves believing in mystery. “Maybe there is some kind of mystery behind the whole thing. If I live through this simple task, maybe it will enable me to see a great display of higher spiritual consciousness.” Now you are like a frustrated donkey trying to visualize a carrot. But at some point that becomes boring as well. How many times can you seduce yourself with that? Ten times, twenty times? By the time you have repeated the same thing seventy-five times, the whole thing becomes meaningless, just mental chatter.

All those things that happen in sitting meditation are relating with ourselves, working with ourselves, exposing neuroses of all kinds. After you have been through a certain amount of that, you master the experience of breathing in spite of those interruptions. You begin to feel that you actually have a real life that you can relate to instead of trying to escape or speed [along without having to connect with it]. You don't have to do all those things. You can be sure of yourself, you can really settle down. You can afford to slow down. At this point you begin to realize the meaning of pain and the meaning of egolessness and to understand the tricks of ignorance that the first skandha has played on you.

So shamatha meditation practice is very important. It is the key practice for further development through all the yantras of Buddhism.

**Trapping the Monkey**  
**From *The Teacup and the Skullcup*:**  
***Chögyam Trungpa on Zen and Tantra***  
**Chögyam Trungpa, pp. 71-80**

In discussing Zen and tantra, we should first understand what seems to be their common ground and affinity: the practice of meditation. Zen and tantra can be understood if we understand basic meditation practice and its meanings and applications. Since both Zen and tantra belong to the Buddhist tradition, they both have that process. The Sanskrit word *dhyana*, which is connected with the word “zen” means “concentration,” “stillness of mind,” or “dynamic stillness;” and the Sanskrit word *samadhi* means “absorption,” or “entering further into a wakeful state.” So dhyana comes first and samadhi comes later.

According to Buddhist tradition, when we talk about meditation, we are not referring to meditating upon something or entering into a particular state. Fundamentally, meditation is about training the mind without using any technique. Meditation is a process of training, and that training is the goal as well as the path. Such training is very gradual, very slow, but very definite at the same time. There is a sense of simplicity. One cannot just embark immediately on the practice of Zen, or dhyana practice, but one has to go through the beginning of the beginning, which is called hinayana discipline, or the narrow path. This is very important. So dhyana, or Zen, could be divided into three categories: the beginners level, the intermediate level, and the final level.

At the beginner’s level, there is what is called “training your mind.” The mind is like a crazy monkey, which leaps about and never stays in one place. It is completely restless and constantly paranoid about its surroundings. The training, or the meditation practice, is a way to catch this monkey, to begin with. That is the starting point. Traditionally, this training is called *shamatha* in Sanskrit, or *shi-ne* in Tibetan, which means simply “the development of peace.” When we talk about the development of peace, we are not talking about cultivating a peaceful state, as such, but about simplicity. If we try to rush toward this monkey or to catch it by chasing after it, that exaggerates the monkey’s paranoia so that it is impossible to catch. The only way to catch this mind-monkey is to camouflage a trap with earth that is seemingly still. Then, hopefully, the monkey will step on that ground and become trapped.

Like the trap, the practice of the development of peace is one of imitating stillness. You are pretending to be still, although the mind is, of course, constantly jumping and restless. Nevertheless, that is the basic starting point, in which you use what you have:

your body, speech, and mind. That is, you use the breathing, your eyes, and the movement of your body as a way of camouflaging yourself in the stillness. But that doesn't mean that you have to stop breathing or completely stop moving.

Another form of camouflage is to go along with the rhythm, so that the stillness pretends to be movement at the same time. In this form of camouflaging, your mental attitude goes along with the breathing, and you visually go along with whatever is in front of your eyes. There is also in Zen a tradition of *kinhin*, or walking meditation, which is similar to the breathing practice. The only difference is that instead of a subtle sense of attention and wakefulness, in walking practice, the whole process becomes much more definite. The moment your foot comes down is more the point, and the sensation of your feet as they carry you around: touching the ground, lifting, putting weight on them, and so forth. Such practices at the shamatha level may almost seem to be competing with stillness, in that they use movement, but all of them are based on trying to capture this crazy monkey by setting a trap. Therefore, taking on the physical discipline of being still and the discipline of carrying out a certain schedule every day is necessary.

At the beginner's level, most of the emphasis is put on the sitting practice, on working with the breathing and walking. In everyday life, being awake and paying attention, bare attention, to what you are doing also becomes important. The way to do that is not so much by trying to slow down your physical movement or by deliberately trying to speak more softly, but by a sense of presence. It is by a glimpse of wakefulness, a sense of bare attention without any purpose or object behind it but just taking a look or a glimpse at oneself. In extending your arm, touching your cup, lifting and drinking; talking and experiencing speech, your own speech and other people listening to you; and in physical movement, you are constantly being there with just bare attention. In doing so, you just touch on the verge of that particular activity rather than wholeheartedly plunging yourself into heavy awareness practice. You are just touching the highlights—which acts as a kind of teaser, in that awareness is suggested or implied—rather than constantly plunging in really deeply, which provides further discursive problems—thoughts, rebounds, reactions, and all kinds of things.

So the idea is to touch just the verge of activities, just pinpoint the verge of activities, which tends to bring a very strange form of slowness or stillness, somehow, that is not deliberate. If you are trying to hold onto awareness very hard, then your activities become rigid rather than slow and peaceful. In this case, the practice is just touching the verge of awareness, which brings a sense of slowness and peacefulness.

We are trying to trap this mad monkey. We have no idea what this monkey is or where it is wandering or even who this monkey is; but at this point it seems to be unnecessary to talk about who or what this monkey is—we are just practicing our entrapment. That seems to be one of the first disciplines of the practice of meditation. It is a very important basic foundation for dhyana practice, or Zen practice, if you would like to call it that.

That seems to be the starting point. Before going on, it would be good to concentrate on trying to understand what we have already discussed and also to have a chance to sit and meditate, so that we have an idea of what we are discussing.

### **Selected Questions**

Student: How long should the beginner practice daily—short or long periods?

Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche: At the beginner's level it has to be a definite amount of time: traditionally, forty minutes...There is really no set pattern, but one should do a sizable amount of sitting practice. And of course, if there is more hesitation, then one has to push further; and if there is too much ambition, then one has to minimize.

S: I don't understand how to identify with the outbreath and why to identify with the outbreath rather than both in- and outbreath.

CTR: This is a particular technique called, "mind mixing with space." In this tradition, inbreathing has the notion of confirming one's existence and outbreathing is an expression of openness. On the outbreath, you have plenty of breath inside your lungs, so you can breathe out. There is a sense of generosity and a sense of not being paranoid or feeling under attack. The outbreath also has a sense of openness, expanding yourself into the atmosphere, into space. It is a gesture of letting go and a very literal attempt to imitate the notion of egolessness. Inbreathing is regarded as just a gap. You breathe in anyway, but your attitude is that it is just a gap, and you go along with the outbreathing. That is what is called the "mixing mind and space" technique....You see, the breathing is a sort of life force that takes place in space, according to this approach. It has nothing to do with anything inside your body, particularly, at all. That is the tradition of mind mixing with space.



# **Sitting Meditation**

**From *The Myth of Freedom and the Way of Meditation***

**By Chögyam Trungpa, Excerpts from pp. 44-59**

## **Simplicity**

Meditation practice is based on dropping dualistic fixation, dropping the struggle of good against bad. The attitude you bring to spirituality should be natural, ordinary, without ambition. Even if you are building good karma, you are still sowing further seeds of karma. So the point is to transcend the karmic process altogether. Transcend both good and bad karma.

...Therefore the attitude one brings to meditation practice should be very simple, not based upon trying to collect pleasure or avoid pain. Rather meditation is a natural process, working on the material of pain and pleasure as the path.

You do not try to use meditation techniques—prayer, mantra, visualization, rituals, breathing techniques—to create pleasure or to confirm your existence. You do not try to separate yourself from the technique, but you try to become the technique so that there is a sense of non-duality. Technique is a way of imitating the style of non-duality. In the beginning a person uses technique as a kind of game because he is still imagining that he is meditating. But the techniques—physical feeling, sensations and breathing, for instance—are very earthy and tend to ground a person. And the proper attitude toward technique is not to regard it as magical, a miracle or profound ceremony of some kind, but just see it as a simple process, extremely simple. The simpler the technique, [page 46] the less the danger of sidetracks because you are not feeding yourself with all sorts of fascinating, seductive hopes and fears.

In the beginning the practice of meditation is just dealing with the basic neurosis of mind, the confused relationship between yourself and projections, your relationship to thoughts. When a person is able to see the simplicity of the technique without any special attitude toward it, then he is able to relate himself with his thought pattern as well. He begins to see thoughts as simple phenomena, no matter whether they are pious thoughts or evil thoughts, domestic thoughts, whatever they may be. One does not relate to them as belonging to a particular category, as being good or bad; just see them as simple thoughts.

When you relate to thoughts obsessively, then you are actually feeding them because thoughts need your attention to survive. Once you begin to pay attention to them and categorize them, then they become very powerful. You are feeding them energy

because you have not seen them as simple phenomena. If one tries to quiet them down, that is another way of feeding them. So meditation in the beginning is not an attempt to achieve happiness, nor is it the attempt to achieve mental calm or peace, though they could be by-products of meditation. Meditation should not be regarded as a vacation from irritation.

In fact, a person always finds when he begins to practice meditation that all sorts of problems are brought out. Any hidden aspects of your personality are brought out into the open, for the simple reason that for the first time you are allowing yourself to see your state of mind as it is. For the first time you are not evaluating your thoughts.

One begins to appreciate more and more the beauty of simplicity. You actually do things for the first time *completely*. Just breathing or walking or whatever the technique may be, you just start doing it and working along with it very simply. Complications become transparent complications rather than solidified ones. So the first step in dealing with ego is to begin with a very simple way of dealing with thoughts. Not dealing with them in the sense of quieting them down, but just see their transparent quality.

Sitting meditation needs to be combined with an awareness practice in everyday life. In awareness practice you begin to feel the after-effects of sitting meditation. Your simple relationship with breathing and your simple relationship with thoughts continues. And every situation of life becomes a simple relationship—a simple relationship with the kitchen sink, a simple relationship with your car, a simple relationship with your father, mother, children. Of course this is not to say that a person suddenly is transformed into a saint. Familiar irritations are still there of course. But they are simple irritations, transparent irritations.

Little domestic things may not seem to be important or meaningful, but dealing with them in a very simple way is extremely valuable and helpful. If a person is able to perceive the simplicity as it is, then meditation becomes 24-hour-a-day work. One begins to experience a tremendous sense of space because one does not have to watch oneself in a very heavy-handed way. Rather you are the recipient of the situation. Of course you may still comment upon and watch this process but when you sit in meditation you just are; you do not use the breath or any other techniques. You are getting into the grip of something. Finally you do not need a translator any more, a watcher any more. Then the language is understood properly.

## **Mindfulness and Awareness**

Meditation is working with our speed, our restlessness, our constant busyness. Meditation provides space or ground in which restlessness might function, might have room to be restless, might relax by being restless. If we do not interfere with restlessness, then restlessness becomes part of the space. We do not control or attack the desire to catch our next tail.

Meditation practice is not a matter of trying to produce a hypnotic state of mind or create a sense of restfulness. Trying to achieve a restful state of mind reflects a mentality of poverty. Seeking a restful state of mind, one is on guard against restlessness. There is a constant sense of paranoia and limitation. We feel a need to be on guard against the sudden fits of passion or aggression which might take us over, make us lose control. This guarding process limits the scope of the mind by not accepting whatever comes.

Instead, meditation should reflect a mentality of richness in the sense of using everything that occurs in the state of mind. Thus, if we provide enough room for restlessness so that it might function within the space, then [page 49] the energy ceases to be restless because it can trust itself fundamentally. Meditation is giving a huge, luscious meadow to a restless cow. The cow might be restless for a while in its huge meadow, but at some stage, because there is so much space, the restlessness becomes irrelevant. So the cow eats and eats and eats and relaxes and falls asleep.

Acknowledging restlessness, identifying with it, requires mindfulness, whereas providing a luscious meadow, a big space for the restless cow requires awareness. So mindfulness and awareness always complement each other. Mindfulness is the process of relating with individual situations directly, precisely, definitely. You communicate or connect with problematic situations or irritating situations in a simple way. There is ignorance, there is restlessness, there is passion, there is aggression. They need not be praised or condemned. They are just regarded as fits. They are conditioned situations, but they could be seen accurately and precisely by the unconditioned mindfulness. Mindfulness is like a microscope; it is neither an offensive nor a defensive weapon in relation to the germs we observe through it. The function of the microscope is just to clearly present what is there. Mindfulness need not refer to the past or the future; it is fully in the now. At the same time it is an active mind involved in dualistic perceptions, for it is necessary in the beginning to use that kind of discriminating judgment.

Awareness is seeing the discovery of mindfulness. We do not have to dispose of or keep the contents of mind. The precision of mindfulness could be left as it is because it has its own environment, its own space. We do not have to make decisions to throw it away or keep it as a treasure. Thus awareness is another step toward [page 50] choicelessness in

situations. The Sanskrit word for awareness is *smriti* which means “recognition,” “recollection.” Recollection not in the sense of remembering the past but in the sense of recognizing the product of mindfulness. The mindfulness provides some ground, some room for recognition of aggression, passion and so on.

Mindfulness provides the topic or the terms or the words, and awareness is the grammar which goes around and correctly locates the terms. Having experienced the precision of mindfulness, we might ask the question of ourselves, “What should I do with that? What can I do next?” And awareness reassures us that we do not really have to do anything with it but can leave it in its own natural place. It is like discovering a beautiful flower in the jungle; shall we pick the flower and bring it home or shall we let the flower stay in the jungle? Awareness says leave the flower in the jungle, since it is the natural place for that plant to grow. So awareness is the willingness not to cling to the discoveries of mindfulness, and mindfulness is just precision; things are what they are. Mindfulness is the vanguard of awareness. We flash on a situation and then diffuse that one-pointedness into awareness.

So mindfulness and awareness work together to bring acceptance of living situations as they are. We need not regard life as worth boycotting or indulging in. Life situations are the food of awareness and mindfulness; we cannot meditate without the depressions and excitement that go on in life. We wear out the shoe of samsara by walking on it through the practice of meditation. The combination of mindfulness and awareness maintains the journey, so meditation practice or spiritual development depends upon samsara. From the aerial point of [page 51] view, we could say that there need not be samsara or nirvana, that making the journey is useless. But since we are on the ground, making the journey is extraordinarily useful.

## **Boredom**

We must use the human body as an analogy to describe the development of ego. In this analogy, the fundamental dualism, feeling, impulse and concepts are like the bones of the body. Emotions are like the muscles of the body and subconscious gossip and all the little mental activities are the circulatory system which feeds and sustains the muscles. So in order to have a completely functioning body we need to have a muscle system and a circulatory system and bones to support them.

We begin meditation practice by dealing with thoughts, the fringe of ego. The practice of meditation is an undoing process. If you want to dissect and examine the body of ego, you start by cutting a slit in the skin and then you cut through the arteries. So the practitioner who is not involved with credentials begins with an operation. Credentials

are an illness and you need an operation to remove them. With your sickness you are trying to prove that you exist. "I am sick, therefore I am real, I feel pain." So the operation is to eliminate the notion of being an important person simply because you are sick. Of course you can attract all kinds of attention if you declare that you are sick. Then you can phone your relatives and friends and tell them that you are sick and they will come and help you.

That is a very wretched way of proving your existence. That is precisely what the credentials do. They prove that you are sick so that you can have attention from your friends. We have to operate on this person to eliminate the credential sickness. But if we give this person an anesthetic, he will not realize how much he has to give up. So we should not use anesthetics at all. It should be like natural childbirth. The mother sees her child being born, how it comes out of her body, how it enters into the outside world. Giving birth to buddha-dharma without credentials should be the same; you should see the whole process. You are taken straight to the operating room. Now, in the operating theater, the first step of the operation is to make a little slit in the area of complaint with an extraordinarily sharp surgical knife, the sword of Manjushri, the sword of compassion and wisdom. Just a little slit is made, which is not as painful as we expected.

Sitting and meditating is the little slit in your artery. You may have been told that sitting meditation is extremely boring and difficult to accomplish. But you do not find it all that difficult. In fact it seems quite easy. You just sit. The artery, which is the subconscious gossip in your mind, is cut through by using certain techniques—either working on breathing or walking or whatever. It is a very humble gesture on your part—just sit and cut through your thoughts, just welcome your breathing going out and in, just natural breathing, no special breathing, just sit and develop the watchfulness of your breathing. It is not concentrating on breathing. Concentration [page 53] involves something to grasp, something to hold on to. You are "here" trying to concentrate on something "there." Rather than concentration we practice mindfulness. We see what is happening there rather than developing concentration, which is goal-oriented. Anything connected with goals involves a journey toward somewhere from somewhere. In mindfulness practice there is no goal, no journey; you are just mindful of what is happening there.

There is no promise of love and light or visions of any kind—no angels, no devils. Nothing happens: it is absolutely boring. Sometimes you feel silly. One often asks the question, "Who is kidding whom? Am I on to something or not?" You are not on to something. Travelling the path means you get off everything, there is no place to perch. Sit and feel your breath, be with it. Then you begin to realize that actually the slitting of the artery did not take place when you were introduced to the practice. The actual slitting takes place when you begin to feel the boredom of the practice—real boredom.

“I’m supposed to get something out of Buddhism and meditation. I’m supposed to attain different levels of realization. I haven’t. I’m bored stiff.” Even your watcher is unsympathetic to you, begins to mock you. Boredom is important because boredom is anti-credential. Credentials are entertaining, always bringing you something new, something lively, something fantastic, all kinds of solutions. When you take away the idea of credentials, then there is boredom.

.....boredom is important in meditation practice; it increases the psychological sophistication of the practitioners. They begin to appreciate boredom and they develop their sophistication until the boredom begins to become cool boredom, like a mountain river. It flows and flows and flows, methodically and repetitiously but it is very cooling, very refreshing. Mountains never get tired of being mountains and waterfalls never get tired of being waterfalls. Because of their patience we begin to appreciate them. There is something in that. I don’t want to sound especially romantic about the whole thing, I am trying to paint a black picture, but I slipped a bit. It is a good feeling to be bored, constantly sitting and sitting. First gong, second gong, third gong, more gongs yet to come. Sit, sit, sit, sit. Cut through the artery until the boredom becomes extraordinarily powerful. We have to work hard at it.

At this point we cannot really study the vajrayana or, for that matter, even the mahayana. We are not up to it because we have not actually made a relationship with boredom yet. To begin with we have to relate with the hinayana. If we are to save ourselves from spiritual materialism [page 55] and from buddha-dharma with credentials, if we are to become the dharma without credentials, the introduction of boredom and repetitiousness is extremely important. Without it we have no hope. It is true—no hope.

.....

## **The Way of the Buddha**

Boredom has many aspects: there is the sense that nothing is happening, that something might happen, or even that what we would like to happen might replace that which is not happening. Or, one might appreciate boredom as a delight. The practice of meditation could be described as relating with cool boredom, refreshing boredom, boredom like a mountain stream. It refreshes because we do not have to do anything or expect anything. But there must be some sense of discipline if we are to get beyond the frivolity of trying to replace boredom. That is why we work with the breath as our practice of meditation. Simply relating with the breath is very monotonous and unadventurous—we do not discover that the third eye is opening or that *cakras* are

unfolding. It is like a stone-carved Buddha sitting in the desert. Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens.

As we realize that nothing is happening, strangely we begin to realize that something dignified is happening. There is no room for frivolity, no room for speed. We just breathe and are there. There is something very satisfying and wholesome about it. It is as though we had eaten a good meal and were satisfied with it, in contrast to eating and trying to satisfy oneself. It is a very simple-minded approach to sanity.

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The Buddha's demonstrations of basic sanity were spontaneous. He did not preach or teach in the ordinary sense but, as he unfolded, the energy of compassion and the endless resources of generosity developed within him and people began to find this out. That kind of activity of the Buddha is the vipashyana practice that we are attempting. It is realizing that space contains matter, that matter makes no demands on space and that space makes no demands on matter. It is a reciprocal and open situation. Everything is based on compassion and openness. Compassion is not particularly emotional in the sense that you feel bad that someone is suffering, that you are better than others and that you have to help them. Compassion is that total openness in which the Buddha had no ground, no sense of territory. So much so, that he was hardly an individual. He was just a grain of sand living in the vast desert. Through his insignificance he became the "world enlightened one," because there was no battle involved. The dharma he taught was passionless, without aggression. Passion is grasping, holding on to your territory.

So our practice of meditation, if we follow the Buddha's way, is the practice of passionlessness or non-aggression. It is dealing with the possessiveness of aggression: "This is my spiritual trip and I don't want you to interfere with it. Get out of my territory." Spirituality, or the vipashyana perspective, is a panoramic situation in which you can come and go freely and your relationship with the world is open. It is the ultimate non-violence.

**Recollecting the Present**  
**The Path Is the Goal: A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation**  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, pp. 66-80**

**Shamatha Prerequisites – Making Friends with Oneself**

The basic approach to understanding the mind is a process of gradually making friends with oneself. That is the first step.

At first, we feel what we are and what we have is somewhat chaotic, and we feel alienated from ourselves. One sterile approach of traditional spirituality is to play heavily on one's inadequacy, one's weakness. You are encouraged to recognize that more and more, until you reach the point where you can't actually stand yourself. You get involved in all kinds of self-flagellation, self-blame. You feel poverty-stricken. You are filled with a sense of how bad you are, how badly you behave--how fucked up you are, basically. This is the trick that is played on you by some forms of traditional spirituality.

People in certain evangelical traditions, who are particularly interested in converting people to their faith, make use of this trick to make their teachings seem more glorious. They are unable to raise their doctrines or teachings any higher or make them any deeper or more direct and personal, so instead of raising the level of consciousness or of the doctrinal or meditative understanding of their teaching, they choose to lower the other area--that of the people they are dealing with. They reduce them lower and lower--to the level of sewage. Through doing that, their own level automatically seems to become higher, more impressive.

So they play on your guilt and your weakness and whatever emotional fuckedupedness exists in you. They tell you that if you keep going the way you are, you are going to get worse, you are already worse, you could get even worse than that, and eventually you will be no more than a turd if you don't pull yourself together. That is the kind of trick that has been played on people--which is by no means meditative or connected with spiritual practice in any way. It is a kind of spiritual-materialistic way of inspiring someone to embark on the spiritual path: to reduce them to nothing.

The approach of meditation is the opposite of that. In that approach, we give people a chance at least. At least we provide some kind of a handle or stepping-stone. There is a working base, there are possibilities, there is inspiration. There is something happening within one's state of being, which is meditation practice.



Nevertheless, the approach of meditation is not all that easy. You've got to do it yourself. The teachers and the teachings can only show you how to do it, that's the closest we can come. But then you have to do it yourself. You can't expect complete hospitality. Your car can only go as far as the garage; it can't drive you into the bedroom. Once your car has stopped in the garage, you have to walk to the bedroom; you have to take off your clothes, you have to get in bed. A certain effort is involved. No matter how tired and how helpless you are, the hospitality offered by your transportation doesn't carry you beyond that. Unless you fall asleep in your car, which often happens, both metaphorically and in actual fact.

So students are given as much assistance as possible, which consists in showing them the path. Showing the path in a down-to-earth, practical way is traditionally known as "grandmother's finger pointing." The grandmother is old and wise and knows how to handle the details of life, and she points with her finger and tells you to do this and this and this. "Grandmother's finger pointing" is a particular term of the Kagyü tradition of Buddhism in Tibet. Showing you how to do it in this way is the closest we can get to helping you along the path.

But there is a need for some acknowledgment and some willingness on the part of the student. You have to be willing to follow the grandmother's finger pointing. If that is the case, then the next question is quite obviously, what are we going to do? The answer is, practice meditation.

### **Shamatha versus Vipashyana**

There are two types of meditation practice. One is called *shamatha*, which means "development of peace." The other is called *vipashyana*, which means "development of insight." We discussed that in basic outline in the last talk. We cannot develop complete vipashyana unless we have some background as to what shamatha is all about. In terms of the metaphor of the tree we used earlier, shamatha is not cutting the branches or leaves of the tree. That comes much later. Before we do that, we have to acknowledge the basic *treeness*--the branchness, the leafness--how the whole setup is seen and experienced. That is an important prerequisite for vipashyana. We can't skip that point. We must discuss that before we discuss vipashyana, the development of insight.

### **Shamatha technique – mindfulness of the breath**

In shamatha, there is a meditative technique, which involves working on a natural resource--breath, your breathing. We start with your breathing. That is always available,

as long as you are alive. You always have your breath as you always have your heartbeat, whether you are excited or you are asleep or you are in a normal state. You always have to breathe.

Your breathing is the closest you can come to a picture of your mind. It is the portrait of your mind in some sense. It goes in and goes out--it sort of fertilizes itself so that the next breath can take place. It is not a stationary object. It moves and it stops and it moves again. It sustains the body; it is a source of life. Also it is the source of your speech and the source of your thinking. If your heartbeat stops, your breath stops, you can't think, you drop dead. So the breath is a statement of life and a statement of the mind at the same time. In order to eat, to smell food and chew it, you have to breathe. If you're tired, you breathe heavier. If you're relaxed, you breathe easy. If your neck is bent, you snore. If your sleeping posture is straight, you don't snore. When you are hungry, you breathe in a special way; when you're full, you breathe in a special way; when you feel happy, you breathe in a special way; when you feel sad, you breathe in a special way.

Breath is changing constantly, but at the same time it constantly keeps its rhythm. Breath, which is yearning for space, stops at the end of the out-breath. By surrendering the breath, the yearning for space, at the end of the out-breath, you get more space. Therefore you can live longer--you can take the next breath. You have two kinds of space. There is the outer space as you breathe out. And before you breathe in, there's a gap. You breathe in outer space, and then as you breathe in, you have another kind of space, which is the inner space within your bodily system. Then you have a gap and then you breathe out again. So there is action, stillness, action, stillness taking place constantly. Which is the portrait of your mind.

Therefore the breath is chosen as the basis for working on your practice of meditation. Working with the breath is recommended. The breath is not separate from you, but on the other hand, it is not quite you. Thus there are enigmatic qualities to the breath. And the same goes for your mind. Is your mind your mind? Maybe. But then what is you is uncertain. So we never actually come to a conclusion as to who is who or what is who. We just constantly hope for the best. Hopefully, we could survive, we could continue in this vague way. You might be extremely articulate and precise and sharp, but still you have no idea where all this comes from, where all this goes. But the basic point here is just that the state of mind has to match with the breath, you have to relate with the breath.

## **Mindfulness versus Concentration**

In the beginning stage of shamatha, you work with your breath, you don't concentrate on your mind. That is impossible to do. Actually, concentrating on your breath is also impossible, because your breathing shifts and changes, and so does your mind. So in connection with shamatha we prefer to use the word *mindfulness* rather than *concentration*.

Concentration has certain connotations. The idea seems to be that you focus on a particular object or a particular subject until you develop a complete photographic relationship with it; and then you can let go and the concentrated state of mind remains. This is very tiresome and very specialized and too industrious in some sense. Therefore Buddhist textbooks say that concentration is a dangerous word to use in connection [page 72] with the practice of meditation. Instead we refer to this practice as mindfulness.

If you are fully with your mind, you could be there, on the spot. But at the same time, you do not have to focus your whole system on one point of reference. In fact there is a very interesting dichotomy here, which comes from the fact that you have no understanding who you are. You don't know who *you* are. You haven't even got a clue, or that is the clue. Maybe we could use the clue as you. But that is as far as we get, rather than getting to the actuality of what *you* is all about. Therefore you cannot concentrate *your* mind. The closest you can come is to be mindful, mind full. The very vague state that exists, known as consciousness, has never seen itself, but it is there. It has never felt itself, but it moves, it happens. Now that state of what we call mind can be full. We can be mind full.

### **Mindfulness as Recollecting the Present**

The Buddhist scriptures talk about resting or abiding in recollection. The best English equivalent of this is *mindfulness*. "Recollection" in this case does not mean dwelling on the past but being in the present. That flow that takes place--you could be with it.

Our present state of mind is based on a reference point. Without a reference point we can't think, we can't eat, we can't sleep, we can't behave. We have to have some reference point as to how to eat, when to stop eating, how to walk, when to stop walking, how to conduct our life--which way? this way, that way, the other way, some other way altogether. All those choices are guided by a reference point. "This is good to do, therefore I am doing this; this is not good to do, therefore I am doing that." There are choices upon choices taking place constantly. Attending to those choices and their reference points is known as recollection, *smriti* in Sanskrit. This is not exactly bringing

the past to the present, but still in order to be in the present, you need memory, which is an automatic thing.

Our mind functions that way usually--in terms of reference point, which equals memory. In making your body function, there are reference points all the time: stretching your arm, lifting your cup and bringing it toward your mouth, tilting it a little bit, drinking, then tasting and swallowing. As you lift and stretch your arm, you do not forget to hold the cup. There is a coordination taking place, which is entirely based on memory. Without that we can't function. On that basis we have developed certain behavior patterns, which make it possible for us to handle our lives. This coordination enables body and mind to be synchronized. And that synchronicity is based on a recollection of the present. Recollecting the present in this way is called being mindful. Mind in this case is equal to recollection. Being mindful is being there, fully minded. If you have a full mind, you have a full reference point. Therefore you are *there*. You relate directly to the present situation, which is precisely what meditation—shamatha practice--is all about. Just being there, very simply, directly; conducting yourself very precisely, relating very thoroughly and fully.

## **The Gap**

The reference point in shamatha is the breath. The traditional recommendation of the lineage of meditators that developed in the Kagyü-Nyingma tradition is based on the idea of mixing mind and breath. This means that you should be with the breath, you are the breath. Your breath goes out and you go out. Your breath dissolves into the atmosphere and you dissolve into the atmosphere. Then you just let go completely. You even forget meditation practice at that point. You just let go. There is a gap. Then naturally, automatically, physiologically, you breathe in. Let that be the gap. Then you breathe out again. Out, dissolve, gap. Go out again, dissolve, there's a gap. Go out, dissolve, there's a gap. You continue to proceed in that way.

There is a moment of space, the gap. We could say there's a moment of weakness, if you like. The whole thing should not be too heroic. And then when you relate with the out-breath, there is a moment of strength. Then the moment of weakness: you dissolve, you have nothing to hang on to. Then you pick up doing something again--going out with the out-breath.

That is the basic technique of shamatha. It has to be very precise and direct.

## **Walking Meditation**

Then there is walking meditation, which has also been recommended. You walk mindfully. You pay heed to, say, your right leg. As your weight shifts, the pressure releases, and the weight is put on the left leg. So your right leg is free, and then you lift it off the ground, swing it. Then it touches the ground, presses the ground as your weight is put on it, and your left leg is released. That is also very precise. One does not have to walk like a zombie in order to do that. You walk with a reasonable natural rhythm; let it be natural, just as with the breath. When you walk that way, very precise decisions have to be taken: this is the time to put weight on this leg, then the other leg, and so on. So the whole process becomes very precise and very direct and very clear.

### **Discipline and Patience in Meditation**

At this point, you have no intention whatsoever in doing this. You are not thinking, "If I do this, I will attain enlightenment tomorrow." You have no concern about anything else but doing your practice of sitting or walking meditation.

This is what is called discipline in the Buddhist tradition and patience as well. Participating in that ongoing process without purpose behind it. Students are advised to do this in a very orthodox way, to pay full attention. But this doesn't mean that you have to be solemn or serious, particularly. If you are serious, that takes away your mindfulness. You get very busy being serious and you lose your mindfulness. Your mind has to be full, rather than one-eighth or one-hundredth. It has to be right there on the spot. We have the expression "Mind [page 76] your business," which means, "Leave me alone, let me be myself." At this point you mind *your* business. Just be there, directly and simply be there.

To do that is to experience the leaves that exist on the tree. You begin to find out who you are somewhat, or who you are not. Whatever--that particular metaphysical problem doesn't matter very much at this point. We can sort that out later.

What is your mind? Students might begin to think about this. As you practice, you might come to conclusions regarding hidden emotions that begin to come up to the surface like dead fish. And you might experience all kinds of contrasts in your point of view on the world, seeing it upside down, downside up. At one point, you might feel you are on top of the world; at another point, you might feel you are at the bottom of hell. The whole time the basic point is to be very precise.

### **Post Meditation**

This approach is not only for the sitting practice of meditation alone, which is heavily recommended, but it also applies after the sitting practice of meditation is over, to what is called the postmeditation experience. That is to say that your life and your commitment to the practice of meditation is not a matter of a patch here and a patch there that you are trying to sew together. Your life is committed to meditation overall, like a blanket. It is from twelve o'clock to twelve o'clock. Your life is completely infested with the practice of meditation. When you are eating, you eat. When you are washing your dishes, you are there with it, right on the spot. It is not a matter of trying to work with your breath and wash your dishes at the same time, which would be cumbersome, unnecessary. In the postmeditation, if you are washing your dishes, you do it properly, completely, fully. Be with that; be with the tap, with the water, be with the dirty dishes; be with your arms, your hands, your coordination with your mind. Be with the water and the faucet and the soap and the sponge. Let us be them together and make a good job of washing the dishes. It is a matter of being on the spot with everything that way. From that point of view, it is a life commitment, a twenty-four-hour job.

It has been said that you can't practice meditation without postmeditation mindfulness. Mindfulness throughout our lives when we are not doing sitting practice is also a part of the practice of meditation. One has to have some kind of self-consciousness in order to lead one's life properly, to be meditative.

Often the term *self-consciousness* is used pejoratively, which is not fair. Or we could say that there are different kinds of self-consciousness. One idea is that self-consciousness has to do with feeling guilty, feeling hurt, feeling pain. But that is not the kind of self-consciousness we are talking about. That kind of self-consciousness is a punishment to oneself. But that is more than self-consciousness. That is heavy-handed egotism. Something else is taking place there. The kind of self-consciousness we talk about in relation to awareness or mindfulness is just being yourself, simply. You possess two arms, you have a sink, you have dirty dishes, and you do a good job. Not for the sake of doing a good job. You just do it, and it turns out to be a good job by accident. That kind of self-consciousness is no problem. It is a way of handling yourself properly, being yourself. Once you take that kind of attitude, you just do it.

It's not a matter of being a great meditator who does a beautiful job of washing up. It's without praise, without blame. As long as there is a notion of trying to prove something, you have the painful kind of self-consciousness, self-consciousness in the pejorative sense. That is the case as long as you're concerned about the end product. "Look what a beautiful job I did. That's because I studied and meditated."

That is the kind of problem that a lot of Zen students fall into. There is some problem having to do with a sense of showmanship. "We sit and therefore we do a good job. Come to Zen!" It's like every Zen student is a self-existing Zen advertisement.

The basic point is to be precise and direct and without aim. Be there precisely. There is a need for mindfulness, which is the equivalent of self-consciousness, if you like--light-handed self-consciousness, which does exist. As long as we feel we exist--which we don't, but never mind about that problem; we actually don't exist, but we think we do, and that provides us with a working basis; we don't have to start 100 percent pure--as long as we feel we exist, let us be full. Let us begin that way. That seems to be the basic point for the practice of meditation. One *does* try; not try-try, but just try. It is a very special way, but it does not have to be a big deal, particularly. You just have this aura that you are part of this meditation livelihood--basically, that your life is the practice of meditation. In fact, you find it difficult to shake it off. You might say, "I'm sick of the whole thing; now I'm giving up my awareness and my meditation completely." Okay, do so. But then you find that something is haunting you constantly. You gave up meditation, but there you are--you have developed more awareness, more mindfulness. That always happens to people. So this is not a matter of something being imposed on you, but there is that element of something-or-other that goes on all the time.

It's like being in the world. You are in the midst of winter and you have that awareness; awareness of that wintry quality is there all the time. If you are in New York City, you don't have to meditate on it. You don't have to develop a special awareness of New-York-City-ness. You pick up the New-York-ness anyhow, whether you are indoors or outdoors. There is an overall awareness, that you are in that particular location. So it's more of a general climate than a particular effort. But that climate has to be acknowledged occasionally. That's very important.

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

**An Element of Magic, pp. 246-266**

[page 264] The unconditioned truth, or dharma, has extraordinary power. In the mahayana sutras, such as the *Heart Sutra*, that power is referred to as a spell, or mantra. At the hinayana level, that power is referred as merit. Practicing dharma is considered to be a meritorious deed, but the hinayana idea of merit is quite different from the ordinary idea of bargaining tit for tat, or the idea that if you do good, you're going to get a goody. It is more than a mere exchange in which you accumulate good karma so that you can have the reward of that good karmic action. Even at the hinayana level, the dharma has tremendous energy and power. Throughout the dharma there is hidden power and magic. According to the popular view of dharma, the idea that there is magic involved is, to say the least, corny, or even bizarre. But there is some kind of magic.

In meditation practice, we are tuning ourselves into an entirely different way of thinking, as opposed to our ordinary, samsaric way of thinking. We have decided to relate with the truth, to tune in to the dharma. Tuning ourselves in to the dharma, committing ourselves in to that stream or flow, means that we are automatically entered into a kind of spiritual power. It is not particularly exciting or extraordinary, but there is power [page 265] and mystical energy. The reason dharma is regarded as sacred is because its contents are outrageous. It is in touch with the energy or cosmic flow of the world.

Magic is the cause, and it is what we are creating in the simple practice of meditation. Through meditation we are putting that particular miracle into effect. So let us not regard meditation as a purely mechanical process that leads one to enlightenment. Instead, the essence of meditation is tuning oneself in to higher truth or magic. The practice of meditation as a way of tuning oneself in to higher truth can only be taught by a competent teacher who has the message and the personal experience handed down through the lineage. Otherwise, if meditation could be approached from a purely scientific level, we could quite possibly read a book on how to meditate and attain enlightenment. The reason that this is not possible is because of the abstract magical quality of the dharma, handed down from generation to generation. That magical



quality accompanies the experienced teacher, who has tremendous common sense and wisdom, and is the holder of the *vajra*, or the mystical power.

It is very important to know about the magical quality of meditation. While it is true that Buddhism is very scientific, ordinary, and extremely straightforward, nevertheless it has magical power. At this point, that mystical power may involve nothing more than employing a simple meditative technique—but in doing so, something happens to you. It is quite different from a mere imitation of the lineage. It is not that you are converted to Buddhism or become a true believer, and it is not that you happen to zap yourself, or that you convince yourself through the power of suggestion. It is that even the simplest teaching has power. Introducing this power or truth is called “turning the wheel of the dharma,” or dharmachakra.

When a person sits and meditates, it is a special situation, a sacred act. Patrül Rinpoche (1808-1887), a prominent Nyingma teacher and author of *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, said that even if you have impure thoughts in the meditation hall, those thoughts are still regarded as sacred thoughts. So in meditation, even the most impure, crude, or confused [page 266] thoughts are regarded as sacred. Discipline is important, whether you have accomplished that discipline or not. You may fall asleep on your cushion, or feel that you have not actually meditated at all. You may feel that as soon as you sat down on your cushion, you began to venture out all over the world, and the only thing that reminded you that you were meditating was that the gong rang and you realized you were supposedly meditating, at least physically. But even such daydreams are important. Viewing meditation as a sacred activity does not mean that the sitting practice of meditation has to be absolutely solemn and rigid. However, you should have the attitude that you are involved with a system and a tradition that is valid and has its roots in solid thinking. Meditation is a definite approach. It is an extremely valid thing to do.

### **The Four Foundations of Mindfulness, pp. 285-287**

In order to free ourselves from too much self-conscious involvement in the practice—in thoughts, sense perceptions, and emotional playback—a technique has been introduced called the “four foundations of mindfulness.” The four foundations of mindfulness are mentioned in texts such as the *Satipatthana Sutra*, or the *Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness*; and the *Visuddhimagga*, or *The Path of Purification* which [page 286] talk about the functions of your mind and how it can be worked with.

The four foundations are usually presented as “mindfulness of body,” “mindfulness of feeling,” “mindfulness of mind,” and “mindfulness of mental contents.” That

presentation has a slightly philosophical orientation, but in this discussion of the four foundations the emphasis is on meditation practice. Therefore, I have translated the four foundations as “mindfulness of body,” “mindfulness of life,” “mindfulness of effort,” and “mindfulness of mind.” The first foundation includes the body and other solid things, so I have called it “mindfulness of body.” The second foundation is about relating with life as a whole, rather than simply with the skandha of feelings, so I have called it “mindfulness of life.” The third foundation is based on the idea of mental concentration, so I have called it “mindfulness of effort.” The fourth foundation is based on “mindfulness of mental contents,” and since the abhidharma definition of mind is “that which can perceive its own contents,” I have called this foundation “mindfulness of mind.”

In some traditions, the four foundations are used to separate very precisely what you are experiencing in your meditation practice. Teachers may use the four foundations in that way, dividing up the different categories of awareness and attention, but mindfulness practice does not need to be that scientific.

The four foundations of mindfulness are not four different practices, but four stages of shamatha practice. Although all four foundations are [page 287] considered to be shamatha, they could also be considered to extend to vipashyana practice. The first foundation, mindfulness of body, is pure shamatha, because it only involves your own body and mind. You do not make an attempt to go out beyond that.

### **Body-Body and Psychosomatic Body, pp. 287-289**

In referring to mindfulness of body, we mean not only this particular body, but any form or body-ness. We mean all body-ness: the body-ness of grass and water and sun and moon and everything else. However, mindfulness of body does not mean that you should be aware of each and every body—there would be so many bodies to be aware of at the same time—it means being aware of the totality. It is a general understanding of where things are, rather than being aware of each hair growing on your head. We are not talking about multiple-awareness systems. Instead, the whole approach is simple and direct: just sit and meditate. You sit and meditate, and you relate with your breath—there’s no further promise. That is all we are talking about. It doesn’t matter if you are a beginner, or old and [page 288] accomplished. Since everybody is a professional samsara-dweller, in terms of samsara nobody is a beginner—everybody is a professional.

In the mindfulness of body, there is a need for solidness, presence, and groundedness. However, we might have difficulty with that. Although we possess a body—we sit on the

ground, we eat, we sleep, we wear clothes—there are a lot of questions about the particular body we think we have. We are uncertain as to whether it is an unconditional body or a body of conceptualization. An ordinary person's experience of the body, known as the psychosomatic body, is largely based on concepts or ideas of body, whereas an enlightened person's attitude toward the body, known as body-body, is a simple, direct, and straightforward relationship with the earth. In our case, we don't have much of a relationship with the earth. We may have some relationship with our body, but we are uncertain. We flicker back and forth between the body and something else. Different levels are going on at the same time: the undercurrent is enlightened, and the superficial aspect is confused, or samsaric.

The experience of psychosomatic body could be quite solid in terms of conceptualization and expectations. You think, "My body exists; therefore, I have to refuel it, entertain it, wash it." It may include a feeling of being. For instance, when you are meditating, you may feel your body resting on your cushion. You may feel somewhat settled, not particularly nervous or self-conscious. If you are tense, however, you may begin to perch on the ground like a bird on a branch. When there are demands being made on you, you feel less of your body and more of your tension and nervousness. Even if you feel your body sitting on the ground and relaxed, it is not actually the body per se sitting on the ground, but your psychosomatic body.

It is your psychosomatic body sitting on the ground, because somehow sitting on the ground gives you ideas. You are doing the sitting down, but at the same time you are not doing it. Your mind is shaping itself in accordance with your body, so your mind is sitting on the ground, your mind is wearing a pair of glasses, your mind is having a certain hairdo, or wearing certain clothes. It is all mental activity. From that point of view, everybody is a self-portrait. That is known as the psychosomatic body. Since that psychosomatic body exists, activity takes place according to that body.

Whatever we do in our life, we are affected by the mind. Our true body is being pressured by the speed of the mind. Consequently, although you have the possibility of sitting properly, on this very spot, in a non-[page 289]psychosomatic way, the whole situation has been brought together by that same driving force. It has been set up by that psychosomatic system. So fundamentally, the whole thing is psychosomatic. This is not regarded as a short-term sickness, but sickness in the long run, in terms of samsara.

A hang-up of some kind has brought you to sitting practice. The desire to study the teachings arises because you begin to be aware of your hangups; therefore, you would like to create a further hang-up to clear the existing hang-ups. That is the process. You never relate directly until the level at which you have flashes of the essential nature of

mind. Until that point, anything you do is always by innuendo. So not only is the disease or hang-up psychosomatic, but even when you are healthy, it is psychosomatic. That is, you are infected by psychosomatic problems already, and disease is something extra, like yeast growing on your back. Therefore, in order to relate to the experience of body directly, the practice of mindfulness of body is suggested.

In meditation practice, we are trying to include this psychosomatic, mind-imitating body; we are going along with that bodylike attitude. Sitting practice has been suggested, practiced, and proven to be the best way to work with that. In sitting practice, the basic technique is working with the breath. Your breath is your physical body from the point of view of mindfulness of body. Sensations of all kinds go along with the breath, including pain, aches, and itches, as well as pleasurable feelings. Since all that goes along with the breath, the breath is the leading point. The idea of mindfulness is simply being precise as to what you are experiencing. However, those experiences are not regarded as your actual body's experiences. At this point, you are in no position to experience your body at all—that is impossible. Your bodily experiences are just thoughts: the thought of pain, the thought of itch, and so forth.

### **Well-Being of Body, Speech, and Mind, pp. 298-303**

The basic approach of the mindfulness of life is that what goes on with your body and your state of consciousness is worthy of respect. There is a feeling of well-being. You see further subtleties, and sense perceptions are more appreciated. Mindfulness of life is rediscovering your world. You develop reverence and respect, which is more than just an attitude; it is something you actually experience in your relationship to yourself and to the world. You are able to experience magic, majesty, beauty, and well-being not just in the meditative state, but in ordinary states as well. That experience is based on being able to see the process of contact with the phenomenal world, which is divided into preparing, proceeding, and touching.

It is important to describe the idea of well-being clearly, as there are several notions of well-being. It may mean that you are secure, and because you are secure, you can afford to relax and to extend yourself. Well-being may be based on a feeling of power, meaning that you are ready to defend yourself or conquer others. It may mean you are on top of the world, that you feel extremely healthy and physically comfortable. You have had a good meal; the clothes you are wearing are elegant; your company is exciting and amiable; everything is completely secure. In this case, well-being is similar to that which is felt by somebody who is on vacation or at a ski resort. Well-being in terms of the meditative state is unlike any of those. In the case of the second

foundation of mindfulness, well-being is based on appreciating your own existence, rather than being conditioned by that or this.

There are several analogies for well-being in the scriptures. Well-being of body is like a majestically solid mountain with no mist and no rain. Wellbeing of speech is like a stringed instrument disengaged from the strings so that it no longer has any desire to communicate with the musician. Well-being of mind is like a great lake with no ripples, no waves, and no wind. Well-being is simple, majestic, and uninterrupted.

[page 299] The three types of well-being are referred to in the scriptures as *chokshak namsum*. *Chok* has the feeling of perkiness or cheerfulness. *Chok* is also a synonym for a soup ladle. A soup ladle is uniquely curved, with a definite shape and its own self-expressive perkiness, and you can hold it in your hand. *Shak* means “rest,” or “put down.” The combination, *chokshak*, is fundamental well-being, rather than conditional well-being. It is not based on comfort or entertainment. In fact, *chokshak* is not based on any conditions at all. *Namsum* means “three aspects,” so *chokshak namsum* means “three aspects of well-being.”

*Chokshak* is egoless and free from dualistic notions. Nevertheless, there is a personal experience of immediateness. You are not concerned with security, but at the same time, there is consciousness and there is body. Although we talk about “letting go” or the “death of ego,” that is at the philosophical level of greater vision. Obviously, in our ordinary experience, there is the world and there is you. Recognizing this does not mean that you are going against the Buddha’s teaching of egolessness. There is definitely something there, which is the working basis and magic of the path. You cannot negate the fact that you taste a good cup of coffee. You cannot say that there is no coffee and there is no “you” to taste it—there are such things! Mindfulness of life is based on that kind of immediate appreciation. The meditation practice is to learn to appreciate the immediateness of what is happening right here and now.

### **Sudden Flash: The Abstract Watcher, pp. 308-311**

There is a way to bring your mind back, which we might call the “abstract watcher.” The abstract watcher does not have an aim or goal; it is just mind being aware of itself. In mindfulness of effort, there is a sudden flash of the watcher’s being there. At that point, you don’t think in terms of getting back to the breath or trying to get away from thoughts. You [page 309] do not need to have a concrete and logical mind that repeats to itself the purpose of sitting practice. You don’t need any of that. Instead, there is a general sense that something is happening here—and you are suddenly brought back.

Without even a name or an idea why, how, or where, there is a quick glimpse or change of tone. That is the core of mindfulness of effort.

Mindfulness of effort cannot be manufactured. It comes along when there is discipline, which sets the general pattern of the sitting practice. Once you have the attitude or idea of discipline, then there's something that reminds you: *that! that! that!* "That what?" and "What is that?" no longer apply. Just *that!* So the mindfulness of effort triggers an entirely new realm of thinking, a new state of consciousness that brings you back automatically to sitting practice. It brings you back to the mindfulness of breathing and the general awareness of well-being.

Right effort is instant effort. You could call this sudden kind of effort "leap," "jerk," or "sudden reminder." You could call it "amazement," or "sudden, abrupt amazement." It could also be referred to as "panic," or "panic without conditions." It is unconditioned panic because it comes to you and changes your whole course. The idea is not to try to maintain that sudden instant of mindfulness, to hold on to it or to cultivate it, but to get back to the meditation. Rather than nursing the reminder or entertaining the messenger, you should relate to what the messenger has to say. That sudden flash of effort, or instantaneous reminding trick, is universal to all practices of meditation, from hinayana practices up to the highest level of tantra. Therefore, effort is the most important point in the practice of meditation.

The trick of bringing your mind back does not only apply at the time of sitting meditation; it also applies to postmeditation experiences, or meditation in action. It applies to day-to-day living. In the case of eating, for instance, you don't meditate on the breathing while you are eating—you just eat. When that flash comes up, you relate with the food. In daily life, that sudden jerk happens constantly.

Mindfulness of body creates the general setting, bringing meditation into the geography of your life. Mindfulness of life is about making a personal relationship with the meditation practice. Mindfulness of effort makes both the mindfulness of body and the mindfulness of life more valid and workable. With mindfulness of effort you are clearly on the path. Effort is like the wheel of a chariot, which connects the chariot and [page 310] the road. It's like the oar in a boat, which connects the boat to the water. Effort is the connection that makes things move forward and proceed. So mindfulness of effort—the sudden reminder or sudden jerk of mindfulness—is extremely important for the practice of meditation.

The sudden jerk of effort is not about improving your meditation, but about bringing it back to the ground, sitting on a cushion and breathing. With that sudden jerk, you are

meditating properly; without it, you could be sitting for five hours a day and find that you had actually gotten back to your breathing practice only fifteen minutes during the whole period. Instead, you were reading your own autobiography and doing all kinds of other things.

You cannot bring about mindfulness of effort just by hoping a flash will come to you and you will be reminded. You cannot leave it up to that flash of effort to just happen to you. You have to set up some kind of general alarm system, so to speak, or general atmosphere of effort. That atmosphere of effort is important. You need to be diligent and not have the faintest notion of looking for any form of entertainment, none whatsoever. You have to give something up. Unless you give up reservations, it will be virtually impossible to develop instantaneous effort or to have it dawn on you. So it is extremely important to have respect, appreciation, and the willingness to work hard.

You need to understand the virtue and importance of effort. Diligence is an extremely powerful thing. If you are willing to give birth to such an inspiration, or if you have that conviction already, then that spontaneous, abstract flash of effort occurs more easily. In terms of the flash, you have to develop the sense that you are completely possessed and haunted, that you can't get rid of it, rather than that you have to cultivate it—which is an entirely different approach.

In the mindfulness of effort, appreciation is said to be similar to falling in love. When you are in love with a person or care for a person, your whole attitude is open toward that person. You get a very sudden abstract flash of your lover as being *that!* *That* is what first comes into your mind. Later you might ponder it, enjoy your daydreams, or entertain yourself by thinking about that person in detail, but those are afterthoughts. The idea is that first there is this jerk. You don't have to figure out where it came from; it just happens to you. You don't have to figure out, "Because I love this person, this thought occurred to me." You don't have to say that—it is in your being. You are in the state of love, rather than being in love with [page 311] somebody. It is almost as if you were in love with yourself. There is always such a result with openness: something flashes. It is like a bubble rising in the water. In the mindfulness of effort, sudden flashes of *that* and *me* happen.

In the Buddhist tradition, the two main analogies for right effort are that of a person in a love and a hunter. A hunter hunting for animals doesn't have to think of a stag or a mountain goat or a bear or any particular animal—he is looking for *that*. As the hunter is walking, if he hears a sound and senses the subtle possibility of finding an animal to shoot, he doesn't think of which animal he is going to find—just the feeling of that comes up. Anybody in any kind of complete involvement—at the hunter's level, the

lover's level, or the meditator's level—has that same kind of openness. Such openness brings about sudden flashes, an almost magical sensation of *thatness*—without name, without concept, without idea.

That openness is the most important aspect of effort—awareness happens afterward. Within openness there is an instant flash of effort, concentrated effort, and awareness follows. Having disowned that sudden experience, awareness occurs very slowly and brings things back to level. If you are able to relate with this sudden mindfulness of effort, then you have no problem as to where you are coming from—you came from somewhere. That is what I mean by disowning the experience. You do not entertain the messenger and you do not have to find out where you came from. Instead you could be like a snowflake released from the clouds, just about to come down onto the ground. You have no choice: you are going to land on the ground in any case. It feels very real.

### **The Transcendental Watcher, pp. 320-322**

Mindfulness of mind is based on a somewhat glorified watcher—a transcendental or divine watcher, as opposed to an ordinary watcher. The term *divine* does not mean that a foreign agent is coming to help us, but that a superordinary watcher supersedes the ordinary watcher. The ordinary watcher is simply the state of consciousness that watches what is happening within us, takes note of it, evaluates it, and tries to compare whether it is good or bad, should happen or shouldn't happen. The ordinary watcher has feelings of fear, aggression, impatience, and all kinds of things mixed up with its ordinary watching. In contrast, the transcendental watcher is simple self-consciousness. It is not clumsy self-consciousness that feels me-ness, bigheadedness, and a faint element of embarrassment. It is simply being aware and conscious of what is happening, completely and totally. The superordinary watcher is able to see what is happening while the application of awareness of breathing is taking place. Knowing intelligently what is happening is still not complete freedom from the point of view of mahayana or vajrayana; nevertheless, it is the only way to develop the potential of prajna, or discriminating-awareness wisdom.

The best way you can begin to practice this is to be aware of what you are doing. There's no other way than that. From there, you begin to develop more space. Being aware of what you are doing does not have to become heavy-handed. You can just do it. Just be aware of what you are doing. Just be there and then disown: touch and go. You don't have to utilize that experience for something spiritual or metaphysical. For example, you might see that you are washing your dish. You see it. That's it. Disown it. Don't cling to it. Just continue. Don't break your bowls and plates; do it properly. Then look at yourself doing it properly. Go ahead and see yourself rinse them and put them



into the cabinet. Just look at yourself. Look! That is all the mind can accommodate at that time. If you try to add something else, you will probably lose your grip or miss a speck of dirt. We are not secularizing mindfulness by doing this; instead, we are creating sacredness out of the secular. Whatever you are doing, such as driving, using the computer, or buying postage stamps, does not have to be a religious act—but whatever you do is dignified.

Effort comes into practice at the beginning and at the end—and during, occasionally. It is not that you have to strain to hang on to your effort and push yourself. A journey back and forth is taking place, rather than effort constantly being maintained. Otherwise there is no practice, and the whole thing becomes a big deal of effort all the time. There's no experience, no meditation, just effort. You are being effortful rather than actually meditating. So in meditating, something other than effort is happening: an alternating, shifting situation is taking place.

If you are one-hundred-percent effortful, you blow the whole thing. There's nothing left but a lump of tense muscle sitting in the middle of a field. If you are kneading dough and you knead too hard, you no longer have dough in your hand, you are just pushing on the board. So in working with the dough, you have to make some compromises. Otherwise, your effort ruins the whole thing. It doesn't work.

At the beginning, pushing yourself to the practice takes effort. During the practice you occasionally check that you are still keeping up with it. You may try to make effort continuous and solid, like a pipe running through the ground, but it is not solid, it is pulsating. In the end, you decide to deliberately let go of that particular project. So effort in the [page 322] Buddhist tradition of meditation is based on an enormous trust in impermanence. Nothing is continuous, but just let it be that way. Death and birth are taking place moment to moment. Let us work with that rather than work toward eternity.

This particular technique of Buddhist meditation allows a certain amount of subconscious gossip. Such gossip is not at the level of repeating or replaying events of the past or expectations of the future; it is simply taking note of what is happening at this very moment. It is keeping track of the nowness. That much gossip seems to be necessary at this point. We cannot expect complete perfection without any thought process or thought movement at all. If we try to do so, we are inviting the further confusion of real subconscious-gossip. We are engaging in fistfights with ourselves while we are sitting. In mindfulness of mind, mind is that which knows, that which takes note of what is happening. While still being fully mindful and steady, ongoing and patient, it is

keeping track of the sitting practice of meditation and the techniques that have developed.

### **Temporary Meditative Experiences: Five Basic Nyam, pp. 323-324**

There are five basic nyam. In addition to these five, there are three further, more fundamental categories of nyam, making eight altogether. All eight of these nyam are temporary as opposed to permanent. The first five nyam are experiences of temporary physical or psychophysical sensations, rather than more fundamental states of being, or states of mind.

**BROOK ON A STEEP HILL.** Within the first set of nyam, the first nyam is the speed and movement in your mind, which is like a brook on a very steep hill. The first nyam is very busy, like water rushing down from the hills with no turbulence, none whatsoever, just like a pipe running from a gravity feed.

**TURBULENT RIVER.** In the second nyam, your relationship with your mind is like a turbulent river in a gorge between two rocky valleys. This river has lots of rocks with waves hitting all kinds of big stones. The second nyam has an appreciation of its existence. The turbulent river hitting those rocks reemphasizes the waterness of it, whereas the rushing brook is very speedy, very fast, but also quite nonchalant.

**SLOWLY FLOWING RIVER.** In the third nyam your mind is like a slowly flowing river. The thought processes that go on in your mind have become familiar and easy to live with. You are familiar with what's happening with your practice, so there are no particular problems and no particular speediness. It is smooth, like a big river slowly flowing.

**OCEAN WITHOUT WAVES.** The fourth nyam is the experience of absolute stillness. It is an experience of meditative absorption, which is like an ocean without waves.

[page 324] **CANDLE UNDISTURBED BY THE WIND.** The fifth nyam is somewhat extra. It is a reconfirmation of the accomplishment of the fourth. That is, the fifth nyam confirms that what you have experienced as stillness is real stillness, like a burning candle undisturbed by wind.

If you look at these experiences from the ordinary point of view, you might think the fourth nyam is nicest, the third is nice, and the others are undesirable. But in actual fact, they are all temporary experiences, so all of them are the same. They are just experiences that occur in your state of mind, rather than one state of mind being higher

or more spiritual than another. So there are no differences, none whatsoever, absolutely not! They are all just temporary experiences.

### **Temporary Meditative Experiences: Three Fundamental Nyam, pp. 324-326**

The second set of nyam is more fundamental, in a sense. These three nyam denote the progress you are making, although the experiences themselves are by no means permanent. You are still not arriving at, or achieving, a permanent state of realization. These temporary experiences are the landmarks, somewhat, of one's growth, one's spiritual path, and one's meditation. However, it is very tricky if you try to re-create them. They are temporary, so you can't hang on to them. That would be like seeing a signpost on the highway saying "New York City," and thinking you had gotten to New York City already, getting out of the car and settling down at the bottom of the signpost.

**BLISS OR JOY.** The first of the three fundamental nyam is bliss, or joy. In Tibetan it is dewa. You are completely refreshed, like after a long day of skiing when you have had a hot bath, a good dinner and good wine, and you are settling down to bed. It is completely refreshing, and there is a feeling of absolute well-being. Physically, tingling sensations and pulsations may happen in the body. Psychologically, there are little twinkling flashes of light and joy, and feelings of being good, extremely cheerful, and highly inspired. In everyday life, you might feel that you can do anything you want, and do it beautifully. Whatever work you are doing, whatever handicraft you are doing, all of it is inspired.

In comparison, in the second foundation of mindfulness, mindfulness of life, the quality of well-being is not all that dramatic. It is just a sensation of being, of having a body and some kind of ground. You experience [page 325] a much more solid sense of well-being and security based on the inspiration of the teachings.

In the first fundamental nyam, the experience of bliss is romantic and flimsy. It has a flowing quality. The only solidity would be if you were self-perpetuating it and you began to feel that it was ongoing. In sitting practice, your experience is a tremendously pleasant one of radiating love and kindness to everyone. It feels extraordinarily rewarding to sit and practice, and you feel that you are worthy to be here. The first fundamental nyam includes all those extraordinarily good and absolutely splendid feelings. However, the experience of bliss could be an obstacle if you regard it as permanent. If you feel that everything comes along very easily, thoroughly, and smoothly, there is no room for effort. It is like moving from the mountains to an apartment, where everything is automatic and easy. It begins to make you very impatient and soft. Therefore, you have to come back to the fourth foundation of mindfulness practice, the mindfulness of mind.

**LUMINOSITY.** The second fundamental nyam is luminosity. The Tibetan term selwa means “luminosity,” “brilliant light,” or “clarity.” However, luminosity does not mean that you literally see a brilliant light; it means that you are able to work with a tremendous amount of energy. You are able to create a link between your body and mind, a link between the psyche and your physical existence. It is as if you were the mechanism to run the universe. You create the link between that and this. You feel very able, extraordinarily able, in the sense that you could order the universe. It is not as abstract and joyful as the first fundamental nyam, but it is more industrious. It is pragmatic in that you are able to handle anything that comes along, without disjuncting the experience. You are able to make things workable. There is tremendous confidence and light, a farseeing quality, panoramic vision.

**NONTHOUGHT.** The third fundamental nyam is called mitokpa, which means “nonthinking,” or “without thought.” This does not refer to a complete state of being without thoughts, but rather to a quality of stillness. There is a quality of solidity and stillness that does not want to move. Any experience that occurs in your state of mind is very still and solid. Nothing happens.

This nyam could bring tremendous depression. You may feel that you are almost going backward, that you are stuck somewhere, with nothing [page 326] happening. Everything is getting very monotonous and repetitious. It is difficult to summon energy. Even a suggestion of moving outward is too tiring to think about. You just want to stay in one spot. You may feel drowsy and faintly aggressive. At the same time, this nyam could lead to a state without thoughts. As you sit, everything is so smooth and ordinary. In this case, you are not excited or depressed. There are no thoughts, no irritations. When the end of meditation occurs, you find it very easy to stop. You are not getting into a trancelike state of meditative absorption, but there is a quality of stillness and solidity.

Like the first five basic nyams, these three fundamental nyams are also temporary experiences. They can be perceived as temporary by mindfulness of mind, that self-conscious awareness. The idea is not to dispel these experiences nor to cultivate them, but just to acknowledge them: “This is happening. This is happening. This is happening.” You do not have to try to pigeonhole or categorize. Instead, whenever any extraordinary experience occurs, you could relate with it simply as a temporary experience, or nyam. That seems to be the point.

**Excerpts on Progress in Shamatha**  
**From *Mindfulness in Action* by Chögyam Trungpa**  
***Compiled, arranged, and edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian***

**Life Force, Excerpt pp. 80-82**

Sometimes, the truth of life makes us indignant. We feel that we deserve more happiness, less hassle, or whatever it is that we want. So we complain about our life. But in the midst of that complaining process, we find that we are suddenly quite connected to reality, quite sane. In the midst of enormous bundles of insanity, there's a sudden realization of sanity. We have to face facts, simply and precisely. That is what we're talking about in terms of the mindfulness of life. It is the experience of being alive, which can happen in the midst of irritation or chaos.

When there is more chaos, we have a tendency to check back with ourselves, to be sure we're coping okay with the chaos. The process of checking back or checking in with ourselves connects us with immediate reality. It's good to do this: Just check in, without any purpose. The checking in is a kind of jerk. When you check in and evaluate the whole thing, the situation may seem extremely messy. You may find some leaks in your pipes. But just check in. Just look, look, look, constantly.

This checking-in process is part of the practice of meditation. When you meditate, you may find a lot of chaos in your thoughts and feelings, as well as conflict, uncertainty, and a feeling of being a fool. At the same time, you begin to hear sounds more clearly, you begin to see more clearly, and you begin to feel your body more distinctly. When you check in with this process, you realize that there is a feeling of being very alive in the midst of all this chaotic activity. You also begin to recognize that this feeling of being so alive is connected with being sane, being fully there. If you check in again and again, then slowly, slowly, you connect with sanity. Sanity in this case is being in contact with reality at its fullest, as much as possible. It is being fully mindful, to begin with, and beyond that, there might be a greater experience of freedom.

Feeling your life force is an experience of being. It brings your mind into focus, into one-pointedness. You may wonder if it's really this simple, or you may feel that you've learned a new trick. In fact, it is the first trick and the last trick at the same time. It runs throughout the practice of meditation, from top to bottom, beginning to end.

When you meditate, you actually are meditating even when you think you're not. You have no choice, in fact. In your mind, you may be miles away from your meditation cushion, but you're still sitting there. There is still communication between your body

and your mind. It might seem like a schizophrenic level of communication to be aware of both the irritations of your body and your distant thoughts. However, you are having a real experience of life, a real experience of reality, whether you like it or not. There is some magic, if you'd like to put it that way, some force of life that takes place. It doesn't matter whether you have an enormous pornographic show going on in your mind or whether you are having a delicious mental meal miles from the meditation hall. In actual fact, you are still sitting on your meditation cushion or in your chair. If you check in with yourself, you'll realize this.

When you have a lot of mental distraction, it is very helpful and necessary to relate with the breath. The awareness of your breathing accentuates that you are sitting on the cushion. Breathing is also a powerful symbol of being alive. If you stop breathing, you are dead, so experiencing breath is experiencing life, constantly. When you mentally lose track of where you are, that's precisely the point where you need the discipline of following your breath. Then, as you begin to notice that you are breathing, it brings you back to the aches and pains in your body. You are actually alive and struggling.

There is a connection to your life, some sanity that truly takes place when you meditate. Sitting on a cushion or in a chair and practicing meditation is more than a token gesture. It is an expression of commitment, an expression of truth, honesty, and genuineness. That commitment is the basic aliveness in our practice. There is so much speed in our society. We have so many things to do. We jump back and forth from one thing to another. The practice of meditation teaches you to slow down and appreciate your life. Appreciate your partner's cooking. Appreciate your kids. Appreciate your job. Appreciate the weather. Experience everything in its own way.

When you drink hot tea, it burns your lips and your tongue. That's reality. There's a good lesson: how to drink tea. Everything in life is literal, direct, and personal—and very demanding. But that demand seems to be necessary. Your commitment is to be present. You're going to experience life as it is, rather than your expectations from the past or your desires for the future. You're going to relate with life in the fullest sense.

## **Touching the Surface of Mind, pp. 91-96**

[page 91] Another foundation of mindfulness practice is being mindful of the mind itself. This is not as mysterious as it may at first sound. Mind reflects our thoughts, feelings, sensations, and emotions, which is its experiential or experience-based aspect. Gaps, or glimpses of clarity without any particular content, also appear in our minds. I refer to these as the intuitive aspect of the mind. These glimpses are just part of our basic makeup, rather than being particularly insightful.

We experience both aspects of mind—the experience-based aspect and the intuitive glimpses—in the practice of meditation. It may be somewhat challenging to sort out how to relate to these two qualities in our practice. We may wonder whether we should focus on the experiential or the intuitive aspects of our minds. Should we pay attention to the mental and emotional upsurges or to the momentary clarity without content? This can be a source of restlessness in the practice of meditation. We are unable to decide which of these to rest with.

[page 92] In the sitting practice of meditation, thoughts and emotions come in the form of memories, habitual thought patterns, fantasies, and expectations for the future. This experiential aspect of our minds is quite provocative and entertaining, and it is an easy source of preoccupation. The intuitive aspect, or the clarity, is refreshing and provides relief from the torrent of thoughts and emotions. The emotional reference points in our minds change from one topic to another, and they also alternate with this sense of relief. We experience the gears shifting from one mood to another. Occasional clarity occurs between one mood or fantasy and the next.

We ask ourselves whether we should pull back from those preoccupations and try to be a good boy or girl, clean and pure. However, sometimes our boredom suggests to us that we might enjoy these little entertainments. If we can involve ourselves in fantasies of this and that in our practice, it almost provides a break from the tension of sitting. Sometimes we feel hypnotized by our memories, and we find that we can kill time this way. Three minutes go by, five minutes go by, or maybe even ten minutes go by. When we indulge in this way, we feel both some satisfaction and a sense of guilt at the same time.

Is there a conflict between the emotional and mental content and the occasional gap? Which should we focus on? When you experience mental confusion and emotional cloudiness, you might hesitate to come back to the awareness of the breath. You might like to remain there exploring, finding out about the emotional cloudiness. In fact, you can relate to both of these situations: the empty clarity and the emotional and mental content. In working with the mindfulness of mind, you don't need to choose one or the other.

The intensity of our conflicting emotions is a workable situation, and it is also a source of developing our mindfulness. Without some juicy material to work on, as we discussed in the previous chapter, there's no journey. The practice of meditation consists of working mindfully with those conflicting thoughts [page 93] and emotions as well as with the occasional gaps that may create a feeling of relief. Without those two, there is

actually no meditation. I think people often have the wrong concept of meditation, thinking that once you become a professional meditator, you won't have to think a single thought. The only activity will just be to b-r-e-a-t-h-e. But that could be quite zombie-like, quite horrific. You utilize the conflicting emotions; you don't cut them off. You may cut through the hard core of ego. But the emotions are just the tentacles, which could be pickled!

So the technique of mindfulness of mind is to be with whatever happens. The movement of breath, the experience of the body, and the fickleness of thoughts all take place simultaneously. Obviously, you don't stop breathing when you think. Mindfulness here is a larger notion of covering all the areas of breathing and the thought patterns.

Concentration usually implies that we have one focus rather than splitting our awareness between more than one object at a time. But in this case, at the level of mindfulness of mind, our concentration or overall awareness can develop a more panoramic quality. It's a beam of light that expands or widens when it reflects off an object. With our light beam of mindfulness, we touch the highlights of the emotions and the thoughts, we touch the highlights of the breath, and both are seen simultaneously by the mindfulness of mind. You may hear sounds; you may see visions and sights of all kinds; you may have thought patterns of all kinds. All of those are connected by a binding factor, which is the mind. Therefore, whenever there is mind, there are possibilities of being aware of whatever is happening, rather than reducing the focus of our concentration to one level alone. Overall, this is what we mean by mindfulness [page 94] of mind, where the cognitive mind is actually functioning in its utter precision.

Awareness of the glimpses of clarity in the mind is also direct and simple. When mind is preoccupied with an emotional theme that involves you personally, you are very taken up with those preoccupations that arise. In contrast to those thoughts there are gaps, which don't make a big deal about *you*. The gap is just a change or a shift. It's like transferring the weight from your right leg to your left leg. When that transfer is taking place, there's a gap where the weight isn't exactly on either foot. It is not particularly mystical. It is just a shift, a change of emphasis. That gap in our meditation is also touched by the presence of awareness.

The totality of the mindfulness of mind is like sunlight simultaneously reflecting on both the mountain peaks and the valleys. Such awareness isn't regarded as a big deal, as such. You don't constantly refer back and tell yourself, "I'm being *aware* now." "Now, I'm being *fully* mindful." Nevertheless, a quality of being there takes place, which goes along with a quality of what could be called "touching." One touches the thoughts. One touches the emotions. One touches the gaps. An even distribution of mindfulness takes



place, in that whatever one is touching, there is also the simultaneous experience of touching the other aspect, or the other shore.

You are gently touching everything throughout your state of mind. It's like stroking a kitty-cat. As your fingers move down the cat's back, you feel the individuality of each hair, but you also feel the continuity, the totality of the hair. This approach involves sharpness, precision, and simultaneous awareness of many different individual components. It's like looking at your toothbrush. You don't have the actual, literal, gross awareness of each bristle on the toothbrush. Yet you see all of those bristles, all of the toothbrush, completely, at once. Your mindfulness is direct and literal, but at the same time it is panoramic.

There is total awareness without being selective. You might [page 95] find this idea of mindfulness rather perplexing, and you might ask what being mindful really means in this context. Are we still talking about being fully committed to the very moment? In the practice of the mindfulness of mind, if you try to be selective and find *the* famous experience of mindfulness, as you look harder and harder, you begin to lose the sense of mindfulness altogether. There seems to be no such thing as real mindfulness at all. The whole thing becomes illusory. You find yourself peeling away the layers of the onion. You think you are being mindful, but you are *watching* yourself being mindful. Then you're watching yourself watching yourself being mindful. And then you're watching yourself doing all that. There's a constant, constant, constant reflection back and forth, and finally you get completely bewildered. At that point you may have to give up the idea of developing or cultivating "true" mindfulness as such. You just accept what goes on and make the best of it, so to speak. In this way, you leave the world undisturbed, rather than trying to disentangle everything too efficiently.

This approach, from one point of view, is not at all demanding. It's a light touch rather than hard work. From another point of view it is *extremely* demanding. If you put all of your effort and energy into something, it occupies your mind, which makes you feel better. However, if your mindfulness practice is touching and experiencing everything without being heavy-handed, you feel suspended in the middle of nowhere. It seems very dubious. You may feel that there is more to go, more to develop in your practice. You may feel that you've only done something in a halfhearted way rather than being fully engaged. But you are there, constantly, at the same time, without any aggression.

If we push ourselves to the level of enormous concentration, if we try to push ourselves painfully and exert ourselves more than is necessary, it becomes aggressive rather than meditative. Meditation practice, however, is regarded as the action of nonaggression, which is a light touch.

[page 96] Nonaggression is quite different from an absence of conflict. When you look from the meditative or mindful point of view, you see how even conflict can contain nonaggression. You might discover how the rugged desert of conflicts in your life could be quite still, quite peaceful. Cactuses are sticking up with thorns growing out of them, but those seeming threats are very earthy.

It's difficult to explain this logically. However, it's possible that the ups and downs we experience can in themselves become the evenness or equanimity of our experience. They can actually be a symbol of peace. The textures of conflict are not gentle, smooth, nor particularly soft. But *how* the challenges exist and how they present themselves is more important than the texture. Seeing in this way is precisely the meaning of mindfulness. You learn to look from an existential point of view—allowing things to exist—rather than trying to even them out or bulldoze the whole landscape. With this view, fighting or resistance isn't necessary.

It is possible to glide through the different landscapes of mind without becoming distracted or wooly-minded, because there is an actual experience of each moment. You develop enormous appreciation of the little things that happen in everyday life. Life becomes humorous and workable. Sound, sight, feelings, and experience altogether become *real*. Then, you never tire of looking at the same rock sitting outside your door. Each time you see it, it's refreshing.

If you paid less attention to what is happening, you might become dreamy. Things might become vague. In this case, however, there is actual contact, actual touch. You are touching the surface of mind very gently. At the beginning, it doesn't seem like a particularly heavy dose of mindfulness. However, in the long run, as you go on, this light touch makes a big impression on your mind.

**Cognition and Deeper Perception**  
From “The Outer Mandala” Chapter  
of *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Vol. 3*  
By Chögyam Trungpa, Compiled and Edited by Judith L. Lief

**Cognition, pp. 315**

Once we have the sense perceptions, we then make use of cognizing faculties of all kinds. As human beings, we perceive pain, pleasure, and indifferent sensations by using any one of those sense perceptions to cognize or re-cognize. We develop our mode of behavior patterns, including such things as the feeling that we want to cry, we want to complain, we want to absorb, we want to take advantage of things—the simple, ordinary level of experience. We conduct ourselves in that way.

**Deeper Perception, pp. 315-316**

Then we go beyond that a little bit, if we can. Along with those perceptions that happen to us, and the cognizing faculties that we possess, we cannot reject that there is deeper perception taking place. That deeper perception is full perception; it is the fresh experience of all of those perceptions. We begin to use smelling, seeing, hearing, and every perception not only as one of our sense faculties, but to experience some clarity. Ordinarily, hearing is often conflicting with tasting, smelling is conflicting with feeling, and thinking is conflicting with smelling. But we begin to experience the clarity and precision beyond those senses—beyond smelling, beyond hearing, beyond tasting. We begin to experience a kind of clarity that can govern all of those situations.

Ordinary experiences could be regarded as sometimes having a clouding effect. Hearing too much or tasting too much might have a numbing effect. But here, we are talking about going beyond that. Beyond ordinary perception, there is supersound, supersmell, and superfeeling existing in our state of being. This kind of perception can only be experienced by training ourselves in the depths of the hinayana. It can only be developed through shamatha practice, which clears out that cloudiness and brings about the precision and sharpness of the perceptions of hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, and all the rest.

In shamatha practice, we develop the precision of experiencing our breath going in and out; and in walking meditation, we experience the movement of our heel-sole-toe. That begins to bring out precision that goes beyond the cloudiness of seeing, smelling, and tasting. Meditation practice brings out the supernatural, if I might use that word. By

supernatural, I do not mean that you are going to see ghosts or become [page 316] telepathic or anything like that, but simply that your perceptions become super natural. You feel your breath; it is so good. You breathe out and dissolve your breath; it is so sharp and so good. It is so extraordinary that your ordinary techniques become superfluous. Usually we think of how to become smarter than somebody else, but with shamatha, we simply see better, hear better, and smell better.

Through shamatha, the best cognition begins to arise in your system and elevate your sense of existence. This happens purely through the means of being with your body, mind, and breath, through simply surviving on your meditation cushion. This process starts in the hinayana, so even at that point, your path is tantra already. Like tantra, the hinayana is continuity; it is dharana, or binding together. The continuity is already there, and the clarity and precision begin to come out of that continuity.

By experiencing the clarity and the precision of the hinayana, we begin to find ourselves in the realm of utter, complete, and thorough reality. You might ask, "What is reality?" Reality, in this case, means seeing absolutely clearly and thoroughly. You can clearly see how you conduct yourself, how you manifest yourself, how you perceive, how you see, how you hear, how you smell, how you taste, how you feel, how you think, and so on and so on. You might say this is nothing particularly extraordinary; it is how you operate anyway. You might even say that you could get the same result out of any form of training. But that is not quite so. You do not begin to experience the mandala principle automatically, without this kind of training.

## Cool Boredom

From *Mindfulness in Action* by Chögyam Trungpa

Compiled, arranged, and edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian, pp. 32-35

In everyday life, we habitually try to conceal the gaps in our experience of mind and body. These gaps are a bit like an awkward silence around the table at a dinner party. A good host is supposed to keep the conversation going with his or her guests, to put them at ease. You might talk about the weather or the latest books you've read or what you are serving for dinner. We treat ourselves similarly. We occupy ourselves with subconscious chatter because we are uncomfortable with any gaps in our conversation with ourselves.

The purpose of the practice of meditation is to experience the gaps. We do nothing, essentially, and see what that brings—either discomfort or relief, whatever the case may be. The starting point for the practice of meditation is the mindfulness discipline of developing peace. The peace we experience in meditation is simply this state of doing nothing, which is experiencing the absence of speed.

Often, in considering the practice of meditation, the question arises as to what you are meditating *on*. In this approach, [page 33] meditation has no object. You do work with your body, your thoughts, and your breath, but that is different from concentrating wholeheartedly on one thing. Here, you are not meditating upon anything; you are simply being present in a simple way.

The practice works with what is immediately available to you. You have your experience of being alive; you have a mind and you have a body. So you work with those things. You also work with whatever is going through your mind, whatever the content is, whatever the current issues are, whether painful or pleasurable. Whatever you are experiencing, that's where you begin. You also use your breath, which is part of the body and is also affected by mind. Breathing expresses the fact that you are alive. If you're alive, you breathe. The technique is basic and direct: you pay heed to breath. You don't try to use the mindfulness of the breathing to entertain yourself, but you use the mindfulness of breathing to simplify matters.

You develop mindfulness of the rising and falling of the breath. You go along with the process of breathing. In particular, you go along with each exhalation. As the breath goes out, you go out with it. And when the outbreath dissolves, you feel that you are

also dissolving. The inbreath is a gap, a space, and then you breathe out again. So there is a constant sense of going out and slowing down.

At the beginning, the technique may be somewhat fascinating, but it quickly becomes boring. You get tired of sitting and breathing, doing nothing again and again and again—and again. You may feel like an awkward fool. It is so uninteresting. You might resent having gotten yourself into this situation. You might also resent the people who encouraged you to do this. You may feel completely foolish, as if the cosmos were mocking you.

Then, as you relax a little bit, you start to call up past experiences, memories of your life as well as your emotions, your aggression and passion. Now you have a private cinema show, and you can review your autobiography while you sit. Then, [page 34] after a while, you might come back to your breath, thinking that you should try to be a good child and apply the technique.

In meditation we have the opportunity to meet ourselves, to see ourselves clearly for the first time. We have never met ourselves properly or spent this kind of time with ourselves before. Of course, we take time for ourselves; we go off to the country or the ocean for a vacation. But we always find things to do on vacation. We make little handicrafts or we read something. We cook, we talk, we take a walk, or we swim. We never just sit with ourselves. It's a difficult thing to do.

The practice of meditation is not merely hanging out with ourselves, however. We are accomplishing something by being there properly, within the framework of the technique. The technique is simple enough that it doesn't entertain us. In fact, the technique may begin to fall away at some point. As we become more comfortable with ourselves and develop more understanding of ourselves, our application of the technique becomes less heavy-handed. The technique almost seems unnecessary. In the beginning we need the technique, like using a crutch to help us walk when we're injured. Then, once we can walk without it, we don't need the crutch. In meditation it is similar. In the beginning we are very focused on the technique, but eventually we may find that we are just there, simply there.

At that point, we may think that the efficient system we've organized around our practice is breaking down. It can be disconcerting, but it's also refreshing. We sense that there is more to us than our habitual patterns. We have more in us than our bundles of thoughts, emotions, and upheavals. There's something behind this whole façade. We discover the reservoir of softness within ourselves.

At that point, we begin to truly befriend ourselves, which allows us to see ourselves much more honestly. We can see both aspects, not just the bright side of the picture, how fantastic and good we are, but also how terrible we are. Good and bad somehow [page 35] don't make much difference at this point. It all has one flavor. We see it all.

As your sympathy toward yourself expands, you begin to appreciate and enjoy simply being with yourself, being alone. Or at least you are not as irritated with yourself as you used to be! As you become ever more familiar with yourself, you find that you can actually put up with yourself without complaint—which you have never done before. Your thought patterns, subconscious gossip, and all of your mind's chatter become much less interesting. In fact, you begin to find them all very boring. However, this is slightly different than our normal experience of boredom, because behind the boredom, or even within it, you feel something refreshing: cool boredom. You're bored to death, bored to tears, but it is no longer claustrophobic. The boredom is cooling, refreshing, like the water from a cold mountain stream.

Hot boredom is like being locked in a padded cell. You are bored, miserable, and irritated. You will probably experience lots of that in your meditation practice. Beyond that, however, with cool boredom, you don't feel imprisoned. Cool boredom is quite spacious, and it creates further softness and sympathy toward ourselves. In that space, we are no longer afraid of allowing ourselves to experience a gap. In other words, we realize that existence does not depend on constantly cranking up our egomaniacal machine. There is another way of existing.

**The Portable Stage Set**  
**The Path Is the Goal: A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation**  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, pp. 88-103**

We should probably discuss the various types of backgrounds with the help of which we operate in our lives. These backgrounds are vague, uncertain, dubious for us. I am talking about the kind of background we create in our minds in every situation--when we enter somebody's room, when we sit by ourselves, when we meet someone. This kind of background is partially made up of the sense of basic space that we carry around with us all the time, and it is also colored by our particular mood of the moment. It is a kind of portable stage set that we carry around with us that enables us to operate as individuals. We constantly produce a display, a theatrical scene. For each situation we create the appropriate backdrop and the appropriate lighting. We also have the appropriate actors, mainly ourselves, who appear on the stage. We carry on this kind of play, this theatrical game, all the time, and we are constantly using our antennae, so to speak, to feel out the total effect our stage set is having.

In vipashyana meditation, we deal with this kind of background, our portable theater. Whether we are a big deal or a small deal, there is always some kind of a deal happening. Vipashyana works with that big deal or small deal, that great deal, large deal, littlest, expansive, cunning, or clever deal--whatever setup you have chosen to establish. In practicing vipashyana, instead of keeping very busy setting up your theater, your theatrical stage, your attitude is changed so that there is a sense of questioning how we produce this background, why we do it, whether we have to do it or might not have to do it. This is still on the level of inquiry in some sense, but at the same time it is experiential.

In vipashyana, you as the practitioner experience the game that you are playing in setting up your theater. From that you pick up a new way of dealing with the whole thing without its being a game. This is the sitting practice of meditation. When you sit, you don't sit for the sake of creating a display or a particular effect. It's a very private thing in some sense. In sitting practice, you relate to the radiation you are creating. Before you begin sitting, this radiation was being created purely in order to impress or overpower the audience. In this case, the situation is reversed. You experience your own radiation face to face rather than playing with it in order to impress or overpower your audience. You have no audience when you sit and meditate, or you are your own audience.



Even in this situation, however, it is possible for subtle little tricks to take place. You congratulate yourself for sitting and being such a good boy or good girl, and try to make that into a display. It's very subtle. The games can be peeled away one after the other like the layers of an onion. The games continue to happen, obviously, but somehow you can deal with this.

You have had the basic training of shamatha practice and from there you begin to expand. I would like to stress again that the shamatha experience is extremely important. Without that foundation, the practitioner is not at all in a position to experience vipashyana. But with that foundation, the practitioner can begin to expand the meaning of mindfulness so that it becomes awareness. Mindfulness is being fully there, and awareness is a total sensing. In awareness, all happenings are seen at once. This could also be called panoramic vision.

Panoramic vision, in this case, is having a sense of the entire radiation that we create. We possess a certain mannerism or a certain style that is reflected outward. When you sit, this becomes purely a thought process. You develop a sense of appreciation of things around you, not one by one, but totally. It's like light radiating from a flame or a light bulb that expands outward. However, we find that this radiation has no radiator. If you look into who is doing all these tricks, producing this display, this radiation, there is nobody. Even the *idea* of somebody doesn't exist. There is a pure sense of [page 91] openness, a sense that you can relate with the living world as an open world.

At this point, we are only just introducing the vipashyana experience. Later we will go into it in greater detail. What it is necessary to understand now is that the vipashyana experience does not proceed to the level of a game, but remains purely at the level of experience, the living experience of awareness (as opposed to mindfulness).

Awareness, in this case, is not awareness of self but awareness of the other. The difference between the two is that if you are aware of yourself, it is awareness of yourself being aware of yourself aware of yourself aware of yourself. There is some kind of incest taking place. Whereas, if you are just being aware, that is openness, a welcoming gesture. You include your doings within your realm of awareness, so you don't punish or you don't watch. You don't question, particularly, but you just be. That seems to be the basic approach or the basic policy in insight meditation, vipashyana.

**Transition from Shamatha to Vipashyana**  
**An Excerpt from Continuing Your Confusion**  
**The Path Is the Goal: A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation**  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, pp. 20-25**

In the case of breathing, there is a particular tradition that has developed from a commentary on the *Samadhiraja-sutra* written by Gampopa. There we find the notion, related to breathing, of mixing mind and space, which is also used in tantric meditative practices. But even at the hinayana level, there is a mixing of mind and space. This has become one of the very important techniques of meditation. Sometimes this particular approach is also referred to as *shi-lhak sung juk*, which is a Tibetan expression meaning “combining shamatha and vipashyana meditation practices.”

Combining shamatha and vipashyana plays an important part in the meditator’s development. Mindfulness becomes awareness. Mindfulness is taking an interest in precision of all kinds, in the simplicity of the breath, of walking, of the sensations of the body, of the experiences of the mind-of the thought process and memories of all kinds. Awareness is acknowledging the totality of the whole thing. In the Buddhist tradition, awareness has been described as the first experience of egolessness. The term for awareness in Tibetan is *lhak-thong*, and there is an expression *lhakthong dagme tokpe sherap*, which means “the knowledge that realizes egolessness through awareness.”

This is the first introduction to the understanding of egolessness. Awareness in this case is totality rather than one-sidedness. A person who has achieved awareness or who is working on the discipline of awareness has no direction, no bias in one direction or another. He is just simply aware, totally and completely. This awareness also includes precision, which is the main quality of awareness in the early stage of the practice of meditation.

Awareness brings egolessness because there is no object of awareness. You are aware of the whole thing completely, of you and other and of the activities of you and other at the same time. So everything is open. There is no particular object of the awareness.

If you’re smart enough, you might ask the question, “Who is being aware of this whole thing?” That’s a very interesting question, the sixty-four-dollar question. And the answer is, nobody is being aware of anything but *itself*. The razor blade cuts itself. The sun shines by itself. Fire burns by itself. Water flows by itself. Nobody watches--and that is the very primitive logic of egolessness.

I'm sure the mahayanists would sneer and think that this is terrible logic, very crude. They probably would not hold high opinions of it. But from the point of view of hinayana, that's extraordinarily fantastic logic. Razor blade cuts itself; fire burns itself; water quenches thirst by itself. This is the egolessness of vipashyana practice.

Traditionally, we have the term *smriti-upasthana* in Sanskrit, or *satipatthana* in Pali, which means resting in one's intelligence. This is the same as awareness. Awareness here does not mean that the person practicing vipashyana meditation gives up his or her shamatha techniques of, say, *anapanasati*--mindfulness of the coming and going of the breath--or of walking in walking meditation practice. The meditator simply relates with that -discipline in a more expansive way. He or she begins to relate with the whole thing. This is done in connection with what is known as the four foundations of mindfulness: mindfulness of body, of mind, of livelihood, and of effort.

If you relate with every move you make in your sitting practice of meditation, if you take note of every detail, every aspect of the movement of your mind, of the relationships in everything that you do, there's no room for anything else at all. Every area is taken over by meditation, by vipashyana practice. So there is no one to practice and nothing to practice. No you actually exists. Even if you think, "I am practicing this particular technique," you really have no one there to relate to, no one to talk to. Even at the moment when you say, "I am practicing," that too is an expression of awareness at the same time, so you have nothing left, nothing whatsoever, even no "I am practicing." You can still say the empty words, but they are like a lion's corpse, as it has been traditionally described. When the lion is dead, the lion's corpse remains lying in the jungle, and the other animals continue to be frightened of the lion. The only ones who can destroy the lion's corpse are the worms who crawl up from underneath and do not see it from the outside. They eat through it, so finally the lion's corpse disintegrates on the ground. So the worms are like the awareness, the [page 24] knowledge that realizes egolessness through awareness--vipashyana.

## **Talk Four: Shamatha and Vipashyana**

### **The Path of Meditation Seminar by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche**

**Naropa Institute, July 1, 1974**

Hopefully, that we have established some basic understanding about practice of meditation on the basis of shamatha level of simplicity and directness. Seem to be necessary to also present the question of vipashyana, which comes after shamatha practice of meditation. According to the tradition, that vipashyana is regarded as further experience of egolessness and developing prajna, which means “transcendent knowledge.” That compared with shamatha, that vipashyana is more concerned with, in dealing with one’s inquisitive mind and taking full advantage of it, and exploring that and developing and so fundamentally or finally that sense of exploration of one’s mind become openness, egoless.

That there is a problem that we have a general concept or idea that one should control oneself constantly until the point that one begin to obey one’s basic given training, and accomplishing training is trying to tighten up unnecessary habits and trying to create a different form of imprisonment. And that has become problem and misunderstood a great deal. So the question here that what we presenting in terms of vipashyana, is sense of freedom, sense of enlightenment, if you like to call it. That sense of freedom is exploring the sense of basic awareness which is basic, fundamental state of our mind of inquisitiveness.

That when we talking about inquisitive mind, we are talking about sense consciousness, which includes the sixth sense, that is, the “sem” that we talked about the other day, the mind. That you’d hear sound, you would smell smell, that you would taste, that you have a feeling, bodily sensations, and you have the sense of being alive. That there is a mental faculty also functions, that those six sense consciousness are need to be used. As so far what we have been discussing in this area, is that those sense perceptions are disregarded, sense consciousness are disregarded. And we haven’t even got that level yet. That we are simply just working on the basic simplicity of keeping our attention with the breath and keeping our experience as simple as possible.

Having developed already some sense of simplicity, and some sense of accuracy in our practice, that thoughts come and go, but however, that they are expression of simplicity. They come and they go, and so what? However, I am sitting here on a meditation cushion and practicing meditation, which is boils down to absolutely doing nothing, and watching your thoughts come and go and then disappear, they come back. And you have your basic breathing is taking place, that sense of precisions as to what’s

happening there is completely wakeful, because whenever you are drifted your mind into thought patterns of the past, present or future, conceptual memories, or whatever, you come back. You come back very simply. Just come back to the breath and very simply to the breath, not analyzing, not visualizing breathing but just simply doing it, precisely, very ordinarily doing it, very consciously, conscientiously in fact doing that. And day to day and repetition after repetition, years and years and weeks and weeks and days and says, hours and hours, that we keep on doing that.

A lot of problems come up which seemingly to be complicated, confused, but however, if you could get back to that particular practice level of simplicity, that complication is dissolved by itself. Because things are so complicated, therefore they take care of themselves. And what you have afterwards is nothing. Very simple situation. That complication took care of themselves being complicated, and there is nothing left behind, anything at all. So things become somewhat encouraging.

But on the other hand, there is possibilities of memories, emotions, aggression, passion, fantasies of all kinds begin to churn up. But even though those are also part of the complications, they take care of themselves. We have nothing to do with them, or we have everything to do with them, whatever. Doesn't matter who is who, what is what, but just simply, simply keep sitting and doing it. That's the shamatha experience of simplicity that is taking place there. It's very honest thing to do. We are not taking advantage of our emotions. We are not dreaming up any new experience or exotic, rich, fantastic dreams, spiritually or otherwise. We are not inventing anything new at all. We are simply just *being* at what we are, what we have. We have our body, we have our breath, we have our mind, and just deal with those three principles. Just very, very simply.

And because of that simplicity, then you begin to find new dimension of experience, what is known as the vipashyana experience, or "lhagthong" in Tibetan, which literally means "development of insight," or, literally speaking, it means "clear seeing, seeing things very clearly, very precisely, extremely clearly and precisely." Lhagthong. "Lhag" means "superior" or "clear" or "exquisite," "thong" means "looking, seeing." So "seeing things exquisitely, very precisely." And a shift between shiné and lhagthong or vipashyana, shamatha, is: in the level of shamatha, that there is very specialized attentions be put on your practice and just breath and breath. Very direct and very simple. Very narrow from that point of view. And in the case of awareness of vipashyana is concerned, it's a slightly extended version of openness. That you begin to find that there is lots of room apart from the object of concentration or breath or your bodily sensations or your whatever you have, that there is lots of more room, great deal of

more room that there is, is experiencing the environment, as well as experiencing the object of our attention, namely our technique of breathing.

According to Buddha, that he described the state of lhagthong or vipashyana is state of clear seeing, egoless, because that we don't have to concentrate on our particular thing too heavy-handedly, but we begin to realize the environment around our practice, around our breath. So when you start with your breath, you begin to experience that environment around you is also part of the breathing, part of the whole basic being. You begin to feel the space around you, sense of being-ness is extended at the level that there is also state of awareness that we all have our antenna sharpened constantly. That you begin to feel that if you sit and meditate very honestly, earnestly, you begin to find somebody is watching behind your back, and looking at your neck, and examining you. And you begin to feel that there is heavy, heaviness coming down to you. You begin to feel that your bodily sensations are as if you are wearing heavy coat or turban, and all kinds of tensions happen in the back of your neck and your buttocks, your legs, and your arms feels awkward. And your body becomes more than there is, at some point. But those are the vanguard of that of the vipashyana experience. That there is something is taking place around you apart from the object of concentration, which is breath. There is something more than that is taking place, more than that is happening. Extended version of that is taking place.

And vipashyana is the seed or beginning point of developing meditation-in-action attitude. That you are able to extend your state of awareness to everyday life situation constantly. That being watchful, being aware of whatever you are doing in your life. But we can't just simply practice on the meditation-in-action level immediately, because we begin to find ourselves not practicing meditation, but we begin to find ourselves entertaining ourselves. That there is tension that is taking place. If you wash up dishes, that you begin to feel entertained by it. You have little spots of dirt to relate with, that you have a plate, that you have the soap, you have the faucet, the water tap. There is lot of things happening there, and the whole thing becomes somewhat delightful experience, and entertaining. That is become the problem, so we shouldn't try to practice meditation-in-action in early stages, which people would say, "well, whatever I do is meditation. I feel good about it. I do everything deliberately. I do my gardening, I do my piano, and I do my washing of dishes, I cook for my husband, my wife, whatever. And I take ride in countryside, I read books, and I feel that I am doing everything very consciously, and I feel very good, and I think I'm meditating."

Well, that's very tricky, and there are a lot of deceptions taking place in such kind of naïveté experience, that things hadn't happened in 100% level. Things are happening in a 50 – 50% level, which is not so good. If we are going to tread the path and going to

practice meditation properly and thoroughly and fully as the Buddha had experienced it, or given the message to us, we got to do it much better than that, much simpler than that, much more orthodox than that. That room for meditation-in-action is possible *of course*, but we have to prepare the ground for that before we do anything. We have to first find out what is the span of our awareness, span of our concentration, span of our watchfulness.

That there is a term “mindfulness” applies to shamatha experience, which is being fully there with our techniques and everything, being completely watchful. Then we have the term “awareness” which applies to vipashyana experience, the second stage. If you being too watchful, too mindful, it is possible you will lose your awareness. That is to say that if you are watching your highway more than necessary, you begin to miss the signposts around the highway, because you haven’t been aware of them, aware of that you are driving, but you have been mindful of your driving, watchful of your driving, mindfully driving that you are so much concerned with your driving, and watching the guy in front of you or behind you too much that you lost your exit, because you haven’t been *aware* of it. So that’s the situation relationship, that it is necessary, to *begin* with, to develop that kind of caution and directness of watching the guy in front of us and behind us as we drive on the highway and keep your speed limit or whatever, and watch for cops. [laughter]

But then you need something else than that, that that is just adolescent level of being careful; but you can be much greater being careful is developing *awareness*, aware. In the Tibetan term, there are two words. The first one is called “trenpa,” which literally means “recollection, memory, sharpness,” like our mindfulness, trenpa. And then there’s another word called “sheshin.” “Shenpa” is “knowing.” “Shin” means “as it is.” So “knowing things as they are.” There is some kind of sense of perspectives involved, and so it is necessary to have both trenpa and sheshin working together, and particularly paying more attention to the sheshin experience as you develop later on in your practice of meditation.

But I wouldn’t suggest students to shift their practice of meditation at this point, but I would recommend still that you should stick to the shamatha practice of the concentration practice at the beginning that we have been discussing, and working with the outbreath and so forth. That seem to be necessary. But if you keep doing that, certain period of time, and maybe at some point that you begin to find that you, that’s not the only thing that’s happening to you alone, but you begin to developing some sense of expansion, some sense of greater awareness, greater mindfulness taking place, which is awareness. And that is possible, that should happen, that would happen provided if you keep faithful to this particular technique was presented to us, and what

we are doing. So sheshin, or the “knowing as it is,” “knowing things as they are,” which is sharpening our antenna, perceptual, visual, smell, sound, feeling, and everything, sense of expansion is taking place.

Taking a second look at same analogies of driving a motor car on the highway, if we rent a car, at the beginning we are concerned about the accelerations of the car, and how to work with the little gadgets goes with on the dashboard, and sense of power, and sense of speed at the same time. If you are experienced driver, then you begin to feel you can tune yourself immediately into the size of the car, how big is the car, how small is the car. Your whole awareness becomes car, as if car is your body, if you are good driver. And you don't miscalculate your size of your being there on the highway. Or even for parking, for that matter. And you begin to get instant knowledge of awareness, rather than mindfulness at that level. That you know how to handle your car, how to park your car, how big is your car, how big you are for that matter, at this point. And that is the question of the awareness of vipashyana that we are talking about, is that we should adapt ourselves to that particular situation of sense of perception, sense of radiation, how far our feelings extend, and so that working situation becomes also appropriate and applicable to our every day-to-day running situation.

So the question of vipashyana at this point is sheshin, or the awareness experience. And when you have that sense of awareness experience taking place in you, you begin to find new discovery, which is that it is not new, that exp, that operating, necessarily. That you really don't exist particularly. It is *that* is operating, the relationship, the vibration is operating, rather than *you* are conducting that particular show. And one begins to feel a sense of hollowness inside you. At the same time, sense of being and very careful and sense of, sense of being appropriate and real, at the same time, of course. But nevertheless, there is sense of hollowness, that you feel that you are not operating that, but it is taking happen, it's happening.

That in fact the car is driving you rather than you are driving the car, in some sense. That car goes by itself, and you just put little energy, but it is not up to you particularly. Whereas if you are bad driver, that you begin to feel lots of *you*, because you are taking all kinds of chances and you do all kinds of dangerous things, and there is more a sense of *you* involved. Whereas if you are confident driver, you have a proper relationship with your motor car, that you have a sense of being there, that you just move a little bit and the car just goes. Which is not *your* movement, but it's movement of the car dictates to you. So awareness dictates to you, from that point of view, that awareness becomes part of your basic being, part of your behavior, that you don't have to meditate as such, but meditation is conducting you, rather than you are conducting practice of meditation as such. That there is a sense of delightfulness taking place and a



sense of openness taking place. And that level maybe then we could look in terms of meditation-in-action, in terms of lhagthong or vipashyana experience.

In the experience of vipashyana, there is sense of dignity, there is sense of completion, definite completion and definite sense of dignity, sense of knowingness, somewhat familiarity. That as if you've done this in some time ago, many times in your past you've done this, and now you're doing it again. That sense of familiarity begins to arise. And awareness is that not only pointing your attention to a spotlight alone, but space around that spotlight, maybe it's the darkness that around that spotlight. Or if you are concentrating on piece of stone, piece of pebble, that you not only see the pebble, but you only see the, also you see the environment around the pebble. And sense of expansion, sense of openness begins to take place.

And one of the interesting points about vipashyana experience is that the sense of exertion, sense of discipline is not so much of *your* discipline, but it is self-existing experience. And that seems to be the basic point that we should understand. That certain point that you have to of course hassle yourself and push yourself into situation that you are going to meditate. Those are just common problems we all have, even if we are advanced meditator for that matter. Once we get into the practice, we might find it different but before we begin to push ourselves into the practice, we have all kinds of hesitations as if we are naughty child. That you try to calculate that anything that you could make excuses that why you are not meditating seem to be valid point to us. That I have to make phone call to my friend, or I have this and that to do, do my laundry, or wash up the dishes, or take the meat out of the freezer. Any little point that comes to us, that usually we usually play against ourselves, particularly if person is living individually rather than at community level, that meditation becomes mandatory. That we usually play games to ourselves all those areas which we have to cut through anyway, whether we are practicing the shamatha level practice or vipashyana level practice, whatever we do, doesn't really matter.

But once we begin to get into the practice and begin to break the ice, so to speak, then we begin to feel that there is a definite sense of difference. That we could glide in, into it, we could swim into it. There is a sense of familiarity, maybe sense of slight irritation that you are doing the same thing all over again, and sense of slight being bored, and being lonely that you are doing this thing to yourself rather than you are doing with anybody. Even if you are doing with group of people, it's same thing. That you are doing this practice by yourself, although the others doing same thing, but they are doing their thing, I am doing my thing. So there is sense of loneliness, sense of individuality takes place. But nevertheless, there is general notion of sense of gliding into the practice of meditation of vipashyana type. Whereas at the level of shamatha type, it is actually

struggle; training ourselves, we can't glide in ourselves, we have to catch ourselves constantly. And there is lot of struggle, there are lot of personal effort is involved, keep yourself alive, that particular meditation. But in the case of vipashyana level that there is a sense of gliding into it because of your training.

So that seems to be the basic point, that students should know about the vipashyana experience. Before you can access the vipashana experience, by the way, that one should get into the shamatha experience thoroughly and completely and fully and being very faithful to your technique, which is absolutely important. And sense of fearlessness and sense of cutting through your boredom, whatever. And having done that already, then it is possible to glide into your technique, your experience. At some point, students find things are very easy, very comfortable, that your physical, physiological situation is adapting itself to the sitting practice, that you are used to sit down on the cushion cross-legged and straighten your back and everything is a natural thing, that it comes very naturally to you. And psychologically much simpler, much easier, because you can glide yourself into that situation.

But, however, there is need to keep the basic sense of openness, awareness, the basic sense of what we could almost say cleanliness, the cleanliness, that things done properly and literally, that meditation becomes a real thing. There are no areas left that we are deceiving ourselves no longer. In fact, that sense of wholesomeness and healthiness into the practice which ignites further light into the experience of vipashyana experience. The experience becomes very personal, very real, very healthy, and very direct. And the purpose of this training is being eventually that you are going to become warrior. That warrior should keep his basic being intact, including his alertness; otherwise, that warrior doesn't become warrior.

So therefore, practice of meditation at this level could be regarded as the experience of training your mind, and training your sense of feeling, sense of touch, sense of smell in appropriate level. That no mysterious areas left at all; that every area has been explored and trained and worked on, so that we have different kind of sense of pride, in the positive sense, that no mysterious dark corners left. That there is sense of enormous pride, enormous wholesomeness, completeness, that the universe or spiritual search does not become still mysterious any more. It's, it's very real to us. And one begin to develop also sense of intellect at the same time, that you can cut yourself, or cut others for that matter, and it becomes a very real experience.

I think that's the purpose of vipashyana experience, vipashyana technique, is to bring us, ourselves down and down and down to the ground, much more than those of the concentrated experience of shamatha, which is okay, but still needs more down-to-

earth level. That finally we begin to realize that sight, smell, sound and all the other experiences are very direct, very literal, and very simple. And of course maybe it's beautiful, but no longer mysterious as such. And perhaps you would like to ask questions, maybe. That's better than me talking.

Q. Is there any difference in, between the technique of shamatha and vipashyana? Is the technique the same?

CTR. Well, as far as the technique is concerned, it's pretty much the same, but in the vipashyana level, you watch the boundaries more than point of concentration. The boundary of feeling around you. That you are not purely working on your breath, but you are working on the boundary around the breath, that sense of expansion is taking place, the radiation is taking place. That's simply question of attitude. You see, the point is that there is literal teaching, and as literal, direct, simple teaching begin to develop, then you begin to expand yourself greater and greater, more and more wider level. And one begin to get a sense of you begin to use your intellect subconsciously and imagination at the same time subconsciously as well. So at the time that attainment of enlightenment, that you got everything together. [laughs]

Q. I have two questions. In the practice of moving from shamatha to vapassana, does, does one just move in that or is there, does it, does one need to push in some way? In other words, is there danger of becoming comfortable in the practice?

CTR. Well, I think as we have discussed already, that it is necessary to have someone to check your practice and we make, develop a personal friendship or reference point with somebody is necessary. But at the same time, you could develop your own intelligence for that, is that when you begin to feel that you have to expand yourself, rather than your practice is strictly at the level of being too faithful. And you begin to feel slightly different, that you can expand yourself. And at that level, if you examine yourself, your particular style of experience is concerned, you begin to find yourself actually doing vipashyana experience already, vipashyana technique already. That you transcended the shamatha experience in any case, so one has to take that kind of, it's like growing up, you know. When you grow up, you have this ceremony called "birthday party," which isn't quite really so. You haven't suddenly become a different person by the time when you blow your candles off or when you get your presents. But you have been growing up all the time. So and I think it's forced you to make just to make random and maybe specialized time and moment. That now everything's okay, you have become different because you had bar mitzvah or whatever, you know.

Q. Also, where do these two techniques fit in terms of Hinayana and Mahayana paths?

CTR. The vipashyana experience is still in Hinayana level. And the sense of the inspiration and sense of awareness is preparing yourself to become Bodhisattva in the Mahayana level. That you need more requirements of awareness and egolessness. That's just a first hint. But basically technique is included according to the doctrine, is that you are doing Hinayana practice still, but preparing yourself to become a Bodhisattva.

## **Talk 9. Comparison of Vipashyana with Shamatha**

### **1973 Seminary Talks: Hinayana-Mahayana**

**By Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, pp. 107-111**

We are going to discuss today the notion of lhagthong, vipashyana practice, in terms of actual meditation practice. But before we get into that, let me further clarify the attitude towards shamatha and vipashyana practice. Shamatha practice could be regarded as a way of quieting, pacifying the mind, and vipashyana could be regarded as a way of sharpening the potentials of psychological development. Shamatha is regarded as a cutting down process, in a way that gives you very little reference point, very little stuff to work on except its own ground. Slowly cutting into what is basically needed in order to quieten one's self. Shamatha is therefore development of peace.

As far as vipashyana is concerned, having already quietened, having already developed some basic work, one would be able to settle into what one has already practiced or created, settle into what one has achieved. Then we could expand from that level, extending ourselves into sharpening awareness rather than cutting down any mental perceptions. So there's an entirely different approach.

So from that point of view, vipashyana is referred to as insight, and also it is the seed of prajna at the same time. The seed of prajna means preparing ourselves, so that we become worthy of listening to the teachings, and can hear them properly. We are able to perceive the subtleties of the teaching and the depth of the teaching. That is precisely the reason why vipashyana becomes an important practice—it is the start of opening the door of wisdom, the gate of wisdom.

As I mentioned yesterday, any contemplative approach toward the teaching is also included into the vipashyana practice. That is to say, pondering on the subject of the Dharma intellectually is also regarded as vipashyana practice. Moreover, there is the meditative practice of vipashyana which is development of awareness.

And that awareness comes from several different conditions, fundamentally being without aggression. The definition of Dharma is absence of aggression. In order to perceive such Dharma, in order to understand, such Dharma, we also have to develop a state of mind without aggression as well. Dharma in this case is any materials involved with our experience which are workable, which could be woven into the pattern of the path.

The absence of aggression in this case means a sense of non-ego, non-speed. You might find it difficult to understand this tall order because it would be impossible for beginners to develop such perfection. But the idea is that there is a momentary state of mind which occurs, in which there is an element of non-aggression and non-ego. That is to say, when we talked about the eight types of consciousness at the beginning, the eight types, of consciousness, including the five skandhas are all momentary things. We develop our first skandha after the gap, and from there onward up to the fifth skandha, and then it goes back and comes out. So ego is not a constantly smooth running, highly secured situation at all, but there are gaps of all kinds. There is a psychological gap which allows disorder for the ego, or the possibility of reasserting its position at the same time. There is that kind of gap which goes on constantly, a gap of non-ego, and then starting from the first skandha developing up to the fifth skandha and so forth. So ego in this case, the five skandhas, are regarded more as fickleness than continuity.

Because of that, the application of vipashyana is possible, to relate with those momentary open gaps which are unconditioned psychologically, unconditioned by dualism, unconditioned by passion, aggression and so forth. But it's very sudden, it's a fraction of—it could be 100 percent of a moment. It's very fast, but also there is still that possibility in us, 100 percent of gap. The reason we can arouse the potential prajna in us by means of vipashyana is because there are those gaps, the possibility to insert, or to relate with the unconditional mind.

The technique or means of developing vipashyana practice is exactly the same as we discussed the other day—the third foundation of mindfulness, effort, or the sudden glimpse of awareness which brings us back, unconditioned awareness which brings us back to the practice. One of the subtleties of this practice is that one could still apply exactly the same methods of meditation practice that we used in the shamatha practice at the beginning. One can use breathing, but in this case instead of being mindfulness of breathing, it becomes awareness of breathing. Awareness of breathing in this case means that there is a sense of precision, accuracy, and also there is a sense of accommodating in that one doesn't have to nurse the experience of being mindful constantly. In the case of mindfulness, we still tend to trust a great deal in the messenger, so to speak, who brings back the message of what's happening and being mindful on the spot. The messenger also checks the sense of totality, the sense of well-being. The sense of thisness is still happening, rather than the otherness.

[Page 109] That seems to be the difference between shamatha and vipashyana. In the case of shamatha, some kind of importance is still made on thisness, in spite of going out with the outbreath and dissolving oneself into the atmosphere. Still it belongs to this area, rather than the other, or that. In the case of vipashyana, there is less emphasis on

this and there is a very subtle and very faint emphasis on some kind of security and letting go, letting be. The other is more important. We can afford to let go more with the breathing.

Do you remember in the beginning, we discussed that the shamatha practice is purely relating with the verge of breathing, the outline of breathing, a light touch? In vipashyana it's slightly more than that. Not more in the sense of letting go of your breathing, mindfulness of breathing, awareness of breathing, making it much looser and more casual. But in the sense that the attitude to the breathing has the otherness involved. The breathing happens not only in its own accord, but also in the realm of the atmosphere around it. When we talk about the otherness, we are talking about the sense of atmosphere, the sense of totality completely outside of our body, and completely outside of our antennae's radiation.

*Q: Does that make the difference between the physical space? Shamatha would be the physical space around you and vipashyana would be the psychological space?*

R: Yeah. And it could be very difficult to actually understand exactly what we are getting into. But if a person has a really good understanding of the shamatha practice in its own sense of space, then the vipashyana practice becomes much easier to work with. In some sense the difference between the two practices of meditation is that shamatha is extraordinarily literal. In spite of its visions, its feelings, its sense of inspiration and discipline, it is very literal. Vipashyana or lhagthong practice is somewhat romantic in a way, idealistic. There is room for some kind of ventilation or fresh air. Quite possibly a person of early vipashyana practice who is used to shamatha practice would feel extremely guilty about that, for doing something unkosher. But that is just a kind of hesitation, like when at a public swimming pool you don't want to undress. Although you have swimming suits available and can put one on, still even that's regarded as a big deal.

Actually it's deliberately designed that way. First there is shamatha practice to tighten up the whole thing, make it into a really definite and ordinary thing. Beyond that, you try to let go of any notion of inhibition, product of that practice of meditation, while still retaining the heart of the practice. Which is to say that a sense of precision is still carried over, but a sense of freedom is added onto it. After we have practiced shamatha meditation, [Page 110] from then onward up to Tantric practices, most of the techniques are letting go techniques of all kinds. We think we have been letting go completely, but we find, because of the dogma that we were involved in, that we have been keeping something private, personal. And we find something to let go of

constantly, each time, each practice that we are involved with—Shunyata, Mahamudra, or whatever.

In a sense vipashyana practice also brings appreciation of art—art in the sense of how to handle ourselves in body, speech, mind, communication, anything. There is a sense of being resulting from shamatha practice and there is also the confident sense of how to be as well resulting from vipashyana practice. So the practice of vipashyana is more the study of movements, interactions. Sitting practice, for instance, relates with the breathing. Breathing is felt: you go out with your breath and breathing dissolves; you dissolve. But there is also a sense of some kind of echo. Not exactly a moderator, but a sense of echo. You have developed your mindfulness practice; you breathe out—"I'm breathing out"—being mindful of that. And then at the same time, you are aware of your mindfulness, so there is a kind of delayed action of going out and going out. Dissolve and dissolve. Space, and space. And then going out and going out. There is some kind of shadow created by vipashyana practice, which is almost on the level of verbalization, of feeling that "it's happening, it's happening." It is not a confirmation but just a remark, a careless remark that sees things.

In other words, mindfulness is a very serious thing, and if you have awareness with mindfulness, you begin to see the seriousness of mindfulness. Your mindfulness is also lightened by it. It becomes much lighter, less heavy. But it doesn't become completely free and careless because you are still continuing your practice on the one base of basic training, basic practice. You can't develop a completely free style of practice outside the technique. The whole thing is still boring and technical in some sense. That kind of secondary spokesman, secondary mindfulness which is awareness, allows the possibility of extending ourselves to greater awareness practice.

In this case, we are not discussing Mahavipashyana or shamatha-vipashyana practice, or anything of that nature. We haven't gotten to the level of advancing enough or playing about enough. At this point what we are discussing is just the little shadow, the light shadow that goes along with your mindfulness. This is what is known as awareness practice. And we learn how to handle ourselves, how to work, because the whole thing is no longer awkward. With a one-shot deal, it becomes very awkward. But since there is a one-shot deal as well as a soft landing of a secondary something, it allows us at least to be less awkward. The function of early vipashyana practice is to make one less awkward. I think I have discussed enough of that particular subject. As far as technique is concerned, it's identical with the anapannasati practice of coming and going with the breath; it's the same thing. Maybe we should have a discussion, to make sure everybody understood.



**Excerpt from Chapter 43: The Freshness of Unconditional Mind**  
*The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma: Volume One*  
By Chögyam Trungpa, compiled and edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 329-331

**[Introduction to Vipashyana]**

Vipashyana refers to the sense of precision that could arise from the sitting practice of meditation and slowly infiltrate our everyday life. There are two different schools of vipashyana: the analytical contemplative way, and the nonanalytical experiential way. The analytical school talks about the possibility of becoming more aware if you ask more questions and examine the nature of reality and your own state of mind. In our tradition, in accordance with Jamgön Kongtrül, we talk mainly in terms of the nonanalytical, or experiential, approach. Because of that emphasis, the Kagyü tradition is known as the practice lineage.

Shamatha provides the ground, but too much emphasis on shamatha practice could be a problem. It is said that one should not be attached to the pond of shamatha, but let the flower of vipashyana bloom, like a pond beautified by a lotus flower. Taking shelter in shamatha is a perversion of shamatha discipline, so it is very important to convert the relaxation of shamatha meditation into the postmeditation activity of vipashyana. Traditionally, it is said that you should try to achieve a fifty-fifty balance between shamatha and vipashyana. Having properly regrouped your state of mind and linked it with sanity, the postmeditation experience could be a tremendous expansion toward awareness.

Vipashyana is entirely different from shamatha. Shamatha practice could be regarded as a way of quieting and pacifying the mind. It is a paring-down process that leaves us very little reference point and very little to work on except the technique itself. Shamatha is a way to quiet oneself. It is the development of peace. Having already become quiet, having practiced and achieved that basic ground of shamatha, we could expand out and extend ourselves. With vipashyana, rather than cutting down our mental perceptions, we sharpen our awareness.

Vipashyana is referred to as insight, or the seed of prajna, in that we are preparing ourselves to become worthy of listening to the teachings. Through vipashyana we can hear the teachings properly. We are able to perceive the subtlety and the depth of the teachings. That is precisely why vipashyana is an important practice: it begins to open the gate of wisdom. Vipashyana practice includes the contemplative approach of

pondering the dharma intellectually, as well as the meditative practice of the development of awareness.

In the contemplative practice of vipashyana, speculative mind is used as a way of looking beyond oneself. You have certain ideas and conclusions, and through philosophical speculation you try to create further ideas and conclusions in order to transcend yourself. In Buddhist philosophy, you are venturing out into different ground than the ground that you find secure. When you find it very confusing to understand things, then rather than formulating new ideas to make sure you have some ground to stand on, the Buddhist approach is to take a further leap and create your own nest in space. That is the philosophical approach in Buddhism. It is precisely the approach of vipashyana, if not prajna.

Vipashyana awareness arises from several different conditions, but fundamentally it comes from being without aggression. The definition of dharma altogether is the absence of aggression. It is a way of dealing with aggression, and shamatha is the starting point. Shamatha brings clear thinking and slows you down, because the only thing you have to work on is your breathing. Because aggression or anger is based on speed and confusion, shamatha leads to the absence of aggression. So shamatha is the development of peace.

In order to perceive or to understand the dharma, you have to develop a state of mind without aggression, a mind based on non-ego and nonspeed. Dharma being without aggression means the materials of our experience are workable and could be woven into the pattern of the path. It may seem like a tall order to be without aggression, and it may seem impossible for beginners to develop such perfection. However, even for beginners, momentary states of mind occur that have elements of nonaggression and non-ego.

## Beauty and Absurdity

*From The Teacup & The Skullcup: Chogyam Trungpa on Zen and Tantra*  
Judith L. Lief and David Schneider, Editors, pp. 83-87

Having discussed the ground-how the basic practice of dhyana, or the tradition of Zen, could be developed-the next stage seems to be the question of how concentration produces appreciation. At this stage, you are actually trapping the crazy monkey. So it is a twofold process. First, you develop a sense of accuracy in relating with your thoughts and your mind--with the neuroses and all kinds of things that develop in one's mind. Secondly, you put all that into a certain perspective, as workable. You make a relationship with your thoughts, you work with the thoughts. So this process could be represented by the analogy of trapping the crazy monkey.

The traditional analogy for the monkey-mind is an ox or an elephant. In Tibetan we call that mind *sem*. Mind, or *sem*, is the intelligent state that relates with objects. It is fickle in nature, constantly moving, and this movement leaves impressions behind. The mind leaves impressions, and it also takes on the burden of others. Mind is a constant state of movement. Sometimes, extraordinarily, the mind extends itself into speeding along very fast; and at some points, it seems to slow down, but that is also an expression of speed. Whether it is slow or fast, the nature of mind is restless, completely restless. At times, there may be room for irritations or obstacles to pass through, but even the occasional stillness of mind lasts no longer than a fraction of a second. That is the definition of mind.

Awareness, or intelligence, is quite a different and separate category from the mind. The intelligence, or consciousness, has less speed and does not carry a burden. It also expects some hospitality: this particular intelligence expects to be accommodated. Intelligence or awareness is therefore referred to as the rider or herder who works with the ox or the elephant or the monkey. Awareness regards the mind as its property; intelligence, or consciousness, is the owner of monkey-mind. The idea is that the monkey is supposed to have been domesticated a long time ago, but, somehow, we did not get around to it. So now we have this big project of setting a trap and trapping this monkey.

The schema is that there is consciousness, which is the intelligent aspect of the mind; and within consciousness, the most sane aspect is the awareness fraction or portion. The monkey-mind is caught in the trap because of the constant practice of sitting meditation, which provides a camouflage. Being completely still, it is complete entrapment. But at this point it is still a game. We are uncertain as to whether we are

going to trap the monkey or not; it is uncertain; it is still a challenge. It could be regarded as a big joke, but nevertheless we are pursuing it and going ahead with it.

One of the problems with the monkey-mind is speed. The intensity of the speed, instant by instant, has prevented us from taking a good look at [85] this particular monkey, so it has become a myth. We are uncertain, and question whether such a monkey exists or not. But the monkey-mind is finally caught in the trap purely by constant patience and forbearance. As practitioners, we do not react against the displays that monkey has provided us: the discursive thoughts and subconscious gossip. The monkey has provided us with all kinds of things, but we continue to remain still. We are faithful to the technique of awareness of breathing and walking.

By the practitioner's sheer discipline and sheer patience, the monkey finally feels that there is no life around it or around the trap. As the monkey begins to relax a little, but still practices its inquisitiveness—suddenly it is caught in the net by our sheer stillness and faithfulness to the technique. The monkey struggles and tries to get out of the net, but that net was well-prepared a long time ago by highly accomplished craftsmen, who handed down from generation to generation the tradition of how to provide such a good entrapment. Every knot in the net is well-produced, and it is very tough and functional. So now the monkey mind cannot get out of this trap. Knowing that as well, the monkey makes only feeble attempts, a kind of tokenism. Another analogy for this process is that of capturing an elephant or an ox, as demonstrated in the Zen oxherding pictures.

In the end, the monkey turns out to be not all that monkey-like in strength and solidity—it turns out to be a gorilla! It has power and strength, and it is worthwhile training this gorilla as a vehicle. Sometimes it is ferocious, sometimes slightly stupid, but nevertheless it is very powerful. So that is another realization: this monkey-mind is not all that feeble. It is not as weak, inquisitive, and speedy as we thought it might be.

In the practice of meditation, in dealing with this gorilla, once we have captured such a creature, we have to examine it and study it. We cannot just do something with it without knowing its habits and its behavior—patterns that might have to change. This is called vipashyana practice, or in Tibetan, *lhakthong*, which literally means “clear seeing.” *Lhak* is “superior”; *thong* is “seeing”; therefore, *lhakthong* could be translated as “superior vision” or “clear seeing.”

Now that this mind has been captured by the discipline and techniques we applied, we have to examine it carefully to see what we can do with this animal and how we can use it—whether we could use it as a farming ox or a vehicle or a baggage carrier. So we look

at this discursive thought finally entrapped in the net of discipline and see what we can do with it. This provides a first step, some hope, because after all the trips that we have gone through, the hypothetical ceases to be hypothetical. It finally becomes reality. After all, we are not kidding ourselves and pretending to be meditating, we are actually doing something with our mind—and this is the proof.

Lhakthong is called clear seeing because it is awareness of every detail and at the same time it is very spacious. It goes beyond a breathing exercise alone. There is a sense of openness and a sense of appreciation of the environment around oneself. The focus on the breathing is no longer the important point—you focus on the totality of the breathing. The space around you becomes extremely important and extremely powerful. At that point, mindfulness becomes awareness, which is the next stage of practice.

Awareness also means comprehension. In other words, you cannot just be aware without being intelligent. The notion of wakefulness still continues at this level, but awareness not only means seeing; it means that seeing, as well as the product of seeing, is being perceived properly. So first you see something, but you do not quite perceive it. Your vision has to be very clear to see properly. Then, having already seen, there is still constant discipline, which continues afterwards. Having seen things as they are, the object you discovered comes back to you and you begin to comprehend. That is, you begin to understand what you have seen, rather than purely seeing. That is the difference. It is like the difference [87] between things perceived through a camera lens and things perceived by a human mind. One is completely mechanical: things can be seen as clearly as possible by a macro lens, but that lens does not transmit its message back. In the case of consciousness, the awareness process is a level of perception that utilizes what is seen as a part of its working situation. Through awareness, you get a very abrupt, definite, and clear perspective of the spontaneous working of perception and reality--suddenly! Vision and perception happen constantly; and with lhakthong, seeing and knowing take place at the same time.

We now realize that this gorilla has all kinds of potentialities. This gorilla can be trained in domestic manners, in every sense of the word. At the same time the intelligence, the conscious mind—which is the hunter of this gorilla--has established its ownership and trust and understanding. At this point, the speedy mind becomes somewhat workable--even highly workable.

# Vipashyana

## Selected Excerpts from *The Manual for Shamatha Instructors*

Based on two Meditation Instructor Seminars, Karmê Chöling, Winter-Spring 1975

### Introduction to Vipashyana

There is more sense of awareness on the breathing, whereas the mindfulness of breathing is somewhat optional. So there is a possibility that the mindfulness on the breathing could just sort of diffuse. One might find that it is no longer important to stick with the breath, particularly. In the zen tradition it corresponds to *shikan taza*, which is the non-technique stage. That is vipashyana experience. So at the first level, mindfulness of breathing is important in shamatha. At the second level, of vipashyana, mindfulness of breathing becomes optional. Not because you should give it up by force, but the mindfulness of breathing might go away. There might be a level of expansion taking place, and less sense of one-pointedness. Traditionally the walking practice is much more associated with vipashyana. Walking practice has somewhat more expansiveness, the body moving through the air. There's a more free idea and also there are more obvious things happening, because you are actually walking. Whereas with the breathing it is questionable whether it's dream level, imaginary breathing, or if you're actually breathing.

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Well, today we should discuss some points about vipashyana experience. The vipashyana experience is a gradual process that develops from the shamatha experience. In many cases students automatically arrive at that situation. In fact, it's almost predictable. So you are not particularly changing their style of technique from one to another, like graduating suddenly from one level to another. But when practitioners do enough sitting and expand their sense of identity with the practice, they tend to feel somewhat at home with it. At that point the actual mindfulness of breathing begins to become less important or less obvious to them. They slowly find themselves not needing to sit with the breathing alone; they find they can do without using the breath. In other words, the technique of breathing begins to drop away. And also some kind of fundamental continuity of mindfulness begins to happen. That's what's known as awareness, as opposed to mindfulness.

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The general nature of vipashyana is that you slowly begin to go away from techniques of any kind. That is the awareness. You have systematic formal, rigid discipline at the beginning, and then you begin to go away from that formality slowly and become more and more involved with general panoramic mindfulness, which is awareness. That also makes the everyday sitting practice, as well as leading life in the postmeditation

experience, easy for you. In other words the mindfulness is very hard to carry out exactly—while you're cooking, while you're eating, and everything. On the other hand, awareness becomes much easier to carry out, because there's no particular specific technique involved, for one thing, and there's not a concentration which is based on pinpointing the situation. So the whole thing is generalized, but at the same time wakeful.

That is the general tendency of vipashyana, which means awareness. Vipashyana literally means “development of clear-seeing,” but it also means clear-seeing in the sense of general vision rather than focused attention on one particular object of perception. It is panoramic, all pervasive. Somehow, it is very difficult to begin on vipashyana first, with the development of general awareness, because we haven't actually worked on the specific awareness first, in all situations—like one's pace in walking meditation or one's pace of sitting and breathing. It would be difficult to institute anything general because we haven't developed the individualities. Once the individuality is already developed, there would be no difficulty at all with just expansion of that. That seems to be one of the basic points of vipashyana. It seems to take a long, long time for people to get to that point.

The general sense of vipashyana possibility is always there. Sometimes the vipashyana experience comes from the other angle. That is, in sitting practice a person works on the breathing—that still seems to be needed very much—but after the sitting session is finished you have an everyday life situation happening, and a sense of panoramic awareness develops as an after-effect of the very concentrated shamatha. So the concentrated shamatha tends to bring vipashyana in everyday life situations with some people. Such people can't do without using the breathing while sitting, but later they can be fully there, fully aware, and at the same time accomplish what they're doing. So those are the two possibilities. People have different styles and find different ways to develop that, but both of them lead to the same situation. The whole purpose of practice here is to provide a very vague boundary between sitting and not-sitting practice, so that finally everything becomes part of meditation.

We begin to see through the technique. One might be very faithful and willing to continue with the breathing. But then feel that it is somewhat irrelevant, somehow they feel there's something which happens behind the breathing, behind the actual mindfulness of breathing activity. Then feel that there is some awareness still going on. Then begin to see through the techniques. You see, that process goes through all the nine yanas of the journey. Each time one begins to see through the technique, he or she is ready to get into the next one. You begin to drop your crutches and see them as irrelevant. You still obey your doctor's orders—although you can walk perfectly

normally, you might still carry your crutches along. There's that kind of tendency, and somehow a kind of insight develops. "I am still faithful to the technique, but I feel that something larger than onepointedness is taking place."

I think it is necessary to go very slowly. The general tendency is that one tends to rush and not be patient enough; and one might suggest, unskillfully, to a student that there is more to come. As if the practice is like a course that you go through, which is a mistake. So when a student comes back and asks you, "What next?" one has to push them back and say, "Keep doing the same things." One has to be very persistent, otherwise nobody takes deep enough root in the practice. So I think if you've been hasty things become disassociated, and people have less feeling of the practice of meditation. The vipashyana experience comes much later. The shamatha approach is like a worm in a tree; it eats the tree, it digests, and it leaves excrement behind; and then it goes on eating. So it creates a tunnel rather than any escape. That seems to be traditionally what's called the walk of a tortoise, which is very slow and very definite, but covers ground. In other words, if there is any kind of glamour, it's very attractive to present.

I think vipashyana awareness is a general sense that there's a greater understanding of the whole thing taking place. Almost you can see in back of your head. It's like everything can be operated in the daylight. We are not particularly aware of the sun shining on us, but everything functions in the daylight, as opposed to nighttime. There is a sense of total clarity, which isn't extraordinary at all—it's just very simple. It's another kind of preoccupation, if you'd like to put it that way. You know, if you are upset about something, you still feel it in the back of your mind; but at the same time you can pay your bills and make your phone calls.



# Vipashyana

## Q&A from "What is the Heart of the Buddha?"

### In *The Heart of the Buddha*, Chogyam Trungpa, pages 8-9

Student: Rinpoche, could you say a little bit about vipashyana mediation? You mentioned it in your talk, but I'm not really sure what it is.

Trungpa Rinpoche: Vipashyana is a Sanskrit word which literally means "seeing clearly." In Tibetan we use the word lhakthong. Lhak means "superior" and thong means "seeing." So lhakthong means "clear seeing," "superior seeing."

Vipashyana begins once we have developed substantial shamatha discipline of being precise and mindful, on the spot, all the time. In shamatha, sound, smell, feeling, thought process, and everything else are looked at, but with such precision that they are nothing other than stillness. They don't produce further bubbles, or further percolation, of any kind at all.

You might say, "Ah, I thought of my father telling me no." At that moment, both your father and the idea of him saying "No, don't do that" are divided into now, now, now, all the time. Everything is chopped into that level of precision, into a grain of sand. That is shamatha.

Usually, memory is predominant in everything you experience. If you are sitting in a meditation hall and the smell of food comes from the kitchen, you think about what kind of dinner they are cooking for you. Or else, you feel the ache in your buttocks and back and you want to [page 9] shift around. Shamatha means that everything is simply looked at. It is sliced up, but not aggressively; it is just looked at- look, look, look.

Through shamatha you are capable of looking at these experiences as individual entities, without referring to the past and without thinking about where they are going, or what they are going to do to you. Everything is without beginning and without end, just on the spot. If you think of onion soup and how you would like to go out and get onion soup, it is only on the level of thought. So you chop your thoughts-now, now, now.

Out of that comes vipashyana. On the level of vipashyana, you chop thoughts because of your training in shamatha, but at the same time you bring them along. The world is a panoramic view, but at the same time things really don't hang together the way they ordinarily used to.

Things are made out of pieces of simple realities, primitive realities. Even if you smell onions for a long time- for half an hour- those smells are chopped into pieces: you smell them, then you don't smell them, you smell them, then you don't smell them. Otherwise, if there were no gap, you couldn't smell at all.

Experiences are not continuous at the ego level. We think they are all together, in cahoots, but it doesn't really happen that way. Everything is made out of dots. When experiences are chopped into small pieces, some realization of the unity of the display could come out of that. That is vipashyana.

You begin to feel good when, for instance, you touch a rock, because you feel that the rock is not a continuous rock, but the rock of the moment. When you hold your fan, it is the fan of the moment; when you blink, your blink is of the moment; when you meet your friends, they are friends of the moment. Nothing is expected and nothing is demanded any more. Everything is seen clearly.

Clear seeing: that is the definition of vipashyana, which is the result of shamatha. Things could be seen as a great display, as a Disney world, or whatever you want to call it. You realize that things are not all that together. But because they are not together, they are fantastically colorful. The more you see the mark of discontinuity, the more you see things as colorful. In order to see color you have to take a rest; then you see color again. So you see, you rest, and then you see brilliance again. That is the precision of how to perceive the phenomenal world.

## **Definition of Vipashyana**

***The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma:***

***Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation***

**By Chögyam Trungpa, compiled and edited by Judith L. Lief, p. 337**

[337] Vipashyana is that which enables you to see the potential for egolessness. The Tibetan term for vipashyana is *lhakthong*. *Lhak* means “superior,” or “special,” *thong* means “seeing”; so *lhakthong* means “seeing in a special or superior way.” That is, vipashyana is seeing without personally localized ambition or ego-centered projects of any kind. Such seeing is necessary because we tend to fixate on sense objects such as sights or sounds, and put them into categories such as liking or disliking. The vipashyana experience of awareness replaces such categorizing altogether. At the same time, it keeps the precision of seeing the sights or hearing the sounds as they are. So in vipashyana, categorization is replaced by awareness.

**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.

## **Systems of Vipashyana**

*The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma:*

*Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation*

*By Chögyam Trungpa, compiled and edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 348-352*

### **Categories of Vipashyana**

To understand buddhadharma, a person must meditate under the guidance of a teacher and be properly trained in vipashyana. Without an understanding of vipashyana, such discoveries as the four noble truths or egolessness cannot be completely comprehended or experienced.

Vipashyana practice is divided into various categories. In one system, vipashyana is divided into lower vipashyana and higher vipashyana. Lower vipashyana is a shamatha-type of vipashyana, based purely on concentration; higher vipashyana is more inspirational, based on such insights as discovering the four noble truths.

### **Aspects of Vipashyana**

In another system, vipashyana is divided into two aspects: discriminating awareness and immovability. Discriminating awareness is the ability to see clearly, and through that clarity to develop definite mindfulness practice. Immovability is a kind of absorption in which awareness is constantly present and stable, and cannot move or shift. Different degrees of immovability happen in the various stages of vipashyana. Immovability is a powerful experience, based on the confidence that you have found the correct path, and therefore you cannot forget it. You finally realize that there is no other practice than this. You have been converted to vipashyana, and you have faith and trust in it.

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Unless you develop vipashyana and realize the importance of wakefulness, you will have only a very distant view of vajrayana or even the higher levels of mahayana. It is necessary to have that kind of basic training and growth. So vipashyana experience and practice is absolutely necessary for a person who follows the Buddhist path and really wants to understand the dharma. Both intellectually and intuitively, vipashyana practice is necessary. You have to make an acquaintance with yourself. You have to meet yourself, to know who you are and what you are. Without vipashyana experience, you don't have any idea of who you are, what you are, how you are, or why you are, at all! So it is very important and absolutely necessary to respect the need for vipashyana experience and practice.

## Four Categories of Vipashyana

From Chapter 47. Investigating the Subtleties of Experience

*The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma:*

*Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation*

By Chögyam Trungpa, compiled and edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 354-358

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

### Discriminating Dharmas

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

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

### Fully Discriminating Dharmas

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

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

### **Completely Comprehending Dharmas**

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

This is not the same as being mindful of thoughts. In mindfulness practice, you are just seeing thoughts and labeling them “thinking.” Here, there is a more general awareness of the presence of crude thoughts. With an awareness of the atmosphere created by your crude thought process—your passion, aggression, or ignorance—you are able to see such thoughts one by one, rather than suddenly being hit by some big thought and being completely overwhelmed. When you are surprised in that way, you may want to call for help or take an aspirin, but when you practice insight, you are not overwhelmed because you are able to dissect your emotions, to separate one from another.

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

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

### **Completely Investigating Dharmas**

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

Sometimes you will find that small thoughts are being investigated by small awareness, so it looks as if one subconscious gossip is chasing another subconscious gossip. When

you find a little idea in your life being looked at by a little effort, you may think you are perpetuating the whole thing, but that's not the case. In this fourth category of vipashyana, the chaser, so to speak, has awareness. What's being chased—that little thought, or that little, little thought—could be insignificant, meaningless, and almost harmless, but we are trying to make sure that nothing gets away. We have to cover the whole ground completely, as much as we can. We have to investigate whatever goes on in our ego-mind.

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

## **Conclusion**

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

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

What is the root of all this? Why do we practice vipashyana at all? We understand that it will be helpful to us, but why is that so? If we approach practice in the style of mental gymnastics, it is like expecting that if we do lots of exercises, our body will get in shape. But what are we getting in shape for? Why are we doing this at all, in the name of

heaven and earth? It has to do with ego! So as you continue sitting and working with your basic shamatha discipline, you could add in a little bit of vipashyana, or awareness. In fact, you could practice vipashyana during all your waking hours. While you're taking a shower, while you're brushing your hair, while you're pressing your clothes, or while you're preparing your cup of tea, it would be helpful to practice vipashyana.

## **The Six Discoveries**

**From Chapter 48. Sharpening One's Perception**

***The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma:***

***Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation***

**By Chögyam Trungpa, compiled and edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 359-366**

Whatever is knowable in the world, of either relative or transcendent nature, can be understood and experienced by means of vipashyana meditation. Vipashyana leads to a complete understanding of the knowable. This does not mean that you will become a great scholar by practicing vipashyana, but that the attitude and approach of vipashyana opens your way of thinking, so that obstacles to learning are no longer prominent.

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

### **Meaning: Discovering the Meaning of Words**

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

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



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

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

### **Form: Discovering the Objects of Inside and Outside**

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

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

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

### **Characteristic: Discovering the Nature of Perception**

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

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

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

### **Direction: Discovering Sides**

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

Discovering sides is not based on picking and choosing, or on making yourself comfortable. It has broad vision and an unyielding quality. You are able to seek wisdom, to seek good attributes. That is, you have an allegiance, or natural instinct, as to what is right for you and what is not. You are able to tune yourself instinctively in to the appropriate situations. It is very simple. In this discovery, you are relating with the common norms of good and bad, but with tremendous wisdom and clarity.

### **Time: Discovering Past, Present, and Future**

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

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

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

Because of this realization, you do not feel trapped in any way. You have confidence and dignity. You are no longer subject to the whirlpool. You no longer fear that once you

jump into the rushing river, you are bound to be swept down Niagara Falls. By practicing vipashyana discipline, you are trying to get out of karmic encirclement. You are trying to [page 364] cut through karmic cause and effect, so that you can realize your dignity and elegance. You can be arrogant in the positive sense because you can cut through the vicious circle of karma by applying the techniques that have been presented to you. That is the realization or discovery of time.

### **Insight: Discovering Knowledge**

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

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

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

## Applying the Six Discoveries

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

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

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

[page 366] On the whole, we are studying dharma so that we know how to handle our life properly. We do not just naively go along with everything, nor for that matter do we become overly paranoid. Instead, as Buddhists we have an understanding of balance. We know how to handle life, and we understand cause and effect. We do not regard our life as though we are constantly being cheated. Whether we are being cheated or not, if we extend ourselves too far or indulge ourselves, we will be cut short. If we are overly sensitive, some accommodation will be provided. That is how the world works according

to the vipashyana vision of discriminating- awareness wisdom, which comes from relaxing your mind. So in Buddhism, we are doing more than purely relating to our meditation practice in the shrine hall—we are training in how to live our life.

***Rediscovering Yourself***  
***The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma***  
***Volume One: The Path of Individual Liberation***  
By Chögyam Trungpa, Ed. Judith L. Lief, pp. 279-280

[page 279] In meditation practice the meditator uses any and all of these eight types of consciousness, so you need to learn how to work with them. The popular idea of meditation is that of trying to attain a higher state of consciousness. You try to clean up the eight consciousnesses into an absolute consciousness or into a higher, superior form of eight types of consciousness. But that approach seems to be a problem. Relating intelligently with the technique of meditation does not have to be a project of sticking out your neck and looking beyond what you are. You are not trying to avoid or to transcend anything. Instead you could remain in the state of what you are.

In meditation practice, using the eight types of consciousness as material, you find to your surprise that you have not made a real and complete relationship with them. You simply exist as you were born, with eight types of consciousness, but you haven't actually looked at those happenings in your being. In that way, you are much more akin to an ape than to an intelligent being. Therefore the first project, so to speak, of meditation practice is to realize and rediscover these eight types of consciousness. In working with them, you are not trying to overcome them or do anything funny with them or manipulate them in some cunning way. You do not have to race with yourself. Instead you are rediscovering them and becoming a more refined animal by developing perfect and complete understanding of your own mind.

Through meditation, you begin to understand the eight consciousnesses and to know their functions inside out and outside in. You begin to understand the five skandhas as well. Realizing the subtleties of consciousness in this way is by no means reinforcing ego. It is like examining your body: you think your body is beautiful and active and powerful, but once you begin to study the muscles, bones, and interior organs, and once you see an X-ray, you begin to feel slightly insecure. At the same time, it is very interesting. You get a new perspective of your body and how your body functions.

Usually the eight consciousnesses are all lumped together; but meditation practice begins to sort them out. You begin to see the functions of mind completely and clearly. You know which part is which. In the meditative state, there could be an experienter of the unconscious. That is the whole point. So far, the whole thing has been so lumped together that you have forgotten your being, your existence. But once you have time to

slow [page 280] down, think, and pay attention to the various little details, like breathing, you begin to realize yourself. It is as if you had been lying on a bed for a long time, not allowed to move around, and you began to rediscover your limbs, your fingers, and your toes—in meditation, you begin to rediscover yourself.

You might say, “What is the virtue of meditation, if we are just rediscovering ourselves? If we are already what we are, then what is the point of rediscovering ourselves?” But even if you develop a state of subtlety and sophistication, you are still rediscovering yourself. You can’t change yourself from an ape to a divine being—that’s impossible. The problem in not being able to see the real state of the eight types of consciousness is that you feel you are being condemned, punished, deprived, belittled. That sense of deprivation and condemnation comes from being unable to relate with yourself completely, let alone bring foreign information into your system. That is out of the question altogether, if there is any such thing. However, there does not seem to be anything transcendental or enlightened outside the eight types of consciousness. So the first step is to rest with what you have and not look ahead too far.

As you meditate, your experience of duality becomes sharpened, and you become more perky. Your deprivation becomes sharpened, but at the same time you begin to feel that your situation is workable. Before you were just stuck in the slums and you had no way of getting out, but now you begin to feel there are ways out. So the starting point is not to get out completely. Instead, you are given a kind of teaser: you get out partially. At that point, your original primitive pain is somewhat lessened—but then you have the ambition to get beyond that, to get completely better! You become very competitive. That kind of ambition grows and grows, and as ambition grows, confusion grows as well—but at a certain point, that confusion becomes encouragement rather than an obstacle. You feel much sturdier and more secure if you carry a heavy walking stick. Although it is heavy, it feels good.

It is exciting and it is good! You can practice the dharma by making use of the eight types of consciousness as vehicle, ground, food, shelter, inspiration, and information. You can become a dharma practitioner and turn the wheel of the dharma. To your surprise, turning the wheel of the dharma is not all that complicated. Anyone can do it.



**Meditation is Taking a Leap**  
**From Simplicity and Awareness**  
*In Work, Sex, Money: Real Life on the Path of Mindfulness*  
**Chogyam Trungpa, Excerpts from pp. 48-53**

We can describe meditation in terms of taking a leap. Taking a leap means experiencing the openness of space. You can take this kind of meditative leap while you are working. It is connected with bringing air and earth together. You can't feel the earth unless you feel the air. The more you feel the air, the more you feel the earth. Feeling the air and the earth together is feeling the space between you and the objects you are working with. This becomes a natural awareness of openness. You automatically begin to feel peace and lightness.

The way to practice this is not to try to concentrate or try to be aware of yourself while managing the task you are doing at the same time. Rather, you should have a general feeling of acknowledging existence with openness while you work. Then you feel that there is more room to do things, more room to work. By cultivating a continual meditative state, you are acknowledging the existence of the openness. You don't have to try to hold on to this or try to bring it about deliberately, just the pure acknowledgment of that state is enough. Acknowledge the vast energy of openness. just flash on it; just acknowledge it. Flash on it for a second. A flash of acknowledgment is all it takes. Having acknowledged it, don't try to hold on. You almost ignore it after that. Continue with your work. The feeling of openness will also continue, and you will begin to develop the actual feel of the situation, the feel of the things you're working with.

So the awareness we are talking about here is not constant awareness as an object of mind. Instead of taking awareness as an object, you become one with awareness, one with the open space, which of course also means becoming one with the actual things you're working with. Then the whole process becomes a very easy one-way process, rather than a situation in which you're trying to split yourself into different levels of awareness, with one level minding the other. With this easy one-way, one-step process, you begin to make a real relationship with objects and with the beauty of objects as well.

Don't try to possess the openness, but just acknowledge it and then turn away from it. It is important to turn away, because if you try to possess the openness, you have to chase after it. You try to follow it, which you can't actually do. You can't actually possess it at all. If you let go of it and disown it, and then continue working, this feeling stays with you all the way along.

Openness here refers to a meditative state of simplicity or lack of complication. The absence of complications becomes simplicity. Within simplicity there is room to do things, to move about. This is true of everyday actions as well as formal meditation itself.

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[53] As long as we feel some sense of empty space and openness, there is something to work with. It's not so very difficult to find this sense of space. It just requires taking a leap into the empty space by not questioning or second-guessing ourselves. This feeling of empty space might be unpleasant to start with, but just leap into it. See what happens.

Meditation, in particular, provides us with the inspiration to relate to the spaciousness of life. To begin with, this comes from working with our thoughts. In your meditation practice, you might find that thoughts are constantly rushing through your mind. If you see them as purely thoughts rather than focusing on the subject of your thinking, then there is more space. When you think of your thoughts purely as a thinking *process*, rather than focusing on the contents of the thoughts, that will make your attitude toward thoughts very impersonal. If you were watching a cloud, and within this cloud you saw your friends and relatives walking around, then immediately you would associate yourself with those people and you would name them and fixate on them, apart from the cloud. Then you are caught up with the whole thing, and it becomes very crowded. Whereas if you just notice the people, and don't try to identify with them, it's more impersonal. It's the same thing with your thoughts. In meditation you develop this impersonal way of looking at thoughts.

## **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.

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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.

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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!”

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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.

**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 merit of 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.

# Vipashyana Awareness: Allowing the Gap

## From 1981 Seminary, Talk 5

By Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, pp. 31-38

[Page 31] Good evening. Last night we discussed how to cut the root of samsara by means of shamatha discipline, and also how the logic of mindfulness-awareness practice prevents the minute kleshas from producing broader results. Continuing with that, tonight we could discuss vipashyana discipline as well.

Vipashyana discipline could be said to be more of an expansion of the general vision of mindfulness-awareness rather than purely one-pointedness alone. The definition of vipashyana is “that which enables you to see the potential for egolessness.” the Tibetan term for vipashyana is *lhakthong* (lhag.mthong). *Lhak* means “superior” or “special”; *thong* means “seeing.” So *lhakthong* means “seeing in a special way, seeing in a superior way,” that is, seeing without personal or localized ambition or ego-centered projects of any kind.

The main point here is that vipashyana definitely has to be combined together with shamatha. That is necessary because, when we have fixation on sense objects such as sight or sound, we develop the notion of liking or disliking them. We begin to put them into categories. The vipashyana experience of awareness replaces such categorizing altogether; at the same time it keeps the precision of seeing the sights or hearing the sounds as they are. So categorization is replaced by awareness.

In other words, you don't play deaf and dumb all the way. You are still able to see, you are still able to hear, but beyond that there is no categorizing on the level of rejecting and accepting; rather there is awareness, through which the categories of liking and disliking are removed. And the ability to remove the process of categorization can only be achieved by the shamatha discipline of concentration during the sitting practice of meditation. Vipashyana, in this case, could be said to be the post-meditation experiences that develop, that happen to you during this study period, and also afterwards when you return home.

What we're trying to do here is to develop a higher level of awareness. Our reactions are still sharp and precise. We see blue as blue, yellow as yellow, and red as red; in terms of sound, we hear higher tones as higher tones, lower tones as lower tones; in terms of taste, sweet is still sweet, and sour is still sour; and in terms of feeling, cold is still cold, hot is still hot. But beyond that, accepting and rejecting are removed.

This does not particularly make you like a zombie. Instead, it makes you more capable of handling your existence. Your capabilities are heightened because you don't have any emotional carry-over. You are not freaked out by what you experience. Usually, if you see a dreadful red, therefore you want to see a lovely yellow; if you taste a terrible sweet, then you look for something nice and sour to eat. But in this case, you are not picking and choosing on that level. [Page 32] Sense perceptions, as far as sense organs and sense consciousness are concerned, are kept; but the consciousness that goes with selecting, liking and disliking—which is slightly more subtle than that—is removed by means of meditation practice. And as a result, you have more equilibrium.

With that kind of awareness in our systems, we begin to attain what is known as vipashyana heedfulness, vipashyana awareness. Out of that, we begin to develop the continual samadhi or stillness that comes from being able to communicate with the fundamental basic goodness of the world. We see that the world is neither for us nor against us. We begin to see that the world is a workable situation. It is no longer a particularly problematic situation, nor is it an extraordinarily helpful one either.

Vipashyana awareness can only develop during post-meditation periods offset by intense sitting practice. Your study period, for instance, is an ideal time to practice vipashyana; and you can do it if you have the intention and the awareness to do so. Please don't be afraid that we are going to turn you into zombies. Far from it. We may turn you into buddhas; I hope you don't mind that. [Laughter.]

Some people feel that reacting to situations is always worthwhile. Modern psychologists, in particular, talk about building our ego, having an ego. That is one of the big problems we run into: In buddhist psychology, when we talk about egolessness, modern psychologists think we are advocating some kind of zombie-ism, or jellyfish-ism. They think that when people sit and meditate, we are encouraging them to experience a complete sense of dullness, to the extent that, if somebody pinched their arms, real buddhists wouldn't even say "ouch." [Laughter.]

A lot of parents have actually said to us, "Is that what you're trying to do to our children when they meditate? When they become real meditators will they know the difference between pain and pleasure?" We have gotten somewhat beyond that level, since a lot of our parents have come to visit and have also experienced our community festivities, such as the various marriages of our students. Because parents have seen those things, they have begun to think that we are somewhat sensitive people. But still they wonder, when we teach about equilibrium, whether meditation will cut down any awareness of good or bad, so that we become neutral; they begin to wonder quite a lot. But it doesn't matter how they feel about it; we have to experience it for ourselves.

This period, which we politely call a study period, is very convenient in some sense. It is actually a vipashyana period, believe it or not. You've been kept extremely busy: All sorts of demands have been made on you; you've been studying, working, reading, doing all sorts of things—and entertaining yourselves, if you didn't have a chance to do that before. [Laughter.] However, you cannot forget the basic fundamental reason you are here. You should use this period of time to develop vipashyana experience.

This is not particularly to say that you are graduating from shamatha. Please don't misunderstand this. It is not that shamatha is just the sixth-grade level, while vipashyana is the fifteenth-grade level. Shamatha is the basic discipline of how you handle yourselves in sitting practice itself, to begin with. Vipashyana is how you handle yourselves in post-meditation experiences. So you do not really graduate from shamatha to vipashyana. You do not get better or worse; you do not go from anywhere to anywhere. They are two different situations, and each is helpful to the other. The lineage often speaks of the indivisibility of shamatha and vipashyana. Likewise the Japanese tradition talks about *shikantaza*, which means shamatha and vipashyana put together.

So there is something that we could do during this study period that would be very helpful. For instance, tomorrow when we have sitting practice, we could spend still more time doing strict shamatha practice, but the emphasis should be more on the gaps than on the sitting practice alone. You should practice vipashyana discipline when you walk out of the shrine hall; when you [Page 33] pick up your laundry, fold your clothes, make your bed, or talk to your friends; when you write a letter to your friend, lick your postage stamp, place it on your envelope, and mail it; when you cut a slice of bread, chip off a piece of butter and smooth it on your slice of bread, break your bread and lift it to your mouth; when you begin to open your mouth and chew it up; and when you use your tongue to circulate the food in your mouth, and to swallow it—and have a conversation at the same time. [Laughter.]

Usually we regard those little things that we do as incidental things. As buddhists, however, we regard everything that we do as very important—not a big deal, but very important. Whatever we do is sacred action. Sacred action is not necessarily something magical or god-ridden; it is the possibility that whatever we do could be shamatha-vipashyana-ridden. There is always room for precision. There are always vipashyana possibilities in whatever we do. Nothing is regarded as unsuitable, which is very helpful. So please pay attention to everything.

The merit of vipashyana discipline is that we begin to work with the neutral areas, the neutral situations. When we don't let hope and fear, liking or disliking, come into the picture; when we actually taste the bread and butter in our mouth; when we don't let passion and aggression enter into it; at that point, we have the perfect opportunity for realizing awareness. Then, eating a good piece of bread with nice butter on it does not produce any karmic seeds or debts. That is how, even at this level, we can actually reduce samsaric possibilities, and free ourselves from future karmic possibilities.

We have to be so methodical. It is not all that easy to cut through karmic debts and the possibilities of being born in the lower realms—the animal realms, hell realms, or preta realms. We might end up in one of those. But still, if we are able to work with situations properly and effectively, we can block out a lot of the possibilities of being born in the lower realms. Then we can begin to block out the possibilities of being born in the higher realms as well, so that finally we can be born in the Pure Land of Amitabha. We might even attain enlightenment. That's always possible.

But we have to start from the beginning, from the bread and butter level. We have to really earn it; we have to do it; we have to really accomplish it. That is why we talk about nontheism: nobody is going to save us. If we are in trouble, we can't pay twenty-five pesos to somebody and say, "Father, please save me." In this particular tradition, nobody will say yes. The father probably will say, "Have you saved yourself yet?" If we can do that, then we are saved already.

If there are any questions, you're welcome.

Q: Is vipashyana always a post meditation experience, then?

V: Not necessarily. You could have good vipashyana during your sitting practice as well. Shamatha experience sort of builds up to one-pointedness, a pinpointed situation. Vipashyana is how to diffuse that pinpointedness. While still having some sense of that pin pointedness, it could be dissolved into a larger scale experience. So, both of them could work together.

Q: Sir, could you explain the difference between the sense of seeing or the sense of hearing, and visual consciousness or hearing consciousness. What is added to turn a simple sense into a sense consciousness?

V: A sense is simply picked up because you have a brain that is alive, a heartbeat that is alive. Your sense organs are alive; therefore they automatically relate with what is there. But consciousness is something more than that. It is sort of an editorial situation, which is almost on the level of accepting and rejecting. It is not quite as bad as that; but consciousness is the advisor to the accepting and rejecting level. It is the vanguard of



that level. The sense consciousnesses go and research what they have seen. Then they come back and tell headquarters whether it should accept red or reject hue. Do you see what I mean?

Q: Yes sir. That's very clear. So in the meal chant when we say the ayatanas are controlled, that is the control of the senses; and not being possessed with the dhatus means not exercising the faculty of consciousness at that point. Is that correct?

V: Well, the ayatanas are controlled because you can't just shut them off; otherwise you couldn't have any physical functions. They are controlled; they are moderated by awareness.

Q: Is labeling actually volitional action? Is it actually sowing the seed of good habitual patterns at that point?

V: Labeling is trying to remove the volitional action altogether, so you don't become personally involved with thoughts. You don't say that it's a bad thought or good thought; you simply say "thought"-which nullifies good or bad, liking or disliking. That is the beginning of nullifying karma. Labeling is the vanguard of trying to overcome karma, altogether. It is the attempt to make sure that you don't create a karmic inheritance by having thoughts.

Q: Well, I'm fairly clear about shine or mindfulness practice: You notice a flicker of thought, and you go back to your breath. With lhakthong, there is more of a sense of awareness, a sense of going further. What is expanded there?

V: Well, when you begin to catch thoughts, you begin to neutralize them. That is because they don't have a chance to get to the level of liking or disliking. They don't fall into the categories of love and hate, anymore; so they don't plant any further karmic seeds or debts. Therefore you are free. So, it is important to have mindfulness in order not to sow seeds anymore.

**Excerpt from Chapter 43: The Freshness of Unconditional Mind**  
*The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma: Volume One*  
By Chögyam Trungpa, compiled and edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 331-336

**Ego, Gap, and Sudden Glimpses of Awareness**

The eight types of consciousness and the five skandhas are all momentary events. We develop our first skandha after a gap, and from there onward we develop the other skandhas, up to the fifth skandha, then the whole thing goes back to the gap and starts all over again. So ego is not a constantly smooth-running, highly secured situation at all—there are psychological gaps of all kinds. Those gaps allow disorder for the ego, and at the same time, allow the possibility of ego reasserting its position. In fact, a gap of non-ego goes on constantly, and within that we rebuild the ego again and again, from the first skandha up to the fifth skandha. So ego, or the five skandhas, is regarded more as fickleness than as continuity. Because of that, the application of vipashyana is possible.

Through vipashyana, we can relate with those momentary open gaps. Such gaps are unconditioned psychologically, unconditioned by dualism, unconditioned by passion, aggression, and ignorance. A gap is very sudden: it happens in a fraction of a second, about one-hundredth of a moment. However, although it is very fast, within us there is still the possibility of one-hundred-percent gap. The reason we can arouse potential prajna by means of vipashyana is because there are such gaps. Because of those gaps, it is possible to insert vipashyana, to relate with unconditional mind.

**Vipashyana Technique**

The technique or means of developing vipashyana practice is exactly the same as in the third foundation of mindfulness, mindfulness of effort: it is sudden effort, a sudden glimpse of awareness that brings us back to the practice. The basic technique is to see the shadow, or echo, of the awareness and then disown it. When a sudden glimpse of awareness comes to you, you be with it—but at the same time, you disown it. That same approach is used for all practices. We should not hang on to any meditative technique or trick we might use; rather, we should take advantage of it and then throw it away. However, although you throw it away, you never lose it. It comes back to you—that's the biggest trick about it!

In vipashyana there is a new attitude toward that sudden abstract flash. In shamatha, you have a flash and then you faithfully go back to shamatha practice. In vipashyana, when you have that sense of shadow, or echo, you do not quite go all the way back, but

halfway. You are making use of that flash, not trying to go right back. You don't come back completely to being absolutely one with the breathing, and you don't bring yourself back—however, you do come back. You are approaching it from the outer realm rather than the inner realm, although as far as the flash itself is concerned, there is no difference.

Vipashyana-type flashes of awareness have to grow out of the shamatha-type at the beginning, so early vipashyana practice will still be shamatha-like. Much later, you begin to realize that there is a different approach, which creates another type of flash—a vipashyana-type flash that is associated with the unconscious mind.

In meditation practice, you definitely need a technique to work on, such as breathing or walking. Having an ongoing technique or discipline is the basic core of the whole journey. The technique of awareness of the breathing is the epitome of being down-to-earth. You are on the earth and breathing. As long as that is going on, your attitude doesn't make all that much difference. You will be aware or mindful naturally.

### **Awareness of Breathing**

One of the subtleties of vipashyana practice is that we can still apply exactly the same methods of meditation that we used at the beginning, in shamatha. With vipashyana, mindfulness of breathing becomes awareness of breathing. With awareness of breathing, there is a sense of precision and accuracy, but there is also accommodation, in that one doesn't have to constantly nurse the experience of being mindful. In the case of mindfulness, we still tend to trust a great deal in the messenger. The messenger brings back the message of what's happening and checks if we are being mindful on the spot; the messenger also checks on the sense of totality and of well-being. So a sense of *thisness* is still happening, rather than *otherness*. That seems to be the difference between shamatha and vipashyana. In the case of shamatha, importance is still placed on thisness. In spite of going out with the out-breath and dissolving oneself into the atmosphere, shamatha practice still belongs to the area of this, rather than the area of other, or that.

### **A Sense of Atmosphere**

In the case of vipashyana, there is less emphasis on *this*. There is a very subtle and very faint emphasis on some kind of security—but then the emphasis is on letting go, letting be. In vipashyana, the *other* is more important. We can afford to let go more with the breathing. In shamatha practice, we are purely relating with the verge of breathing, the outline of breathing, using a light touch. In vipashyana it is slightly more than that. It is

not more in the sense of letting go of our mindfulness of breathing, or making it looser and more casual, but in the sense that our attitude to the breathing has otherness involved with it. The breathing happens not only on its own accord, but in the realm of the atmosphere around it. When we talk about otherness, we are talking about atmosphere or totality—something completely outside of our body, completely outside of our antennae's radiation.

It could be very difficult to understand exactly what we are getting into with vipashyana, but if a person has a really good understanding of shamatha practice and its own sense of space, the vipashyana practice becomes much easier to work with. In some sense, the difference between the two meditation practices is that in spite of its vision, its feeling, its inspiration, and its discipline, shamatha is very literal, whereas vipashyana is more romantic or idealistic. In vipashyana there is room for ventilation or fresh air. Quite possibly a person at the early stage of vipashyana practice who is used to shamatha practice might feel extremely guilty for doing something unkosher, but that is just a form of hesitation. It is like not wanting to undress at a public swimming pool: although there are swimming suits available and you can put one on, it is still regarded as a big deal.

### **Letting Go**

First there is shamatha to tighten up your practice, to make it definite and ordinary. Beyond that, you try to let go of any notion of inhibition or product of that meditation practice, while still retaining the heart of the practice. The precision is carried over, but a sense of freedom is added on. After you have practiced shamatha meditation, from then onward up to tantric practices, most of the techniques you practice are letting-go techniques of all kinds. At each stage, you think you have been letting go completely, but because of the dogma that you are involved in, you find that you have been keeping something private and personal. So as you go along, you find something to let go of constantly. With each new practice, you are learning to let go. Actually, the path is deliberately designed in that way.

Sometimes it might be necessary for the meditation master to change a student's style of practice. For instance, a student might find herself or himself in vipashyana, but feel guilty that what she or he is doing may not be orthodox enough. Students might mislead themselves. So the role of the teacher is to present a more and more loose and free style of practice. In going through the yantras, as one style of practice becomes orthodox, the teacher presents a new approach connected with the next yantra, which in turn also becomes orthodox, and so on.

## The Echo: Lightness and Sense of Humor

In vipashyana, as in shamatha, sitting practice relates with the breathing. As breathing is felt, you go out with the breath; as the breath dissolves, you dissolve. But there is also an echo—not exactly a moderator, but an echo. You have developed your mindfulness practice so that as you breathe out, you know you are breathing out. You are mindful of that. At the same time, you are aware of your mindfulness, so there is a kind of delayed action of going out and going out; dissolving and dissolving; space and space. There is a kind of echo, a self-existing awareness. That echo is not regarded as harmful or dangerous; in fact, there is a strong possibility that such awareness may be the seed of discriminating wisdom.

Going out and going out is a kind of shadow created by vipashyana practice. It is almost on the level of verbalization, or of feeling, “It’s happening, it’s happening.” But it is not a confirmation; it is just a remark, a careless remark. It is simply seeing things. In other words, mindfulness is very serious—but if you have awareness with that mindfulness, you begin to see the seriousness of the mindfulness, and your mindfulness is lightened. So with awareness, your mindfulness becomes much lighter and less heavy. However, it doesn’t become completely free and careless, because you are still continuing your practice, your basic training. You do not develop a completely free style of practice outside the technique. In fact, the whole process is still somewhat boring and technical. But that secondary spokesperson, or secondary awareness, allows the possibility of extending yourself to greater awareness practice.

The echo cuts the seriousness of your practice. If your basic mindfulness practice has gotten very clear and strong, and the whole thing has become too serious, it becomes self-destructive. Your honesty and seriousness get in your way. With the echo, there is a little humor. It is as if you were saying something very meaningful, and somebody kept repeating it back to you. Because somebody is making a joke out of it, your statement has less impact and is not as heavy. It is as literal as that. The seriousness of shamatha’s one-shot deal is lightened by the echo.

Mindfulness followed by awareness is like settling down and having the dust come up. From a purely shamatha perspective, the element of vipashyana results in your actions not being as honest and as good as in the past. But in trying to make your practice definite, in solidifying the whole thing, you have a problem: you do not know your territory or what you are doing. However, if you have the awareness or mindfulness coming toward you, rather than you being aware of something, there is no problem. Awareness happens, and it also dies. You do not have to be aware of the breathing as your breathing, particularly. Even at the level of shamatha practice, you don’t have to do

that. The point is that breathing is happening properly. It doesn't really matter who is who or what is what, as long as there is flow taking place.

At this point, we are not discussing anything all that advanced. What we are discussing is just a light little shadow that goes along with your mindfulness, which is known as awareness practice. Meditation practice can become very awkward. The function of early vipashyana practice is to make one less awkward. As far as the meditation technique of vipashyana is concerned, it continues to be based on the coming and going of the breath. However, with awareness, we learn how to handle ourselves, to work with ourselves. Since there is a one-shot deal as well as a soft landing, vipashyana allows us to be less awkward.

**Ultimate Bodhicitta Slogans**  
**From *Training the Mind and Cultivating Loving-Kindness***  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, Edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 29-45**

**Slogan 2: Regard all Dharmas as Dreams.**

This slogan is an expression of compassion and openness. It means that whatever you experience in your life—pain, pleasure, happiness, sadness, grossness, refinement, sophistication, crudeness, heat, cold, or whatever—is purely memory. The actual discipline or practice of the bodhisattva tradition is to regard whatever occurs as a phantom. Nothing ever happens. But because nothing happens, everything happens. When we want to be entertained, nothing seems to happen. But in this case, although everything is just a thought in your mind, a lot of underlying percolation takes place. That “nothing happening” is the experience of openness, and that percolation is the experience of compassion.

You can experience that dreamlike quality by relating with sitting meditation practice. When you are reflecting on your breath, suddenly discursive thoughts begin to arise: you begin to see things, to hear things, and to feel things. But all those perceptions are none other than your own mental creation. In the same way, you can see that your hate for your enemy, your love for your friends, and your attitudes toward money, food, and wealth are all a part of discursive thought.

Regarding things as dreams does not mean that you become fuzzy and woolly, that everything has an edge of sleepiness about it. You might actually have a good dream, vivid and graphic. Regarding dharmas as dreams means that although you might think that things are very solid, the way you perceive them is soft and dreamlike. For instance, if you have participated in group meditation practice, your memory of your meditation cushion and the person who sat in front of you is very vivid, as is your memory of your food and the sound of the gong and the bed that you sleep in. But none of those situations is regarded as completely invincible and solid and tough. Everything is shifty.

Things have a dreamlike quality. But at the same time the production of your mind is quite vivid. If you didn't have a mind, you wouldn't be able to perceive anything at all. Because you have a mind, you perceive things. Therefore, what you perceive is a product of your mind, using your sense organs as channels for the sense perceptions.

**Slogan 3: Examine the Nature of Unborn Awareness**

Look at your basic mind, just simple awareness which is not divided into sections, the thinking process that exists within you. Just look at that, see that. Examining does not mean analyzing. It is just viewing things as they are, in the ordinary sense.

The reason our mind is known as *unborn* awareness is that we have no idea of its history. We have no idea where this mind, our crazy mind, began in the beginning. It has no shape, no color, no particular portrait or characteristics. It usually flickers on and off, off and on, all the time. Sometimes it is hibernating, sometimes it is all over the place. Look at your mind. That is a part of ultimate bodhichitta training or discipline. Our mind fluctuates constantly, back and forth, forth and back. Look at that, just *look at that!*

You could get caught up in the fascination of regarding all dharmas as dreams and perpetuate unnecessary visions and fantasies of all kinds. Therefore it is very important to get to this next slogan, “Examine the nature of unborn awareness.” When you look beyond the perceptual level alone, when you look at your own mind (which you cannot actually do, but you pretend to do), you find that there is nothing there. You begin to realize that there is nothing to hold on to. Mind is *unborn*. But at the same time, it is *awareness*, because you still perceive things. There is awareness and clarity. Therefore, you should contemplate that by seeing *who* is actually perceiving dharmas as dreams.

If you look further and further, at your mind’s root, its base, you will find that it has no color and no shape. Your mind is, basically speaking, somewhat blank. There is nothing to it. We are beginning to cultivate a kind of shunyata possibility; although in this case that possibility is quite primitive, in the sense of simplicity and workability. When we look at the root, when we try to find out why we see things, why we hear sounds, why we feel, and why we smell—if we look beyond that and beyond that—we find a kind of blankness.

That blankness is connected with mindfulness. To begin with, you are mindful of some *thing*: you are mindful of yourself, you are mindful of your atmosphere, and you are mindful of your breath. But if you look at *why* you are mindful, beyond *what* you are mindful of, you begin to find that there is no root. Everything begins to dissolve. That is the idea of examining the nature of unborn awareness.

#### **Slogan 4: Self-liberate Even the Antidote.**

Looking at our basic mind, we begin to develop a twist of logic. We say, “Well, if nothing has any root, why bother? What’s the point of doing this at all? Why don’t we just believe that there is no root behind the whole thing?” At that point the next slogan, “Self-liberate even the antidote,” is very helpful. The antidote is the realization that our



discursive thoughts have no origin. That realization helps a lot; it becomes an antidote or a helpful suggestion. But we need to go beyond that antidote. We should not hang on to the so-whatness of it, the naiveté of it.

The idea of antidote is that everything is empty, so you have nothing to care about. You have an occasional glimpse in your mind that nothing is existent. And because of the nature of that shunyata experience, whether anything great or small comes up, nothing really matters very much. It is like a backslapping joke in which everything is going to be hoo-ha, yuk-yuk-yuk. Nothing is going to matter very much, so let it go. All is shunyata, so who cares? You can murder, you can meditate, you can perform art, you can do all kinds of things—everything is meditation, whatever you do. But there is something very tricky about the whole approach. That dwelling on emptiness is a misinterpretation, called the “poison of shunyata.”

Some people say that they do not have to sit and meditate, because they always “understood.” But that is very tricky. I have been trying very hard to fight such people. I never trust them at all—unless they actually sit and practice. You cannot split hairs by saying that you might be fishing in a Rocky Mountain spring and still meditating away; you might be driving your Porsche and meditating away; you might be washing dishes (which is more legitimate in some sense) and meditating away. That may be a genuine way of doing things, but it still feels very suspicious.

Antidotes are any notion that we can do what we want and that as long as we are meditative, everything is going to be fine. The text says to self-liberate even the antidote, the seeming antidote. We may regard going to the movies every minute, every day, every evening as our meditation, or watching television, or grooming our horse, feeding our dog, taking a long walk in the woods. There are endless possibilities like that in the Occidental tradition, or for that matter in the theistic tradition.

The theistic tradition talks about meditation and contemplation as a fantastic thing to do. The popular notion of God is that he created the world: the woods were made by God, the castle ruins were created by God, and the ocean was made by God. So we could swim and meditate or we could lie on the beach made by God and have a fantastic time. Such theistic nature worship has become a problem. We have so many holiday makers, nature worshipers, so many hunters.

In Scotland, at the Samye Ling meditation center, where I was teaching, there was a very friendly neighbor from Birmingham, an industrial town, who always came up there on weekends to have a nice time. Occasionally he would drop into our meditation hall and sit with us, and he would say: “Well, it’s nice you people are meditating, but I feel much

better if I walk out in the woods with my gun and shoot animals. I feel very meditative walking through the woods and listening to the sharp, subtle sounds of animals jumping forth, and I can shoot at them. I feel I am doing something worthwhile at the same time. I can bring back venison, cook it, and feed my family. I feel good about that.”

The whole point of this slogan is that antidotes of any kind, or for that matter occupational therapies of any kind, are not regarded as appropriate things to do. We are not particularly seeking enlightenment or the simple experience of tranquillity—we are trying to get over our deception.

### **Slogan 5: Rest in the Nature of Alaya, the Essence.**

The idea of this slogan is that in the sitting practice of meditation and with an understanding of ultimate bodhichitta, you actually transcend the seven types of consciousness, and rest in the eighth consciousness, alaya. The first six types of consciousness are the sensory perceptions: [1] visual consciousness, [2] hearing consciousness, [3] smelling consciousness, [4] taste consciousness, [5] feeling or touch consciousness, and [6] mind consciousness, or the basic coordinating factor governing the other five. [Customarily: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind consciousness.] The seventh type of consciousness, [7] nuisance mind, is a kind of conglomeration which puts energy into all of that. In Tibetan it is called *nyön-yi*: *nyön* is short for *nyönmong* [*klesha* in Sanskrit], which literally means “nuisance,” “defilements,” “neurosis,” and *yi* means “mind.”

The idea of resting one’s mind in the basic alaya is to free oneself from that sevenfold mind and rest in simplicity and in clear and nondiscriminating mind. You begin to feel that sight, smell, sound, and everything else that happens is a production of home ground, or headquarters. You recognize them and then come back to headquarters, where those productions began to manifest. You just rest in the needlessness of those productions.

The idea is that there is a resting place of some kind, which could be called primitive shamatha. There is a starting point, a returning point. You can look at me and as you look at me you might check yourself—but you might check *beyond* yourself and find that some homing device is already taking place. So the idea is to rest in alaya, to be with the homing device, to rest where the orders and information come from.

This whole logic or process is based on taking it for granted that you trust yourself already, to begin with. You have some kind of relaxation with yourself. That is the idea of ultimate bodhichitta. You don’t have to run away from yourself all the time in order

to get something outside. You can just come home and relax. The idea is to return to home-sweet-home.

You try to give yourself good treatment. You do not follow fixed logic or fixed conceptual ideas of any kind, including discursive thought. Resting in the nature of alaya means going beyond the six sense consciousnesses, and even beyond the seventh consciousness, the fundamental discursive thought process which brings about the other six. The basic alaya principle goes beyond all that. Even in ordinary situations, if you actually trace back to find out where everything came from, you will find some primitive resting level. You could rest in that primitive basic existence, that existential level.

Starting from the basic alaya principle, we then develop *alaya-vijnana*, or alaya consciousness, which makes distinctions. We begin to create a separation between this and that, who and whom, what and what. That is the notion of consciousness, or we could even call it *self*-consciousness—who is on our side and who is on their side, so to speak. The basic alaya principle does not have any bias. That is why the basic alaya principle is called natural virtue. It is neutral. It is neither male nor female, therefore it is not on either side, and the question of courting is not involved. *Alaya consciousness* is biased. It is either male or female, because the courting concept is involved.

Basic wakefulness, *sugatagarbha*, is beyond alaya, but it goes along with alaya at the same time. It is pre-alaya, but it encompasses the alaya state. Alaya has basic goodness, but *sugatagarbha* has greater goodness. It is wakefulness in itself. From that point of view, even basic alaya could be said to be consciousness of some kind. Although it is not an official category of consciousness as such, it is a kind of awareness, or maybe even a kind of samsaric mind. But *sugatagarbha* is beyond that. It is indestructible—the ancestor, or parent, of alaya.

The process of perception, when you first perceive a sense object, has several components. You have the actual mechanisms which perceive things, your physical faculties such as eyes, ears, and so forth. Beyond that are the mental faculties which use those particular instruments to reflect on certain objects. If you go beyond that, there is the intention of doing that, the fascination or inquisitiveness that wants to know how to relate with those objects. And if you go back beyond that altogether, you find there is a basic experience underlying all of that, which is known as the alaya principle.

According to this text on lojong, that experience is known as basic goodness. So this slogan refers to an experience, not simply to the structural, mechanical process of projection. We could describe that process with the analogy of a film projector. We have

the screen, the phenomenal world; then we project ourselves onto that phenomenal world; and we have the film, which is the fickleness of mind, constantly changing frames. So we have a moving object projected onto the screen. That moving object is mechanically produced by the machinery of the projector which has lots of teeth to catch the film and mechanical devices to make sure that the projection is continuous—which is precisely the same situation as the sense organs. We look and we listen, therefore when we listen, we look. We connect things together by means of time, although things are shifting completely every moment. And behind the whole thing is the bulb, which projects everything onto the screen. That bulb is the cause of the whole thing. So resting in the nature of alaya is like resting in the nature of that bulb, which is behind the machinery of the film projector. Like the bulb, alaya is brilliant and shining. The bulb does not give in to the fickleness of the rest of the machine. It has no concern with how the screen is coming along or how the image is coming through.

Resting in alaya is the actual practice of ultimate bodhichitta, what happens during sitting practice. You experience ultimate bodhichitta at that level. Ultimate bodhichitta is purely the realization that phenomena cannot be regarded as solid, but at the same time they are self-luminous. In the analogy of the film projector, you have to work with the lamp. You take the lamp out of the projector—there's no monkey business with your projector—and you just screw that lamp onto your regular old-fashioned fixture and look at it. That is the self-liberating alaya.

It may be an embarrassing subject to discuss, but this book is designed for the ordinary practitioner. We are not believing in or cultivating alaya, but we are using it as a stepping stone. It would be dangerous if you cultivated it as an end in itself. In this case it is just another step in the ladder. We are talking very simply about alaya as just a clear mind, a basic clear mind. It is simplicity and clarity and nondiscursive thought—very basic alaya. It may not be completely free from all the consciousnesses, including the eighth consciousness itself, but it is the alaya of basic potentiality.

We have to be very clear on this, generally speaking. We are not trying to grasp the buddha nature immediately, at this point. This instruction on resting in alaya is given to somebody who is at the very beginning level. A lot of us have problems, we have no idea whether we are sitting or not sitting. We have struggles about that. So we are trying to work on our basic premises. It is a slowing-down process. For the first time we learn to slow down.

**Slogan 6: In Postmeditation, Be a Child of Illusion.**

Being a child of illusion means that in the postmeditation experience there is a sense that everything is based on creating one's basic perceptions out of one's preconceptions. If you can cut through that and inject some basic understanding or awareness, you begin to see that the games going on are not even big games but simply illusory ones. To realize that requires a lot of mindfulness and awareness working together. Here we are talking about meditation in action, actually, or postmeditation discipline.

Illusion does not mean haziness, confusion, or mirage. Being a child of illusion means that you continue what you have experienced in your sitting practice [resting in the nature of alaya] into postmeditation experience. Continuing with the analogy of the projector, during postmeditation you take the bulb out. You might not have the screen or the film at this point, but you transfer the bulb into your flashlight and carry it with you all the time.

You realize that after you finish sitting practice, you do not have to solidify phenomena. Instead, you can continue your practice and develop some kind of ongoing awareness. If things become heavy and solid, you flash mindfulness and awareness into them. In that way you begin to see that everything is pliable and workable. Your attitude is that the phenomenal world is not evil, that "they" are not going to attack you or destroy you or kill you. Everything is workable and soothing.

It is like swimming: you swim along in your phenomenal world. You can't just float, you have to swim; you have to use your limbs. That process of using your limbs is the basic stroke of mindfulness and awareness. It is the "flash" quality of it—you flash on to things. So you are swimming constantly in postmeditation. And during meditation, you just sit and rest in the nature of your alaya, very simply. That is how we could develop ultimate bodhichitta. It is very basic and ordinary. You can actually do it. That's the whole idea.

It is not abstract, you simply look at phenomena and see their padded-wall quality, if you like. That's the illusion: padded walls everywhere. You think you are just about to strike against something very sharp, while having a cup of tea, or whatever, and you find that things bounce back on you. There is not so much sharp contrast—everything is part of your mindfulness and awareness. Everything bounces back, like the ball in one of those little television Ping-Pong games. When it returns, you might throw it out again by not being a child of illusion, but it comes back again with a beep, so you become a child of illusion. It is "first thought, best thought." When you look at things, you find that they are soft and that they bounce back on you all the time. It's not particularly intellectual.

This slogan is about learning how to nurture ultimate bodhichitta in terms of mindfulness and awareness. We have to learn how we can actually experience that things in the postmeditation situation are still workable, that there is room, lots of space. The basic idea of being a child of illusion is that we don't feel claustrophobic. After your sitting practice, you might think, "Oh boy, now I have to do the postmeditation practices." But you don't have to feel that you are closed in. Instead you can feel that you are a child of illusion, that you are dancing around and clicking with those little beeps, all the time. It is fresh and simple and very effective. The point is to treat yourself better. If you want to take a vacation from your practice, you can do so and still remain a child of illusion. Things just keep on beeping at you all the time. It's very lucid. It's almost whimsical.

Being a child of illusion is very simple. It is being willing to realize the simplicity of phenomenal play and to use that simplicity as a part of awareness and mindfulness practice. It's a very strong phrase, "child of illusion." Think about it. Try to be one. You have plenty of opportunities.

**Slogan 5. Rest in the nature of alaya, the essence.**  
**Ultimate Bodhicitta Slogans**  
**From *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Vol. 2***  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, Edited by Judith L. Lief, Pages 297-300**

According to Buddhist psychology, there are eight types of consciousness. This slogan is about transcending the first seven consciousnesses and resting in the eighth, or alaya consciousness. The first six consciousnesses are connected with sensory perception, or the meeting of a sense organ, a sense object, and a corresponding sense consciousness. The six sense consciousnesses are sight, smell, hearing, touch, taste, and mind consciousness, which is the basic coordinating factor governing the other five. The mind consciousness uses those particular instruments to perceive mental objects, or thoughts. Beyond all that is the intention of doing so, which is the seventh consciousness, or nuisance mind. The seventh consciousness puts energy into all those perceptions and brings the whole thing together. It has a quality of fascination or inquisitiveness. Going further, beyond all that, you find a level of experience known as the alaya consciousness. There is a resting place, which could be called primitive shamatha.

Resting in alaya means that you do not follow your discursive thoughts, but you try to treat yourself well. Basically, you do not follow fixed logic, discursive thoughts, or conceptual ideas of any kind. Generally when you look out at someone or something, you tend to check back on yourself, but you could look further, beyond yourself. When you do so, you are brought back to that resting place, where the orders and information are coming from.

Starting from basic alaya, you develop alaya consciousness, which makes distinctions. You begin to create a separation between this and that, who and whom, what and what. That is the notion of consciousness, or self-consciousness. You begin to distinguish who is on your side and who is on their side, so to speak. But basic alaya does not have any bias. That is why it is called natural virtue. It is neutral, neither male nor female; therefore, it is not on either side, and there is no question of courting.

Basic wakefulness, or sugatagarbha, is beyond alaya. It is pre-alaya, but at the same time encompasses alaya. Alaya has basic goodness, but sugatagarbha has greater goodness—it is wakefulness itself. From that point of view, even basic alaya could be said to be a consciousness of some kind. Although it is not an official category of

consciousness, it is a kind of awareness, and maybe even a form of samsaric mind. Sugatagarbha is beyond that. It is indestructible; it is the ancestor or parent of alaya.

We could describe the process of perception with the analogy of a film projector. First you have the screen, the phenomenal world. Then you project yourself onto that phenomenal world. You have the film—the fickleness of mind, which constantly changes frames—so you have a moving object projected onto the screen by the machinery of the projector. There are lots of teeth to catch the film, and mechanisms to make sure that the projection is continuous. This is precisely the same situation as the sense organs: you look and you listen, and as you listen, you look. You connect things together, although they are shifting completely every moment by means of time.

Behind the whole setup is a bulb, which projects everything onto the screen. That bulb is the cause of the whole thing. Resting in the nature of alaya is like resting in the nature of that bulb. Alaya is brilliant and shining; it does not give in to the fickleness of the rest of the machine. That bulb has no concern with the screen or how the image is coming through. Resting in alaya is the actual practice of ultimate bodhichitta. It is what happens during sitting practice. Ultimate bodhichitta is the realization that phenomena cannot be regarded as solid, but at the same time, phenomena have a self-luminous quality. So alaya refers to experience, not simply to the structural, mechanical process of projection.

In the analogy of the film projector, the bulb can be taken out and put into a flashlight. If you have a flashlight with a beam of light coming out of it, you have to hold it properly in order to use the light. The flashlight is like relative bodhichitta; holding it properly and making it work for you is absolute bodhichitta. You need absolute bodhichitta so that the light will shine everywhere, wherever you need it. Resting your mind in alaya produces absolute bodhichitta constantly.

By resting your mind in the alaya consciousness, in clear and nondiscriminating mind, you are trying to free yourself from sevenfold mind, or the first seven consciousnesses. But before you can transcend sevenfold mind, you have to work with the bulb. Instead of monkeying with the projector, you could just take the bulb out of your projector, screw it into your regular old-fashioned lamp, and look at it. So there is just the bare minimum of you and your mind, very simply. That is the self-liberating alaya. That good old bulb is the real thing. You have your light or you don't—you switch off or you switch on.

Even in ordinary situations, if you actually trace back to find out where everything comes from, you will find a primitive resting level. You could rest in that quality of basic



existence, or alaya. However, you should not cultivate alaya as an end in itself, which would be dangerous, but you should use it as a stepping-stone. In this case, we are talking about alaya as a clear mind—as simplicity, clarity, and nondiscursive thought—as alaya consciousness. We have to be very clear on this. We are not trying to grasp the buddha nature immediately, but we are trying to work on our basic premises. For the first time, we are learning to slow down.

Alaya is described in the text as naturally good, as basic goodness. That quality of basic goodness applies to personal wholesomeness as well as to dedication to others. It is like saying you are a good person who can take care of your family and friends. Basic goodness is related to both alaya and bodhichitta. However, bodhichitta is more active and illuminating, while alaya is a resting quality with no grudge against anything, just satisfaction.

With the third slogan, “Examine the nature of unborn awareness,” you look at your mind and trace back where your perceptions are coming from. With the fifth slogan, “Rest in the nature of alaya, the essence,” instead of getting caught up in your visual and auditory perceptions, you come back home. You return to “home sweet home,” which is your alaya. The alaya is where everything began, so you are returning to central headquarters. You see that all your activities—sight, smell, sound, and everything else that happens—are a production of that home ground. Having recognized that, you come back to where they began to manifest, and you rest in the needlessness of those productions. Alaya is a starting point and a returning point. It is internalizing. Resting in the nature of alaya takes for granted that you trust yourself already. It assumes that you don't have to run away from yourself all the time in order to get something from outside. You can just come home and relax.

**The Prajna of Meditation**  
**From the Wisdom chapter in *Meditation in Action***  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, pp. 71-74**

Finally we come to *gompa*, meditation. First we had theory, then contemplation, and now meditation in the sense of *samadhi*. The first stage of *gompa* is to ask oneself, 'Who am I?' Though this is not really a question. In fact it is a statement, because 'Who am I?' contains the answer. The thing is not to start from 'I' and then want to achieve something, but to start directly with the subject. In other words one starts the real meditation without aiming for anything, without the thought, 'I want to achieve.' Since one does not know 'Who am I?' one would not start from 'I' at all, and one even begins to learn from beyond that point. What remains is simply to start on the subject, to start on what *is*, which is not really 'I am'. So one goes directly to that, directly to the '*is*'.

This may sound a bit vague and mysterious, because these terms have been used so much and by so many people; we must try then to clarify this by relating it to ourselves. The first point is not to think in terms of 'I', 'I want to achieve.' Since there is no one to do the achieving, and we haven't even grasped that yet, we should not try to prepare anything at all for the future.

... . We should not start off by expecting any kind of reward. There should be no striving and no trying to achieve anything. One might then feel, 'Since there is no fixed purpose and there is nothing to attain, wouldn't it be rather boring? Isn't it rather like just being nowhere?' Well, that is the whole point. Generally we do things because we want to achieve something; we never do anything without first thinking, 'Because...'. 'I'm going for a holiday *because* I want to relax, I want a rest.' 'I am going to do such-and-such *because* I think it would be interesting.' So every action, every step we take, is conditioned by Ego. It is conditioned by the illusory concept of 'I', which has not even been questioned. Everything is built around that and everything begins with *because*.

So that is the whole point. Meditating without any purpose may sound boring, but the fact is we haven't sufficient courage to go into it and just give it a try. Somehow we have to be courageous. Since one is interested and one wants to go further, the best thing would be to do it perfectly and not start with too many subjects, but start with one subject and really go into it thoroughly. It may not sound interesting, it may not be exciting all the time, but excitement is not the only thing to be gained and one must also develop patience. One must be willing to take a chance and in that sense make use of will power.

One has to go forward without fear of the unknown, and if one does go a little bit further one finds it is possible to start without thinking 'because...'—without thinking 'I will achieve something', without just living in the future. One must not build fantasies around the future and just use that as one's impetus and source of encouragement, but one should try to get the real feeling of the present moment. That is to say that meditation can only be put into effect if it is not conditioned by any of our normal ways of dealing with situations. One must practice meditation directly without expectation or judgment and without thinking in terms of the future at all. Just leap into it. Jump into it without looking back. Just start on the technique without a second thought. Techniques, of course, vary a great deal, as everything depends on the person's character. Therefore no generalized technique can be suggested.

Well, those are the methods by which wisdom, *sherab*, can be developed. Now wisdom sees so far and so deep, it sees before the past and after the future. In other words wisdom starts without making any mistakes, because it sees the situation so clearly. So for the first time we must begin to deal with situations without making the blind mistake of starting from 'I'—which doesn't even exist. And having taken that first step, we will find deeper insight and make fresh discoveries, because for the first time we will see a kind of new dimension: we will see that one can in fact be at the end result at the same time that one is travelling along the path. This can only happen when there is no / to start with, when there is no expectation. The whole practice of meditation is based on this ground. And here you can see quite clearly that meditation is not trying to escape from life, it is not trying to reach a Utopian state of mind, nor is it a question of mental gymnastics.

Meditation is just trying to see what *is*, and there is nothing mysterious about it. Therefore one has to simplify everything right down to the immediate present practice of what one is doing, without expectations, without judgments and without opinions. Nor should one have any concept of being involved in a battle against 'evil', or of fighting on the side of 'good'. At the same time one should not think in terms of being limited, in the sense of not being allowed to have thoughts or even think of 'I', because that would be confining oneself in such a small space that it would amount to an extreme form of *Sila*, or discipline.

Basically there are two stages in the practice of meditation. The first involves disciplining oneself to develop the first starting point of meditation, and here certain techniques, such as observing the breathing, are used. At the second stage one surpasses and sees the reality behind the technique of breathing, or whatever the technique may be, and one develops an approach to actual reality through the technique, a kind of feeling of becoming one with the present moment.

This may sound a little bit vague. But I think it is better to leave it that way, because as far as the details of meditation are concerned I don't think it helps to generalize. Since the techniques depend on the need of the person, they can only be discussed individually; one cannot conduct a class on meditation practice.

**The Buddhist Path**  
**An Excerpt from *Journey Without Goal:***  
***The Tantric Wisdom of the Buddha***  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, Excerpt on pp. 4-5**

The entire Buddhist path is based on the discovery of egolessness and the maturing of insight or knowledge that comes from egolessness. In the hinayana, we discover the nonexistence of self through the practice of meditation. Assuming a dignified sitting posture, identifying with the breath, and simply noting thoughts and feelings—basic discursiveness—we begin to make friends with ourselves in a fundamental sense. By applying mindfulness, or bare attention, to whatever arises during meditation, we begin to see that there is no permanence or solidity to our thought process, and at some point, we begin to realize that there is no permanence or solidity to us.

In Sanskrit, the meditative practice of mindfulness is called *shamatha* and in Tibetan it is *shiné (zhi-gnas)*. *Shiné* literally means the development of "peace." The meaning of peace here is precisely this sense of taming the wildness of mind so that we are alert and able to experience ourselves directly. We are not talking about peace as some kind of trance state: shamatha is the first step in waking up.

Mindfulness naturally leads to the development of awareness, which is a sense of expansion, being aware of the environment or space in which we are being mindful. Awareness brings tremendous interest in things, people, and the world altogether. We begin to develop sympathy and caring for others. The practice of awareness in Sanskrit is called *vipashyana* and in Tibetan, *lhagthong (lhagmthong)*, which literally means "clear seeing." Vipashyana is traditionally connected both with the practice of meditation and with the formal study of the teachings and postmeditation activities in general. Vipashyana provides a link between the insight that is developed in meditation practice and our everyday experience. It allows us to carry that meditative insight or awareness into our daily lives.

Through the insight that comes from vipashyana, we begin to make a further discovery of egolessness. We begin to develop a precise understanding of how mind functions and how confusion is generated. We are able to see how the belief in ego causes tremendous pain and suffering to ourselves and others.

From this comes the desire to renounce samsara, the wheel of confused existence—the world of ego. Renunciation is expressed as the desire to refrain from harming ourselves

and others. As well, we begin to long for the path that will liberate us from confusion. We begin to develop confidence in the Buddha as the enlightened example; in the dharma, or teachings of Buddhism, which are the path; and in the sangha, the community of practitioners who follow this path. Renunciation is utterly and absolutely necessary if we wish to practice the teachings of the Buddha. This theme runs through the entire path, from beginning to end. At the Vajrayana level, renunciation is connected with devotion to the teacher, the vajra master. Devotion to the teacher in the vajrayana demands the total surrender of ego, the complete renunciation of all clinging to self.

Because of the discovery of egolessness in shamatha and the development of interest and sympathy in vipashyana, we naturally begin to expand our sense of warmth and friendliness to others. We are less interested in "this," "I," "me," and more interested in "that." The mahayana path is based on this discovery that others are more important than ourselves. Because we have discovered egolessness, because we have discovered that *me* does not exist, we find that there is lots of room, lots of space, in which to help others. That is the basis of compassion, *karuna*. Compassion in the Buddhist tradition is not based on guilt; it is based on having greater vision, because we can afford to do so.

**Discovering a World beyond Ego**  
**From *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Vol. 2***  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, Edited by Judith Lief, pp. 134-137**

**Developing Egolessness: The Hinayana Foundation**

[page 134] The mahayana, like the hinayana, is based on the development of egolessness. In general, the various levels of the path have to do with your relationship to ego and your understanding of egolessness. The mahayana realization of twofold egolessness is dependent on the hinayana in that you first need to develop the egolessness of individuality as well as the first half of the egolessness of dharmas. You might have the intention of attaining the state of twofold egolessness, and you might aspire to the benevolence and gentleness of the compassionate path, but before such things take place, it is absolutely natural that you first go back and develop individual salvation.

Individual salvation means working with yourself. It is based on the idea of renunciation, and in turn, renouncing the renunciation itself. In the hinayana, you take refuge in the Buddha, dharma, and sangha, and begin to overcome the ego of individuality. Once you have accomplished that, you are on the brink of the ego of dharmas. You begin to question why you are doing all this, and you discover the karmic chain reaction of the twelve nidanas. And as you study the nidanas, or interdependent [page 135] co-origination, you realize that you have to reverse that process in order to cut through it.

All this helps you to develop the egolessness of dharmas, but there are still little uncertainties left behind. You have managed to work on the gross level of your experience of dharmas, or things as they are, but you still perceive primarily in terms of opinion and attitude. At a gross level, your attitudes, perceptions, and opinions about the ego of dharmas have been cut through by your experience and understanding of the twelve nidanas. In relating with things as they are in their solid form, you have worked with the crude world of the twelve-nidana chain reaction process up through the ignorance level. But at a subtle level, you have not reached a full understanding of where all those things come from. The source is not yet cut through. So you are back to square two: to the source of the ego of dharmas.

The ego of dharmas comes from fixation on the "am" of "I am." As a practitioner on the boundary between hinayana and mahayana, you have liberated the "I," but you still have not completely clarified the level of "am." You are still fixated on "am" and on

where the "am" came from. The gross level of "am" has been related with, but the primordial "am" still has not been completely clarified.

The primordial "am" comes from some kind of "I am," but not from the original "I am." That situation has already been overcome at the shravakayana level. But at that level, and even at the pratyekabuddhayana level, the ego has not been completely cut through. In fact, pratyekabuddhas regard the little ego that's left as useful and necessary in order to go further. They would probably say that if you completely cut through everything, there would be nothing left to practice with. There would be no reason to go on and no purpose to life, which is quite true. In other words, pratyekabuddhas are afraid of the prajna principle; they are both afraid of it and attracted to it.

In entering the mahayana, you are giving up and letting go. You are letting go of your fixation on individual salvation and you are letting go of your righteousness and religiosity. The last hold of the ego of dharmas is cut through. Everything is regarded as attitude, but it is not attitude that is being cut through—attitude has been cut through already. Rather, it is the "attituder" or the experiencer of attitude that is cut through, which is the second half of the ego of dharmas. When the experiencer of mind's creation has been cut through, you realize that everything is understandable [page 136] and perceivable. You have cut through twofold ego by realizing that the seemingly subtle mental grasp of "am" is really very gross.

When you begin to overcome the fixator, the philosopher, and the conceptualizer, you begin to develop an appreciation for the absence of twofold ego. Although it is not so easy, and may not have happened completely, you still feel that you have overcome something, that you have cut through. At that point, the dawn of mahayana, or the dawn of the absence of twofold ego, occurs in your mind, and you begin to feel that something is worth celebrating. It is quite cheerful; nothing is depressing. The vast action of the bodhisattva begins to develop, and you experience the dawn of mahayana as luminosity and brilliance.

### **Differentiating Techniques and Experience**

The development of egolessness is a progressive process, not a sudden attainment. Shamatha is the basic technique. On the basis of shamatha, vipashyana is the practice that leads to the realization of the first egolessness, which is the egolessness of self, and then to the realization of one-and-a-half-fold egolessness, which is the egolessness of self and the first half of the egolessness of dharmas. Vipashyana practice culminates in prajna, the technique that brings the complete experience of twofold egolessness, or shunyata. So first there is the tool, and then there is the experience. We should be



absolutely clear about that, and not confuse technique with experience. You cannot have mahayana without vipashyana—it would be like a tree without a trunk. The whole thing is ancestral. Prajna gives birth to the shunyata experience of the buddhas, and vipashyana is the stone that sharpens the sword of prajna. You could not experience twofold egolessness just with vipashyana, because you could not do it without prajna—but if you abandon vipashyana, you don't get anywhere at all.

Prajna is a technique as much as vipashyana or shamatha: shunyata is what you get, and prajna is what you are going to get it with. Shunyata is like death, and prajna is like a deadly weapon. That may sound rather morbid, but in terms of overcoming ego, I am sure you will understand what I mean. Prajna can be regarded as a microscope, and shunyata as what is on the slide. That is why the *Heart Sutra* places an emphasis on prajna, but little emphasis on shunyata. Shunyata is discovered in the phrase, "No eye, no ear, no nose," and so on, but prajna is actually more important. [page 137] Sharpening and cleaning your instrument is more important than what you see with it. You cannot cut with shunyata, as if it were a weapon. That would be absurd, because shunyata happens after the fact. Since prajna is the instrument with which you discover shunyata, shunyata is regarded as the child of *prajnaparamita*, of the perfection of wisdom.

## **Three Levels of Samten**

**From *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Volume Two, The Bodhisattva Path of Wisdom and Compassion***

**By Chögyam Trungpa, Compiled and Edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 252-254**

In addition to two categories of samten, there are three levels: dwelling in the dharma of seeing, accumulating goodness, and enthusiasm in working for others.

### **Dwelling in the Dharma of Seeing**

The first level of samten is dwelling in the dharma of seeing. It is the practice of shamatha. Your perception and your state of mind are working along with the ayatanas and dhatus, so you are constantly projecting outward. You are not trying to contradict the ayatanas, but you are maintaining yourself within the ayatanas, so you are able to remain in the state of shamatha quite leisurely. Your mind becomes peaceful and your body relaxed. That seems to be the essence of shamatha practice.

The relaxation that comes with shamatha is called shinjang. You are thoroughly processed. Your mind is processed by the peace and one-pointedness of mindfulness practice, and your body is processed by assuming certain postures. Eventually the posture of sitting meditation practice becomes a soothing and natural exercise; it is natural relaxation. It is as if both mind and body were put into a washing machine and then into a dryer. But it is a dry-cleaning process rather than a wet-cleaning process. You do not have to go through the wetness of passion, just the dryness of prajna. So shinjang is the Buddhist version of dry-cleaning our whole being. It is achieved through shamatha practice, which is the first level of samten.

### **Accumulating Goodness**

The second level of samten is accumulating goodness or virtue. Having fully and thoroughly achieved shamatha mindfulness, you begin to develop vipashyana awareness. Mindfulness is a very localized situation, but with awareness, you actually can discriminate dharmas. At the same time, you develop a further appreciation of concentration. In the state of awareness, you can appreciate the possibility of seeing the world properly and fully. You can see how your ayatanas and dhatus function or operate, and you can see how the world works. This is what is known as vipashyana.

[page 253] According to the Buddhist tradition, virtue can be defined as clear perception. Clear perception is not involved with ego. If you have ego, you cannot have

clear perception; your perceptions will still be clouded. When you no longer have any obstacles or cloudiness, you experience clarity, and you are able to practice immaculately. Because you are able to practice immaculately and purely, you can also help others beautifully—and because you can help others, you yourself become trained at the same time. And because of that, you can attain enlightenment and help others attain enlightenment.

### **Enthusiasm in Working for Others**

The third level of samten is enthusiasm in working for others. You are not purely interested in peace and insight, or shamatha and vipashyana alone, but you develop agitation in your state of mind. That agitation is to work for sentient beings. From the mahayana point of view, when you develop shamatha, you are developing shunyata, and when you develop vipashyana, you are developing compassion. So you have a sense of compassion and shunyata already.

At the third level of samten, you gain further energy to combine shamatha and vipashyana, to join emptiness with compassion. So the discipline of working for sentient beings begins to evolve. But nobody is going to get an award for saving all sentient beings, that's for sure, because nobody can keep up with it. That is the saving grace. It is like working as a doctor: if you are a doctor, how many people are you going to cure? Are you going to cure the whole world, or are you going to cure people one by one? You just keep working every day. Do you expect that everybody is going to be healthy, that one day the whole world will just say, "I'm healthy"? You wouldn't expect that—but you still keep working.

With samten, or meditation, you cannot be moved by wandering thoughts. Your attention is good, and your desire to do things becomes very real. Exertion encourages some sort of feistiness, and the practice of samten establishes that feistiness as grounded and real. "We mean business," so to speak. Working for sentient beings is finally becoming fully and thoroughly established as the ground of your whole being. Your state of mind is completely and fully soaked in it. At this level, working for sentient beings becomes the activity of shunyata and compassion.

The other paramitas are very good in their own way, but they could be very jumpy. With dhyana, because your span of attention becomes much [page 254] more vast and definite, you do not have to be constantly jumpy. You have learned how to concentrate, how to attend to one theme for a long time, and that affects how you can practice compassion and how you can work for others. If you want to help someone, you spend lots of time with them, you cultivate them, and you never get frustrated. Your span of

attention becomes so vast, so good, and so willing, that this person can shit on you, piss on you, kick you, try all sorts of ways to provoke you, but you are never moved. You are just like a mountain. Since your span of attention cannot be interrupted, you can listen to someone and work with them for many years. You do not look for shortcuts. Your real commitment to that person is an act of compassion—and because you are also practicing exertion, you enjoy what you are doing.

**Excerpts from Chapter 49. Self-Perpetuating Awareness**  
*The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma:*  
*Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation*  
By Chögyam Trungpa, compiled and edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 367-369

**Burning Conceptual Mind**

[page 368] In his synopsis of vipashyana experience, Jamgön Kongtrül writes about seeing the phenomenal world as empty space. He says that the phenomenal world is empty—it does not have any form, any qualities, any perceptions, any anything at all. Out of that nonexistence, and because of it, we are able to shape forms, objects, colors, and conceptualizations of all kinds. Fixed concepts, shapes, and colors arise, but they are like firewood. That firewood is an aspect of one's intelligence, or discriminating awareness; and the fire is the discipline that burns the fabric of discriminating mind. That is, through the experience of vipashyana, apparent phenomena are seen as fuel. Such firewood should be burned so that there is no difference between the phenomenal world and its occupants—they are one. When the fuel of fixed concepts is burned up by the fire of discipline, we have nothing to hang on to. And having discovered nothing to hold on to, we find that the whole thing dissipates. That is the total experience of vipashyana.

**Total Experience**

Vipashyana experience is total experience that goes beyond techniques and beyond mindfulness. Vipashyana awareness expands and opens constantly. We could call it active space, self-perpetuating space, or self-perpetuating awareness. Through vipashyana, you have a different way of being, in that you are more open to life both psychologically and physically. Everything should be included in the process of awareness. Such self-perpetuating awareness is possible. It is not so much that you can do it, but there is the possibility that you can see it. When the firewood has burned up, the original fire and wood no longer exist. They have dissolved into open space, which is very real to us and very personal.

**Two Types of Effort**  
***The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma:***  
***Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation***  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, Edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 505-507**

[page 505] In joining together shamatha and vipashyana, the scriptures talk about two types of effort: the practice of surrendering and the practice of continuity. The Sanskrit word *virya* (Tib.: tsöndrö) means "effort," "diligence," or "working hard." The practice of surrendering, or devotional *virya*, is called *küjor*—*kü* meaning "respect," or "devotion," and *jorwa* meaning "application" or "practice," so *küjor* means the "practice of devotion." The practice of continuity, or ongoing *virya*, is *tagjor*. *Tag* means "continuity," and *jorwa* again means "practice," so *tagjor* means "the practice of continuity." With *tagjor*, your practice is ongoing. You have engaged with [page 506] the practice, and your practice is diligent and devoted—and you are willing to go along with that for the rest of your life.

The two *viryas* balance one another. Devotional *virya* could become impulsive, and ongoing *virya* could be without devotion or inspiration, just dragging along. So we need both devotional *virya* and ongoing *virya*. The two *viryas* seem to be important. They are the basic core of the shamatha-vipashyana marriage—and shamatha-vipashyana is recommended as the vanguard of the mahayana practice of shunyata. Shamatha-vipashyana is the way you step out of the path of accumulation onto the path of unification, the second of the five paths. The combination of shamatha with vipashyana is the leverage.

In shamatha-vipashyana practice, when you sit you have an awareness of your surroundings. Your sense perceptions have been taken into account in developing vipashyana awareness, and you also have the shamatha practice of deliberateness, of getting into things directly. Bringing together those two types of practice is said by the Kagyü lineage father Gampopa to be one of the most enlightening and promising techniques ever developed in the dharma.

In the Burmese Theravada tradition, the late Burmese meditation master Mahasi Sayadaw was a great revolutionary in the meditation field. He reintroduced meditation practice into the Theravada world with a particular emphasis on the combination of shamatha-vipashyana. It is an important point that having already accomplished shamatha and vipashyana independent of each other, we can combine them together by application of the two types of *virya*. This approach is highly recommended by all kinds of great teachers.

When we combine shamatha and vipashyana, we feel the verge of the breath, or the touch of the breath going out, rather than being heavy-handedly involved in it. At the same time, there is a feeling of completeness around us everywhere, in all directions, an environmental feeling. We sense that when the breathing dissolves, it is an expanding process—dissolving at this point, dissolving at that point, and further points, and further, further points. That dissolving is taking place in the whole universe, and you are, in a sense, nowhere. Finally, you lose the reference point as to who is breathing and where the breathing is dissolving. But that sense of complete desolation cannot take place unless the precision and accuracy of the breathing is happening at the same time. The accuracy of shamatha happens to be independent of the particular department that perpetuates [page 507] the sense of reference point. But even if there is no point of reference with shamatha, as the breathing goes out, it is real and complete breathing going out.

The sense of reference point is connected to the psychosomatic body, which is the source of security. If you lose that reference point, you may feel that you have at last freed yourself from the world of desire, and your psychosomatic sickness has no control over you anymore. But you still have a long way to go. You have not yet touched shunyata. Although it may be subtle, there is still a sense of self. Although the heaviest part of the neurosis has been removed, there is still a feeling of duality. For the practitioner, the sense of self abides in the teachings and the practice itself. That is the only security there is: trusting in the truth of the teachings. With practice, there is definitely a change, because you experience the desolation of things being not all that solid and definite. Your belief in physical existence is being pulled apart, but you still believe in the discontinuity. There is the abstract belief that what pulls you apart is a form of security. There is still some kind of trust that you are going to continue, and you have a practice to work with. So although you lose your body, you can still practice.

In shamatha-vipashyana, mind and space mix together. That mixing of mind and space comes from the two types of virya. The virya of devotion, kūjor, leans toward the practice of precision, of bending one's fantasies to the simple breath. It is the shamatha aspect. The virya of continuity, or tagjor, is related with vipashyana. In shamatha-vipashyana, you need kūjor and tagjor happening together simultaneously.

***Beyond Present, Past, and Future Is the Fourth Moment***  
**By Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Ed. Carolyn Rose Gimian**  
*Excerpts from a lecture in “The Tibetan Buddhist Path” class taught by*  
**Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche during the first summer session of the Naropa**  
**Institute, in July 1974. Shambhala Sun, March 2006**

The shamatha experience, the slow process of mindfulness that takes place on the beginner’s level, allows us to be available to ourselves. Before we become missionaries or social workers, whether in the conventional sense or on the level of bodhisattvas and tantric practitioners, we have to work with ourselves and pull ourselves together. The first step towards being a social worker or a preacher is to make sure that you don’t become a nuisance to others. The starting point is the shamatha practice of meditation, in which we begin to catch ourselves being a nuisance to ourselves. We find all kinds of thought problems, emotional hang-ups, and physical problems with meditation—problems of all kinds.

We find that we are being a nuisance to ourselves, let alone being a nuisance to others. We get angry with ourselves, saying: “I could do better than this. What’s wrong with me? I seem to be getting worse. I’m going backwards.” We’re angry at the whole world, including ourselves. Everything we see is an insult. The universe becomes the expression of total insult. One has to relate with that. If you are going to exert your power and energy to walk on the path, you have to work with yourself.

The first step is to make friends with yourself. That is almost the motto of shamatha experience. Making friends with yourself means accepting and acknowledging yourself. You work with your subconscious gossip, fantasies, dreams—everything. And everything that you learn about yourself you bring back to the technique, to the awareness of the breathing, which was taught by the Buddha.

Having made friends with yourself, you feel a sense of relief and excitement. At the same time, you should be careful not to get overly excited about your accomplishment. You are still a schoolboy or a schoolgirl. If last night’s homework was good, that doesn’t mean that you are done with school altogether. You have to come back to class, you have to work with your teacher, you have to do more homework, precisely because you were successful. You have more work to do.

Next is the experience of vipashyana, which is a sense of fundamental awareness. Such awareness acknowledges the boundaries of non-awareness, the boundaries of wandering mind. You begin to realize the boundary and the contrast. Your awareness is



taking place and your confusion, your mindlessness, is also taking place. You realize that, but you don't make a big deal about it. You accept the whole situation as part of the basic awareness.

Not only are you aware of your breath, your posture, and your thought process, but you are fundamentally mindful and aware. There is a sense of totality. You are aware of the room; you are aware of the rug; you are aware of your meditation cushion; you are aware of what color hair you have; you are aware of what you did earlier that day. You are constantly aware of such things. Beyond that there is nonverbal, nonconceptual awareness that doesn't talk in terms of facts and figures. You have a fundamental, somewhat abstract level of awareness and of being. There is a sense that "This is taking place. Something is happening right here." A sense of being—experience without words, without terms, without concepts, without visualization—takes place. It is unnameable. We can't call it "consciousness" exactly, because consciousness implies that you are evaluating or conscious of sensory inputs. We can't even really call it "awareness," which could be misunderstood. It's not simply awareness. It's a state of being. Being what? One never knows. It is just being without any qualification. Are you being Jack? Are you being Jill? Are you being Smith? One never knows.

This may sound rather vague, but it is not as vague as all that. There is a very strong energy. A very powerful thing is taking place. There is a shock, the electricity of being pulled back into the present constantly: here, here, here. It's happening. It's really taking place.

There is an interesting dichotomy here: on the one hand, we don't know what it's all about. On the other hand, there is enormous precision and understanding. Such directness is taking place. That is the state of vipashyana, a state of realization or insight. You begin to see inside your mind on the level of nonverbal awareness. Nonverbal cognitive mind is functioning. You may say, "Now I hear the traffic. Now I hear the cuckoo clock. Now I hear my wristwatch ticking. Now I hear my wife yelling at me." But you also have to say: "I hear but I don't hear at the same time." Such totality is taking place. A very precise something or other is happening. That is the state of vipashyana. It is nonverbal and nonconceptual and very electric. It is neither ecstasy nor a state of dullness. Rather, a state of "hereness" is taking place, which is described in the Tibetan Buddhist literature as *nowness*.

*Nowness* is sometimes referred to as the fourth moment. That may sound more mystical than what is meant. You have the past, present, and future, which are the three moments. Then you have something else taking place, which is called the fourth moment. The fourth moment is not a far-out or extraordinary experience as such. It is a

state of experience that doesn't even belong to now. It doesn't belong to what might be, either. It belongs to a non-category—which provides another sense of category. Thus it is called the fourth moment. That is the state of vipashyana, or the state of non-ego. The Tibetan term for this is lhakthong dagme tokpe sherap, which means “the knowledge of egoless insight.” It is a very real experience in which nothing can be misunderstood. It is such an overwhelming experience. The experience comes at you. You experience it precisely and in great detail.

.... That is what is happening in vipashyana experience. Experience becomes so real and precise that it transcends any reference point of the doctrine that you are practicing. Whether you are practicing Buddhism or Hinduism, you are practicing life. In fact, ironically, you begin to find that you can't escape. You find that life is practicing you. It becomes very real and very obvious.

Experiencing the fourth moment is an important point in the process of spiritual development. You actually realize that you are on the path, and everything in your life begins to haunt you. Sometimes the haunting process takes the form of pleasurable confirmation. Sometimes it is painful and threatening. There is the feeling of some kind of ghost haunting you all the time. You can't get rid of it; you can't even call the Catholics to exorcise it. That state of insight and state of being simultaneously haunted is the experience of the fourth moment.

You might feel that you are sitting and camping on the razor's edge, making campfires quite happily, yet knowing that you are on the razor's edge. You can't quite settle down and relax and build your campfire, yet one still does so.

That state of hauntedness is the state of ego, actually. Somebody in your family, some part of your being, is beginning to complain that they are getting uncomfortable messages. In other words, the vipashyana awareness of the fourth moment cannot materialize unless there is a slight tinge of being haunted by your own ego. The hauntedness and the sense of insight work together. That is what creates experience.

.... The present is the third moment. It has a sense of presence. You might say, “I can feel your presence.” Or, “I can feel the presence of the light when it's turned on. Now there is no darkness.” The present provides a sense of security: you know where you are. You keep your flashlight in your pocket. If you encounter darkness, you take out your flashlight and shine the light to show you where you are going. You feel enormous relief, created by that little spot of light in front of you. You don't see the whole environment, but you feel the sense of presence and the present. The fourth moment is a state of totality. Basic awareness is taking place which doesn't need any particular

reassurance as such. It is happening. It is there. You feel the totality. You perceive not only the beam of light from the flashlight, but you see the space around you at the same time. The fourth moment is a much larger version of the third moment.

Without the experience of the fourth moment, there isn't enough intelligence taking place. You are just accepting things naively, and that naivete may become the basis for spiritual materialism. Naivete is believing in something that doesn't exist, which means that it becomes a sense of ignorance or stupidity. You turn on the cold shower, and you hope everything is going to be okay. You try to make sure that everything will be predictable and okay and then you just give in. You are not prepared for any reminders. Then this little twist of hot water takes place. Whenever there is a reminder, it is part of the fourth moment. If there is a reminder, everything becomes very real. If you don't have a reminder, then you are just at the mercy of chaos, samsara. That is why the sitting practice of meditation is so important. It boils down to that.

**Vipashyana**  
**Excerpt from The Fourth Moment**  
***Cynicism and Magic: Intelligence and Intuition on the Buddhist Path***  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, pp. 104-110**

Having made friends with yourself, the next process is what is known as vipashyana experience, which is a sense of awareness. This is fundamental awareness, which is to say awareness that acknowledges the boundaries of nonawareness. You begin to realize the boundary between where your awareness is taking place, and where your wandering mind and confusion is happening. However, you don't make a big deal about it. Rather, you accept the whole thing as part of basic awareness. Not only are you aware of your breath, and your posture and thought process, but you are fundamentally mindful and aware. A sense of totality is taking place. You're aware of the room, you're aware of the rug, you're aware of your zafu, you're aware of the color of your hair, and what you did before you came to sit. You are constantly aware of those things.

But then there is nonverbal awareness, nonconceptual awareness, which doesn't relate in terms of facts and figures, such as what time you came here and sat and meditated. Rather, you have a basic, general, abstract awareness of being. A sense of being is taking place. In fact, a sense of being is happening here and now, a sense of experience without words, without terms, without a concept, without a verbalization or visualization. It's taking place and it is unnameable. We can't call it a "consciousness" exactly. We can't even call it "awareness," which is sometimes misunderstood. This is not quite awareness. It's a state of being. Being what? One never knows. It's just being without anything.

Are you being Jack? Are you being Jill? Are you being Smith? One never knows. But it's not as vague as that. Within the state of vagueness and uncertainty, there is very strong energy. Something very powerful is taking place—something is happening. There is a shock, an electricity of being pulled back into the present constantly. Here. Here. Here. It's happening. It's really taking place. It's not as vague as we expected: but actually it's happening.

It is a very interesting dichotomy. On the one hand, you don't know what it is all about. On the other hand, there is enormous precision and understanding. A directness is taking place, which is the state of vipashyana, a state of realization in terms of insight. You begin to see inside your mind at the level of nonverbal awareness.

Nonverbal cognitive mind is functioning, which is the state of vipashyana. It is nonverbal, nonconceptual, because you can't say, "I now hear the traffic. I now hear the cuckoo clock or my wristwatch clicking. I now hear my wife yelling at me." You hear, yet you don't hear at the same time. This totality is taking place. Something is happening that is very electric. On the other hand, it is not particularly ecstasy, nor is it a state of dullness. Rather, a state of here-ness is taking place. In the Tibetan Buddhist literature it is described as "nowness."

Sometimes that state is referred to as the fourth moment. That may sound more mystical than what it means. You have the past, present, and future, which are three moments. Then you have something else taking place, which is called the fourth moment. The fourth moment is not a particularly far-out experience, or extraordinary as such. It's a state of experience that doesn't belong to now, or any "might be" experience. It belongs to a noncategory, which provides another sense of category. That's why it is called the fourth moment.

That is the state of vipashyana, or the state of nonego. In Tibetan terms this is called lhakthong dagme tokpe sherap, which means "the knowledge of egoless insight." It's a very real experience, an overwhelming experience you can't mistake. In fact, at some point the experience comes at you. Experience is coming at you and you're experiencing it, precisely and in great detail. You are then able to work with yourself and your everyday life situations, because there are constant reminders taking place in everyday life.

There are all kinds of little hassles: you forgot to pay the telephone bill and the message from the company is getting heavy. They are about to sue you. Your motorcycle is about to catch fire because you are overextending its power. Your grandmother is dying. Your family and parents are calling for your attention, and you can't afford to ignore them. All kinds of past reminders and present reminders are happening at once. There's a constant state of turmoil.

But if you look at where the problem came from more closely—what is all this about?—you begin to experience the fourth moment. A problem comes and a problem goes, but it still remains problematic. That is the state of the fourth moment. The problem remains a problem, nothing dissolves into love and light, or a beautiful, creamy, honey lotus lake. It still remains potent, slightly painful, sour, as if the universe is staring at you. The world is looking at you with a disapproving look. You haven't been quite good, or as enlightened as you should be. When the sun shines at you, it's a disapproving look from the world. When the cock cries cock-a-doodle-doo, when the car honks outside your

house, when your telephone rings, it says the same thing. There are ironic mockeries happening all over the place.

It's not that the devil is against you and trying to destroy you, or some magician has put a spell on you. The world is constantly, very powerfully in its subtle way, trying to remind you that you should remember your fourth moment. The fourth moment. That is what is happening. At the level of vipashyana, that experience becomes very real, very precise. It transcends even the reference points of the doctrines of practicing Buddhism or practicing Hinduism. Rather, you're practicing life. In fact, ironically, you begin to find that you can't escape—that life is practicing you. It becomes very real and very obvious.

That is a very important starting point in the process of evolving yourself. You begin to realize that you are on the path. Everything that happens in your life begins to haunt you. Sometimes the haunting process takes the form of a pleasurable confirmation and sometimes it is painful and threatening. There is some kind of ghost haunting you all the time, which you can't get rid of. You can't even call the Catholics to exorcise it.

That state of insight, the fourth-moment experience, as well as the state of being haunted, take place simultaneously. That's an interesting place to be. You might feel that you are camping on the razor's edge, making campfires quite happily—but knowing you are on the razor's edge, and you can't quite settle down and relax and build your campfire, although you still do it. That state of hauntedness is the state of ego, actually. There's somebody in your family, in a part of your being, who begins to complain to you that they are getting uncomfortable messages. In other words, that state of awareness of the fourth moment in the vipashyana experience cannot materialize unless there is a slight tinge of being haunted by your own ego. The hauntedness and the sense of insight both work together, which builds the experience. Experience cannot happen unless there is black and white taking place, sweet and sour working together. Otherwise you have no experience. You are just absorbed into sweet, or you're absorbed into sour, so you have no way of working at all.

You should regard our practice on the path as being experiential, rather than a series of stages. It's not as though today you are doing one program and tomorrow you are doing another program. On July fourth you decide to change your program into something else. On September second you move on to the first bhumi or the second bhumi. On December tenth you are going on to vipashyana training. Somehow, things don't work that way. A lot of teachers have tried to institute such programs and have failed. A lot of students have tried to position themselves so they know where they're at, so to speak, and they've also failed. We have no way of knowing where we are, or how we are doing,

in terms of a computerized system. But we know we're on some journey. That journey takes place, that journey takes time and experience.

When we talk about "experience" we should be very careful. What are you experiencing? Traditionally speaking, experience works through having an expectation. You have some kind of warning as to what the experience might be. Somebody has told you, you might know it roughly, so you prepare for this particular experience. Then you wait for it. You do as much as you can. You exert yourself. Then you have the experience. Everything is absolutely predictable.

But in this case we are not talking about a programmed and predicted experience. We are talking purely in terms of experience which comes from the unconscious mind. It's like if you take a cold shower and suddenly it turns hot, with burning water coming out. It's so instant, so real. For a moment, when you have the hot water coming at you, you still think it's cold. Then you begin to feel that something is not quite right with that particular coldness. It begins to burn you. It is unprogrammed—experience is like that. Nothing is experienced in terms of your expectations. But it's like experiencing hot water and cold water simultaneously.

**Three Stages of Vipashyana**  
***The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma:***  
***Volume One, The Path of Individual Liberation***  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, compiled and edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 349-351**

Traditional texts describe three stages that are very important to understand in connection with vipashyana: *chipa nyerchö*, or “acting like an infant”; *ro-nyam* or “equal taste”; and *teshin mikpa*, or “seeing things as they are.”

**Acting like an Infant**

The first stage is called *chipa nyerchö*. *Chipa* means “infant,” *chö* means “acting,” and *nyer* means “being closer to it”; so *chipa nyerchö* means the “acting like an infant” level of meditation experience. *Chipa nyerchö* is the first glimpse of vipashyana. It is like teaching an infant to walk. *Chipa nyerchö* develops from very intense shamatha practice, which brings up what are called “visions of emptiness.”

When you suddenly stop speeding and you become absolutely still, you get a kind of backfire of speed within the stillness. Because you are so confused between stillness and speed, you create visions, or hallucinations, which do not have any substance. The Japanese Zen people call such hallucinations *makyo*. Such nonexistent hallucinations have no root or background. Things shift in front of your eyes, or you begin to see smoke passing by. You might begin to have a sense that your toes are gigantic and your body is tiny, or you have a gigantic head and a small body. You might think the ceiling is sinking above your head, or your zafu is shifting around. Your vision changes and all kinds of sounds are heard. Some people hear a complete orchestra, with singing and chanting. Different tingling sensations occur in the body. Sometimes there is terror that you don't exist.\* Such experiences may seem profound, but as long as there is humor or play, I don't think they are a problem.

**Equal Taste**

[page 350] The second stage is called *ro-nyam*. *Ro* is “taste,” and *nyam* means “equal”; so *ro-nyam* means “equal taste.” *Ro-nyam* is a slightly higher stage, a little bit more on the adult level. You begin to experience the four noble truths and you also begin to

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\* When a student asked at this point what that experience of terror was like, Trungpa Rinpoche replied, “I suppose more or less like this,” and continued to sit normally.



experience the simplicity of awareness, so although the sensorial hallucinations might continue, they don't mean anything to you. There is a quality of one flavor, or one taste. Your shamatha practice continues in a very solid way. You have developed mental stability and you are able to stay with the practice. Because you are already completely involved with shamatha, you also begin to see the simplicity and straightforwardness of vipashyana. So at the second stage, or ro-nyam, shamatha and vipashyana are combined. That combination is the goal of the Burmese meditation schools in particular. They highly recommend the second category of vipashyana as a most important experience.

### **Seeing Things as They Are**

The third stage is called teshin mikpa. *Te* means "that," *shin* means "like"; so *teshin* means "like that." *Mikpa* is "perception," "understanding," or "knowledge"; so *teshin mikpa* means "seeing things as they are," which is known as the mahavipashyana experience. The mahavipashyana experience creates a link between hinayana and mahayana practice, in that you begin to experience emptiness, or shunyata. *Shunya* means "empty," and *ta* makes it a noun; so *shunyata* means "emptiness." You sense that you are basically shunya, or empty. Your psychological makeup, the embellishments you indulge in, and your thought process are all nonexistent. Because awareness is very direct, precise, and simple, it brings spaciousness and a glimpse of shunyata. You begin to see not only simplicity, but emptiness, or intangibility. In mahavipashyana, a quality of conviction begins to take place, a primitive shunyata experience. So mahavipashyana is a step further than ro-nyam, because with mahavipashyana you have a glimpse that you are inherently nothing—not as a meditation experience alone, but as a kind of fundamental devastation.

In mahavipashyana, there's an enormous feeling of being helped "out" rather than helped "in." You are pulled out of whatever realm you are in, into a realm, or psychological state, that is completely empty. You begin to realize that you do not have an origin, and you don't belong anywhere. [page 351] You are treading on a path that is a path in terms of experience but is no longer a concrete path, so there is a lot of fear. It is as if you are riding and you lose your grip on the reins, or as if your car begins to go by itself and the steering wheel doesn't work. Something slowly begins to take over so that the path comes to you; you don't go to the path. Practice becomes constantly apparent. It is in your mind all the time, so there is a lot of fear and a lot of concern.

But mahavipashyana experience can also lead to celebration. It depends on your attitude. If your attitude is that the world is playing a trick on you, you will complain to everybody, or at least try to find a source of complaint, so that your ground will be solid

and your ideas will be appreciated. However, if you don't have that attitude of competitiveness, then realizing that there is no ground becomes a source of celebration and joy.

At this stage, the experience that you have nothing to hold on to is continual. And that experience will go on, until at a certain level of vajrayana it takes a different form, with further sophistication. However, in this case it is just the simple experience that you exist, but at the same time you do not have any ground. You have no ground because awareness is constant, and the characteristic of awareness is emptiness. Awareness does not have a portrait, a reflection, or identification. So a positive feeling of nothingness becomes very real at the stage of teshin mikpa, or mahavipashyana experience.

In mahavipashyana, it is as though you have been released. It is like catching a fly and throwing it out the window so that the fly flies away rather than being squashed on the table. The idea of release or liberation in mahavipashyana discipline is to have a glimpse of groundlessness. The basic idea is that the closer you are to enlightened mind, the more your development takes you in that direction, the more groundless you are.

In terms of the idea of egolessness, the closer you are to enlightenment, the less ego there is. Egolessness is the root of vipashyana. Since the ego provides an ongoing ground and reference point, you are losing your foundation; therefore, you are helped "out." You lose your reference point and you become thinner and thinner, so to speak. Vipashyana experience cannot be given birth to, developed, or taught unless there is some understanding of egolessness. At the mahavipashyana level, you have been introduced to the egolessness of self, and you are just about to be introduced to the egolessness of phenomena. But you haven't actually been completely introduced yet—you just have a "flu" of it.

[page 352] In ordinary language, shamatha is simply the experience of concentration. It has been said in the texts that even hunters develop shamatha. By one-pointedness with the target, hunters develop their mindfulness or concentration. So you could develop a form of shamatha independent of vipashyana, but to shift from that to a Buddhist-type of concentration, or shamatha, you have to have some experience of, or feeling for, egolessness. You have a sense that there is that possibility, that it is just about to present itself to you, and you practice in that way.

Mahavipashyana is influenced by the mahayana. When you become highly trained in the hinayana and thoroughly absorbed in shamatha practice, your outlook and your experience naturally become mahayana-like. No matter which hinayana school you may

be in, the various doctrinal or philosophical labels and distinctions are irrelevant as far as you are concerned.

Unless you develop vipashyana and realize the importance of wakefulness, you will have only a very distant view of vajrayana or even the higher levels of mahayana. It is necessary to have that kind of basic training and growth. So vipashyana experience and practice is absolutely necessary for a person who follows the Buddhist path and really wants to understand the dharma. Both intellectually and intuitively, vipashyana practice is necessary. You have to make an acquaintance with yourself. You have to meet yourself, to know who you are and what you are. Without vipashyana experience, you don't have any idea of who you are, what you are, how you are, or why you are, at all! So it is very important and absolutely necessary to respect the need for vipashyana experience and 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.

**Combined Excerpts on Shamatha and Vipashyana**  
**From *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Vol. 2: The***  
***Bodhisattva Path of Wisdom and Compassion***  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, Edited by Judith Lief**

**A Taste of Enlightenment, pp. 6-7**

With bodhichitta, the heart or chitta comes first, and bodhi comes later: the heart awakens. So we begin by developing a particular kind of heart, one that is not connected with personal longevity, personal entertainment, or egotism. First we develop heart, and then we develop what heart is all about, or enlightened heart. Enlightened heart is expansive and awake. It is not territorial, and it does not demand that we gather our own flock of egotistic companions. When we look into that quality of basic wakefulness beyond our own territoriality, we find ourselves having a taste of enlightenment for the very first time.

In the hinayana, we may have had a glimpse of gentleness, goodness, and precision, but we never had a taste of the mind clicking in and awakening on the spot, as it should. That has not yet happened. But in the mahayana, it is actually happening. That is why it is very important for us to join mindfulness and awareness, or *shamatha* and *vipashyana*.

In *shamatha-vipashyana*, the process of training takes place in your heart. It is not an athletic approach. You are training yourself so that you can be awakened from drowsiness, deep sleep, and the samsaric world. But you are awake already, which is why it is possible to notice that you have fallen asleep—and you can tune yourself in to this awakened state of being by the practice of rousing bodhichitta. Shamatha brings *maitri*, a simple and kind attitude toward yourself, and vipashyana brings *karuna*, a compassionate attitude toward others. So joining shamatha and vipashyana brings about the realization of bodhichitta. When concentration and awareness are working together, for a fraction of a second you may have a taste of what enlightenment might be.

Such a glimpse is highly possible, even by suggestion. You might find yourself with no discursive thoughts. When you discover that your unwholesome discursive thoughts have been pacified and subjugated, there might be a gap. A pure gap of the absolute, ideal state of mind might occur to you. This is not hypothetical, but real. When discursive thoughts are liberated, you may try to cover up that gap, disguising it as

absentmindedness. But you may be unable to cover it up, which is lucky, for you are having an actual glimpse of bodhichitta. For everyone, without exception, such a glimpse is always possible. And at some point, you realize that it is more than a glimpse, more than a possibility. You realize that bodhichitta is not a theory or a metaphysical concept, but a reality. It is more than rain clouds gathering in the sky—it is the actual rain.

## **Two Aspects of Love: Maitri and Karuna, pp. 15-17**

[page 15] The soft heart of mahayana can only develop by paying attention to your existence and your state of being by means of shamatha and vipashyana. Mahayana experience evolves from being in a state of tranquillity as well as by gentleness to yourself and others, and the only way to develop that is by being fully aware and mindful. So the state of compassion and love grows out of awareness. In the Buddhist tradition, we do not usually use the term *love*. Instead, we use the two terms *maitri* and *karuna*.

### **Maitri / Loving-Kindness**

The primary glimpse of experience that is closest to love is maitri, or loving-kindness. In Tibetan it is *champa*. *Cham* means “tender,” or “gentle” and *pa* makes it a noun; so *champa* is “tenderness” or “loving-kindness”; it is being kind and gentle to oneself. Maitri arises as the result of shamatha discipline. When we begin to be very precise with ourselves, we experience wakefulness and gentleness.

At the hinayana level, your attitude toward discipline is very acute and precise, but at the bodhisattva level, you begin to relax. That relaxation is a form of maitri, or loving-kindness. When you are free from ego fixation altogether, you gain some kind of relief. You realize that you don't have to be all that intense and tight. When you let go of ego fixation, you develop freedom and relaxation, and as an automatic response to that freedom and relaxation, you develop gentleness and compassion.

With maitri you are actually trying to confront the ego directly, to insult the ego. That may seem aggressive, but it is always good for you to insult your ego. Maitri is known as the source of all dharmas, because maitri is the basis of losing the ego. By losing the ego, you automatically give birth to kindness toward yourself and gentleness toward others. It is important to understand that by losing the ego you are becoming benevolent. You realize that caring for others is intrinsic. Once you have removed the fixation on “me” and “my-ness,” behind that fixation you discover a general and natural kindness toward others. It is like removing the skin and flesh from the body and

discovering the bones and the marrow. With maitri, it is possible for even ordinary people to appreciate enlightenment.

[page 16] Because of maitri, you can begin to awaken your buddha nature. You can awaken your ability to be in love. Everybody is capable of falling in love; everybody is capable of being kind to others. Everybody who has an ego can reverse their ego fixation and rediscover their buddha nature. You may not achieve complete liberation right away, but you can begin the occasional back-and-forth journey from confusion to freedom. Anybody can make that journey; anybody can have a taste of freedom. That is always possible. If you want it, it can be done. It doesn't mean that you are going to become a living buddha on the spot, but you could still experience a taste of enlightenment. That taste of enlightenment makes you nostalgic; it makes you want to go further and to practice more. The Black Crown Ceremony is an example of such a taste of enlightenment.<sup>4</sup> It gives you a taste of how to be open and to experience oneness. In this ceremony, you are in a gigantic hall with the Karmapa, the head of the Kagyü lineage, and you just dissolve. When you identify with that experience, enlightenment ceases to be a fairy tale, and begins to become real.

Maitri is based on being gentle with yourself, and at the same time respecting yourself. Often people suffer from depression and other psychosomatic problems because they are unable to respect themselves. They kill themselves because they hate themselves. The idea of maitri is to have sympathy and a gentle attitude toward yourself, to feel that your own existence is worthwhile. You are a would-be buddha, and you have the inheritance of buddha nature already, so you don't need to feel poverty-stricken.

With maitri you begin to experience a quality of delight. You feel that you are worthwhile and delightful in spite of your little thingies. You begin to feel that you can stick your neck out. Your attitude toward yourself begins to lift like a cloud, and you feel as if you have been freed [page 17] from twofold ego completely.<sup>5</sup> You begin to have fewer hang-ups and less aggression. This experience is not earthshaking, it is just a little shift whereby you begin to feel that you are capable and that you have no reason to

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<sup>4</sup> In the *Black Crown Ceremony*, the Karmapa, as the official head of the Kagyü lineage, holds a black crown on his head. This ceremonial crown is a replica of the one given by the Chinese emperor Yung-lo (1360-1424) to the fifth Karmapa (1384-1415). The original crown was said to have been made from the hairs of *dakinis* (female deities who protect the teachings) after Yung-lo had a vision of the crown on the fifth Karmapa's head. As the Karmapa holds the crown on his head, he slowly recites the mantra of Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of compassion. It is said that during those few minutes, he brings to earth the transcendent form of Avalokiteshvara and radiates the bodhisattva's pure egoless compassion.

<sup>5</sup> Twofold ego includes both the fixation on self and the fixation on phenomena as solid, independent, and real.



hide in your depression. At that point, you are ripe and ready to take the bodhisattva vow and formally enter the mahayana path.

## **Karuna / Compassion**

The second aspect of love is karuna, or compassion. In Tibetan it is *nying-je*. *Nying* means "heart," and *je* means "noble"; so *nying-je* means "noble heart." Nying-je is connected with dealing with others. Because we feel gentleness to ourselves, we are able to feel compassionate to others. We begin to experience vipashyana, to be aware of our environment. We see that our friends, relatives, and the people around us are suffering, and they need help. We see that our building is beginning to have cracks in its walls and leaks in its plumbing, and we have to fix it. So we first learn how to love ourselves with the help of shamatha discipline, and from that we begin to develop vipashyana, so that our attention is not stolen by distractions or surprises. Therefore, we begin to develop good compassion.

Traditionally, maitri is connected with the desire to join the path of the bodhisattva, and karuna is connected with actually going along the path. Maitri is the way to overcome aggression; it is the mentality of egolessness. Karuna liberates us from ignorance so that we know how to conduct our affairs, and know how to relate with the world at large. So first we tame ourselves, and after that we develop bodhichitta. But we have a long way to go. Until we have maitri and karuna, loving-kindness and compassion, it is not possible to experience bodhichitta. Therefore, we need to work with shamatha and vipashyana. So hinayana discipline is the preparation for realizing mahayana vision. Without that preparation, we cannot experience what mahayana is all about.

## **Cultivating Wholesomeness, pp. 51-53**

In the Mahayana there is a quality of wholesomeness, which comes from shamatha, vipashyana, and the union of the two. Shamatha leads to freedom from aggression; it brings gentleness, maitri, and kindness to yourself. Vipashyana leads to freedom from ignorance; it brings clarity and intelligence. The combination of the two produces wholesomeness. That is how to develop an enlightened person.

Shamatha-vipashyana practice is utterly important in all three yantras, so you should not drop it. Otherwise, you might find yourself behaving calmly in the hinayana, kindly in the mahayana, and then freaking out in the vajrayana. With mindfulness practice, you do not behave differently in each yana. It is not that you graduate from the first grade and then get into the second grade and the third grade. It is more like making butter out of milk. In the hinayana, when you make butter from milk, you find that you have

something called buttermilk left to drink; in the mahayana, you drink the milk; and in the vajrayana, you enjoy the butter itself.

Joining shamatha precision and calmness with vipashyana awareness brings the realization that the world is not attacking you. The world is no longer an obstacle; in fact, the world is actually helpful to you. This is the [page 52] beginning of entering into the mahayana, which brings the possibility of egolessness. Instead of hanging on to yourself, trying to grasp “me” and “my-ness,” you could let go by means of shamatha and vipashyana. You could loosen up a little bit more.

### **Mindfulness: Freedom from Aggression**

When you practice mindfulness at the mahayana level, instead of simply trying to be mindful, you also have to tame your aggression. The more you tame your aggression, the more mindfulness you develop. If you are so energized that you are unable to concentrate or have difficulty paying attention to details, those problems are a result of underlying aggression. Generally speaking, aggression tends to come up in the form of boredom. Because you are bored, you want to find some way of occupying yourself other than what you are doing on the spot, whether it is watching your breath, eating your food, or whatever you are doing.

Aggression is an obstacle to mindfulness. If you are pushed to follow your breath or to watch your thoughts, you are bound to get angry. Such aggression is completely inevitable. Aggression affects your span of attention; it is the reason you cannot sit still for more than a few minutes, why you fidget, why you are irritated, why you have to bring up the pain in your back or your knees. Triggered by aggression, the intelligence of boredom is manifesting itself. Your subconscious gossip tells you, “Don't obey any of those rules. You should be an individual. Do anything you want.” That is the voice of aggression, manifesting through impatience and boredom. But with mindfulness practice, you can develop gentleness and nonaggression.

### **Awareness: Freedom from Ignorance**

Vipashyana is trickier than shamatha because in order to pay greater attention to more details, you need to expand yourself further. To be aware of what is around you, you have to become less self-centered. The conventional approach to awareness is based on the idea that if you do your best, you can win a gold medal. But in the mahayana, we don't think of awareness in terms of having a particular purpose. You are simply trying to pay more attention to the environment around you. For example, in oryoki practice, you learn to be fascinated by your napkin, your bowls, [page 53] your spoon, and your

chopsticks. Paying more attention to them is better than paying attention to yourself, to good old Joe Schmidt. You do not have to handle two things at once. Hopefully, while you are cleaning your bowl, Joe Schmidt is completely forgotten. While you are eating in that way, there is no ego of self. At least on a simple level, that is one way of realizing egolessness.

If you have awareness in whatever you do, you always have a sense of basic decency. You do not cheat. You do not do things just because they are traditional, and you don't just do something this year simply because you did it last year. You always try to practice your discipline as genuinely and honestly as possible—to the point where the honesty and genuineness begin to hurt. In fact, such hurting is regarded as good. If you begin to get hurt by being genuine, it is the beginning of warriorship. It is the level at which you are capable of exchanging yourself for others.

### **Basic Training, pp. 55-56**

[page 55] To work for others, you first have to develop composure. If you have no basic stability, when you try to help others, they will not benefit from your help. If you are trying to prevent someone from falling out of a window, you will both go out the window together. To prevent that, you have to stay inside so you can pull them back. In order to do this, training in shamatha and vipashyana is absolutely necessary. With that basic training, you are able to maintain yourself properly. This is why it is so important to develop hinayana self-discipline first, before going on to mahayana vision. You can then learn how the whole thing works, and watch yourself progressing.

Shamatha and vipashyana, or mindfulness and awareness, allow you to be stable and precise. Mindfulness allows you to become stable, to develop tranquility and peace; awareness allows you to be precise, to be able to pay attention to details. Out of that stability and precision, there naturally arises a quality of gentleness and kindness, an attitude that you will never cause harm to others or create the basis of such harm. When you carry that attitude slightly further, you begin to develop the [page 56] mahayana view that not only will you refrain from creating harm for others, but you will actually try to benefit them. You try to create a helpful attitude in yourself, and at the same time perform helpful actions for others. So the ground of mahayana comes from training in shamatha and vipashyana.

Through shamatha and vipashyana, you become like a young thoroughbred horse, somewhat responsive and well trained. You have an understanding of egolessness and the four noble truths, and you have achieved a relatively good state of control over mental distraction. But it is possible that you lack real conviction, so you are unable to fulfill the practice completely. You do need to have mental discipline and control over your mind, but in the mahayana, it is necessary to develop a greater level of commitment. No matter how contemplative the practices of shamatha and vipashyana

may be, there is still an element of mechanicalness. Therefore, it is absolutely important to be awakened and to be encouraged to join the mahayana path. Shamatha-vipashyana experience and treading on the mahayana path are complementary to one another and equally important.

As a result of shamatha and vipashyana, you are shingang-ed, or flexible. You can climb rocks, you can swim—you are capable of doing anything. When you are no longer rigid and tough, when you stop trying to hold on to things, when you stop trying to make everything meaningful to you, when you no longer want to do everything in your own original samsaric style—when all that has fallen apart—you become very soft, gentle, and pliable. In fact, you are so soft that you become almost wormlike. Once you are soft, there are many ways to connect with sentient beings, and there are all kinds of sentient beings you could work with. You could work with very tough ones or very mushy ones.

Hinayana discipline, the inspiration of taming the mind, never dries up. It has been around quite a long time, twenty-six hundred years, and it is still going on. You have to work with your own training first. If you want to become a professor, you must first learn to read and write. Even someone like Mozart had to go to school to learn about music in order to wake up his talent. Likewise, although *tülkus*, or "incarnate lamas," may be very highly developed, they still have to go through an extremely [page 57] excruciating, painful training—even more so than other people. That was my personal experience as well.

Sitting practice is important, but attachment to sitting practice can become a danger. There can be too much emphasis on the heroism of sitting practice and on the idea that there is nothing to do but meditate. Basing your life on sitting practice alone may be a true approach, straight from the books and the experience of your teachers. Nevertheless, you cannot just look at practice in that way. There is a greater world than your little meditation world, your little meditation hall, and your little meditation cushion. There are other seats—there are saddles and chairs and green grass you can sit on. Everywhere you sit does not have to be a meditation cushion.

In the hinayana practice of taming the mind, you are working with the various forms of unmindfulness. In the mahayana, since your mind has already been tamed, you can work on training the mind. Having domesticated your mind, you can make further use of it. It is like capturing a wild cow and domesticating it to the point that the cow becomes completely willing to relate with its tamer. In fact, the cow likes being domesticated; it becomes a part of your household. So first you tame the mind by means of shamatha discipline, and then you train the mind by means of mahayana contemplative practices such as *tonglen*, or exchanging oneself for others, as well as by the actual fieldwork of helping others.

## **The Paramitas and Shamatha-Vipashyana, pp. 230**

[page 230] The paramita of patience continues the pattern of alternating shamatha and vipashyana through the paramitas. That is, the first paramita, generosity, is connected with shamatha; the second paramita, discipline, is connected with vipashyana; and with the third paramita, we are back to shamatha. Patience is the way to quell the heat of aggression by following the way of shamatha tranquillity and peacefulness—but it is a highly [page 231] advanced level of shamatha discipline. As we go on to higher and higher levels of paramitas, the standard of shamatha and vipashyana escalates, so the paramita of patience involves a higher level of shamatha than the paramita of generosity.

The sequence of the paramitas is significant. Generosity is the stripping-off process, and discipline is remaining in the loneliness. Having gone through those two processes, we find our situation unbearable, as if we were being beaten by hundreds of people. All kinds of pain come up in our life, not as the result of punishment but as the result of being generous and disciplined. We actually invite pain by being alone and keeping our discipline. We are like an owl in the daylight, physically and psychically attacked from all directions by visible and invisible forces. The paramita of patience means not getting resentful about that.

### **Shamatha Vipashyana and the Order of the Paramitas, p. 239**

Another way to look at the paramitas is in terms of how a paramita is paired up with either shamatha or vipashyana. In the development of the paramitas, shamatha and vipashyana alternate six times. So it is shamatha (generosity), vipashyana (discipline), shamatha (patience), vipashyana (exertion), shamatha (meditation), and vipashyana (prajna). In this process, the residues of shamatha and vipashyana from the previous paramitas are not rejected, but the underlying, heightened point of each of the previous paramitas continues. At the level of exertion, we have a lot of residues piled up already, but at the same time we are working on a particular, very powerful point.

### **The Hinayana Version of Ego Taming, p. 348**

The hinayana version of taming ego is to cut through sloppiness and wandering mind by the application of shamatha discipline. Shamatha practice undermines the fundamental mechanism of ego, which is that ego has to maintain itself by providing lots of subconscious gossip and discursive thoughts. Beyond that, vipashyana brings awareness of the whole environment into our discipline. That allows us to become less self-centered and more in contact with the world around us, so there is less reference to

"me" and "my-ness." Vipashyana allows us to cut through our ego. When we enter the bodhisattva path and begin to practice bodhichitta, our concern is more with warmth and skillfulness, with karuna and upaya. We realize we have nothing in ourselves to hang on to, so we can give away our attachment each time it arises.

**Combined Excerpts**  
***The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Vol. 3: The Tantric  
Path of Indestructible Wakefulness***  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, Compiled and Edited by Judith L. Lief**

**Cognition and Deeper Perception**  
**From “The Outer Mandala” Chapter**

**Cognition, pp. 315**

Once we have the sense perceptions, we then make use of cognizing faculties of all kinds. As human beings, we perceive pain, pleasure, and indifferent sensations by using any one of those sense perceptions to cognize or re-cognize. We develop our mode of behavior patterns, including such things as the feeling that we want to cry, we want to complain, we want to absorb, we want to take advantage of things—the simple, ordinary level of experience. We conduct ourselves in that way.

**Deeper Perception, pp. 315-316**

Then we go beyond that a little bit, if we can. Along with those perceptions that happen to us, and the cognizing faculties that we possess, we cannot reject that there is deeper perception taking place. That deeper perception is full perception; it is the fresh experience of all of those perceptions. We begin to use smelling, seeing, hearing, and every perception not only as one of our sense faculties, but to experience some clarity. Ordinarily, hearing is often conflicting with tasting, smelling is conflicting with feeling, and thinking is conflicting with smelling. But we begin to experience the clarity and precision beyond those senses—beyond smelling, beyond hearing, beyond tasting. We begin to experience a kind of clarity that can govern all of those situations.

Ordinary experiences could be regarded as sometimes having a clouding effect. Hearing too much or tasting too much might have a numbing effect. But here, we are talking about going beyond that. Beyond ordinary perception, there is supersound, supersmell, and superfeeling existing in our state of being. This kind of perception can only be experienced by training ourselves in the depths of the hinayana. It can only be developed through shamatha practice, which clears out that cloudiness and brings about the precision and sharpness of the perceptions of hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, and all the rest.

In shamatha practice, we develop the precision of experiencing our breath going in and out; and in walking meditation, we experience the movement of our heel-sole-toe. That begins to bring out precision that goes beyond the cloudiness of seeing, smelling, and tasting. Meditation practice brings out the supernatural, if I might use that word. By supernatural, I do not mean that you are going to see ghosts or become [page 316] telepathic or anything like that, but simply that your perceptions become super natural. You feel your breath; it is so good. You breathe out and dissolve your breath; it is so sharp and so good. It is so extraordinary that your ordinary techniques become superfluous. Usually we think of how to become smarter than somebody else, but with shamatha, we simply see better, hear better, and smell better.

Through shamatha, the best cognition begins to arise in your system and elevate your sense of existence. This happens purely through the means of being with your body, mind, and breath, through simply surviving on your meditation cushion. This process starts in the hinayana, so even at that point, your path is tantra already. Like tantra, the hinayana is continuity; it is dharana, or binding together. The continuity is already there, and the clarity and precision begin to come out of that continuity.

By experiencing the clarity and the precision of the hinayana, we begin to find ourselves in the realm of utter, complete, and thorough reality. You might ask, "What is reality?" Reality, in this case, means seeing absolutely clearly and thoroughly. You can clearly see how you conduct yourself, how you manifest yourself, how you perceive, how you see, how you hear, how you smell, how you taste, how you feel, how you think, and so on and so on. You might say this is nothing particularly extraordinary; it is how you operate anyway. You might even say that you could get the same result out of any form of training. But that is not quite so. You do not begin to experience the mandala principle automatically, without this kind of training.



## **Shamatha-Vipashyana as Indivisible Emptiness and Luminosity**

**From PTOD Vol. 3, pp. 291-292**

The experience of the mandala principle is based on having received abhisheka. It is based on realizing the nonduality of shamatha and vipashyana as the body, speech, and mind of the guru, and recognizing that as indivisible vajra nature. So in discussing the mandala principle, it is most important to realize that the discovery of ultimate wisdom derives from the indivisibility of shamatha and vipashyana.

Shamatha-vipashyana is sometimes referred to in vajrayana terms as the indivisibility of emptiness and luminosity. Emptiness is connected with shamatha, for slowly but surely, by means of shamatha practice, we try to eliminate the things that are not necessary to us. Discursive thoughts are not necessary, so we try to avoid them; therefore, we attain emptiness, or vacancy of some kind. Luminosity is connected with vipashyana. It means seeing brightly and clearly. By means of vipashyana, awareness begins to pick up what needs to be done.

Shamatha-vipashyana is also known as the combination of emptiness and skillful means. Emptiness, again, is the shamatha process of eliminating mind's occupations and preconceptions, slowly removing them altogether. "Skillful means" refers to vipashyana awareness, which sees all the possibilities of the environment around oneself. So as you can see, shamatha-vipashyana is a very powerful discipline and a very definite experience.

In the vajrayana, shamatha and vipashyana are indivisible. We are not practicing just one or the other alone, but we are trying to join together emptiness and its brightness, emptiness and its skillfulness. So the Vajrayana practitioner begins to feel that situations are being handled, but without being regarded as a dualistic feast, pleasurable to mind's duplicity and fickleness. Therefore, indivisible shamatha-vipashyana is known as ultimate. It is ultimate because we have practiced it and we have achieved the result: we have achieved freedom from the fickleness and duplicity of mental activities.

In the nondual experience of shamatha-vipashyana, we have achieved the ultimate shunyata or the emptiness possibilities of shamatha, free from all preoccupations; and with the vipashyana aspect, we have achieved brightness and luminosity as well. Because such an achievement has taken place already, on the spot, it is real and definite. Because it is real and definite, it is known as the ultimate wisdom, or *tongyi yeshe*. And because of the achievement of ultimate wisdom, we can experience the results of abhisheka.

# **Transforming Kleshas through Shamatha-Vipashyana**

**From PTOD Vol. 3, pp. 331**

[page 331] On top of that, it is also very helpful to understand the experiences of vipashyana awareness and shamatha tranquillity. Without that understanding, you will have difficulty in relating with or experiencing the five wisdoms.

All five wisdoms originate from the basic wisdom called dharma, and the definition of dharma is passionlessness. The opposites of dharma are grasping and holding oneself as more important than others. So in this teaching, we are reminded once again that not grasping comes from the hinayana practice of shamatha-vipashyana, and we are reminded that not holding oneself as more important than others comes from the mahayana practice of exchanging self for other. When you are so adaptable that you begin to realize that you could change places with other people, and that pain and pleasure could be exchanged, you will no longer have any difficulty understanding the universality of the five wisdom principles. So in order to understand vajrayana thoroughly and fully, both the hinayana and mahayana are extraordinarily important.

It is necessary to understand that shamatha and vipashyana are also vajrayana techniques. Even at the level of vajrayana, they play a key role. Through shamatha and vipashyana, you can realize the sacredness of the Buddha, the sacredness of the dharma, the sacredness of the sangha, and their indivisibility.

At that point, the kleshas could arise: you breathe that in. Then as you breathe out again, with the beginning of the out-breath, you surrender your holding on. So as the breath goes out, it is actually transforming the kleshas. At the end of the out-breath, the kleshas are being transformed into sacred world.

## **Ngondro and Shamatha-Vipashyana**

**From PTOD Vol. 3, pp. 356-357; 361; 365**

Prostrations are connected with shamatha practice. Like shamatha, offering prostrations is a repetitious exercise, and you always come back to the same spot. At the same time, you are dealing with any irritations that arise. You have a body and you have to relate with your body, the same as you relate with the breath. In prostration practice, you are trying to burn up the fuel of restlessness. Although prostrations do not exactly develop calmness, they are working toward calmness. So they are correlated with the shamatha discipline of making sure that there is a sense of peace, harmony, and gentleness in us, because there is no arrogance and pride.

.....

In order to do that, the proper dish-washing process is needed. By reciting the Vajrasattva mantra, you take the attitude 100,000 times that you are basically and intrinsically pure. You do this by identifying yourself with the intrinsic goodness and purity of Vajrasattva himself and the Vajrasattva mantra altogether. You also develop the vipashyana quality of general awareness of the environment. You are completely aware of your blockages and your habitual tendencies and neuroses, and through this practice you look into all that. You realize that even having surrendered your arrogance and pride, you still have more cleaning up to do.

.....

Mandala offering is definitely a shamatha discipline. You are training your mind not to expect anything in return, but instead you are constantly giving, giving, giving. Therefore, this practice is very much related with the out-breath, much more so than any of the other ngondro disciplines. This emphasis on the out-breath means a lot. In order to breathe out, we naturally have to breathe in, but we do not put any emphasis on the in-breath. Instead, we constantly go out again and again. By doing so, we discover natural dignity and richness. We see that we are intrinsically rich. We have basic richness because we are capable of giving lots of gifts, and we have a lot to give because we have nothing to lose. If we had anything to lose, we would have lost it already in the previous yantras and in the earlier parts of the discipline. So at this point, we have nothing left to lose. And because we have nothing to lose, we have lots to gain.

# **Stability, Luminosity, and Joy**

**From PTOD Vol. 3, pp. 400-403**

## **Joining Shamatha and Vipashyana**

[page 400] Throughout the path, shamatha discipline produces one kind of experience, and the vipashyana experience furthers that particular situation. For instance, the shamatha aspect of mandala offering brings about the vipashyana aspect of guru yoga. So all along the way, you alternate shamatha and vipashyana, the development of steadiness and awareness.

Steadiness is the way to be on the spot thoroughly and fully, as much as possible. It is developed by means of vajrayana techniques, such as mandala-offering practice. So shamatha is the skillful means, the discipline; and that type of discipline tends to bring about the vipashyana aspect of vajrayana practice. It brings greater awareness, devotion, and longing for the teacher. Through vipashyana, you unify your emotions with your appreciation of the teacher.

That union, or bringing together of the teacher and yourself, makes it possible for you to work together. It is the experience of tokpa gak, the cessation [page 401] or stopping of thoughts. By stopping thoughts, we are not talking about becoming zombies. You have to be quite careful about that. We cut conceptualization, but the natural, functioning mind and general awareness still goes on continuously. In fact, it is cultivated further by the vipashyana experience. Later on, it becomes the upaya of the vajrayana disciplines as well. So that particular aspect of mind could be sharpened. There is never a need for conceptual thinking. Nobody needs it. It is absolutely unnecessary because it produces pain and the unnecessary fortification of ego. That is what conceptual mind is for: to build your ego fortification. It is for “me,” for “I.” It is about how to be “I,” how to build “myself” up—and that is not necessary. There could be a world without “I.”

## **Stability and Luminosity**

The abhisheka experience is a combination of shamatha and vipashyana put together completely. At the point when you receive abhisheka, you do not have any separation of those two at all. When you begin to share your reality with the vajra master, when you begin to enter into the vajra master’s world, your experience becomes very dynamic, direct, and basic. You have the solidness and stability of shamatha, and at the same time you are not completely solidified in hanging on to your ego. Therefore, an expansion of vision takes place on the level of *prabhasvara*, or luminosity. That luminous quality goes

along with your vipashyana practice. So things become bright and luminous, and at the same time they are very steady, direct, and simple.

These abhisheka principles are very much connected with transforming your ordinary mind and your ordinary concepts into another form of ordinary concept. When you see, hear, or think about things, your first glimpse might be extraordinary; you might hear something extraordinary or you might think something extraordinary. But when you go beyond that, when you do a double take, you begin to realize that things are not so extraordinary after all. That comes as a kind of relief. It is not a relief because there have been any misunderstandings or problems, but rather because a fundamental relaxation or fundamental freedom takes place. Finally, you can relax.

However, when you receive abhisheka, it is not so much that you are relaxing, but that your mind is relaxing with the mind of the vajra master and the mind of the lineage altogether. Your mind is relaxed with the [page 402] minds of Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa, Milarepa, and all the rest of the lineage teachers, including the Buddha and Vajradhara as well. There is a sense that the ordinary hang-ups of the phenomenal world, which are heavy and painful, begin to dissolve. They are no longer dragging you down, and because there is no fixation or feeling of being imprisoned, you are uplifted. You are not completely blissed-out, but you feel somewhat lighter. Your dirt and your obscurations have been removed.

At this point, you begin to realize that the inanimate and animate worlds could be seen as the living mandala principle on the spot. In other words, that situation is no longer mythical; it has become very real and very direct. Abhisheka is the first entrance into the world of the yidams and the world of the guru's mind altogether. It is the point at which we have finally joined the shamatha and vipashyana principles together. That is the way we are able to receive abhisheka fully and thoroughly.

Luminosity is vipashyana, and steadiness is shamatha. This combination of shamatha and vipashyana shows up in Tibetan terms such as *nangtong*, or "appearance-emptiness," in which the *tong*, or emptiness part, is shamatha, and the *nang*, or appearance part, is vipashyana. It shows up in the term *traktong*, or "sound-emptiness," in which the *trak*, or sound part, is vipashyana, and the *tong* part is shamatha. Shamatha is an expression of emptiness, and vipashyana is an expression of luminosity. Shamatha is overcoming complications, which is a kind of cessation or negation, while vipashyana is something positive and vast. Vipashyana is the absence of fixation; it is that which sees egolessness. It is postmeditative awareness.

In the vajrayana, it is said that skillful means come out of luminosity, which is considered to be synonymous with compassion. So prajna and shunyata develop into compassion and skillful means; that is the combination of shamatha and vipashyana on the highest level. Shamatha and vipashyana produce each other automatically. If you have a feeling of tremendous space, that automatically brings a sense of detail, and the unity of the two is the abhisheka itself. You cannot have Vajradhara without shamatha and vipashyana.

### **Working with the Trikaya Principle**

The combination of shamatha and vipashyana is also connected with the trikaya principle. The practice of shamatha brings the dharmakaya, and the practice of vipashyana brings sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. [page 403] Broken down that way, the three kayas are sometimes known as the two kayas: the formless kaya and the form kayas.

It is interesting that at the beginning of the path, we think we are working on a very crude level when we do shamatha practice: we just learn how to breathe, how to stop our thoughts, and things like that. It seems to be quite a primitive level, but in fact we are actually working with the dharmakaya, or with potential dharmakaya, which is very advanced. The dharmakaya is a very high level, particularly from the vajrayana point of view. It is jnana-dharmakaya, the wisdom aspect altogether.

So first we have to manifest dharmakaya, and after that there are the postmeditation experiences or awareness practices, the sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya principles. We have to rescue the pure strictness of shamatha by relating with our day-to-day living situation through vipashyana experiences, which are luminous and bright.

## **The Importance of Shamatha Practice for All Four Yogas**

**From PTOD-3, pp. 612-613**

[page 612] Going back to the original practice of shamatha is important for these four yogas of mahamudra. Even at the level of nonmeditation, you still do not give up the technique and the style of shamatha and vipashyana discipline. You use the same technique, have the same posture, and the same sense of uprightness all the time.

In order to maintain the one-pointedness of the first yoga, it is important to concentrate on mindfulness and awareness. Shamatha is also important for the second yoga, simplicity, since it is still necessary to give up any possibility of having some kind of ground to hang on to. It is important for the third yoga of one taste, for through shamatha practice you begin to realize that you are not using your technique as a saving grace. Therefore, at the level of the fourth yoga, or nonmeditation, you begin to realize that sophistries such as meditating or not meditating are all used up. Because you have overcome the habitual patterns of your original backache and your original grandmother problems and your original “what have yous,” you begin to develop a sense of freedom. From that point of view, shamatha practice is quite practical.

Shamatha is always important. You have to maintain a shamatha-like precision of body and speech. You have to be in that state all the time. In Tibet we used to have calligraphy lessons. First we wrote very slowly, making big letters; then we wrote at a medium pace; and finally we tried to write the cursive letters very fast, using the same format. In that way [page 613] we learned to do excellent calligraphy, and even our cursive handwriting became elegant.

If you had seen the Buddha giving his teachings, you would have seen that he sat upright. Even in vajrayana sadhana practices, we visualize the various deities in precisely prescribed postures, which are the product of shamatha practice. They may be holding symbols and scepters and so on, but they still have their form. It is a mark of ultimate training, a mark of being noble. Further accomplishment is referred to as the royal attainment. More accomplished people always have a quality of regalness. They eat properly, and they deal with things properly.

Over time, the shamatha technique becomes ingrained. So even when you have attained nonmeditation, you do not just collapse and you do not become an idiot. You always carry your dignity. But at this point, you have realized what is known as coemergent wisdom.

## Vipashyana

### Talk Seven: Shravakayana

*1976 Vajradhatu Seminary, Hinayana Mayahana Transcripts*

Chogyam Trunpga Rinpoche, pp. 61-66

Q: Rinpoche, did the Vaibhasikas and the Sautrantikas practice shamatha?

R: They are part of the whole thing; they practiced everything. They were not scholars, you know.

Q: Then how did they come to the wrong conclusions about time and dharmas in the abhidharma sense?

R: They did not come to wrong conclusions at all, absolutely not. The Vaibhasikas, who are practicing the sravakayana, began to realize that solid things are not all that solid, that they are made out of little atoms.

Q: But they are accused of being like etemalists and atomists.

R: That's the Madhayamikas who make that accusation. But if you actually can experience that this tree or this rock is made out of little substances, that they aren't really gigantic, monumental, monolithic things to threaten your existence any more at all, that's a beautiful idea. You are beginning to learn to sort things out: the water that quenches your thirst is not really water—it's made out of little dots, little things.

Q: Well, if they thought that time is linear, how did they feel about space?

R: Well, time is made out of things which are linear, basically little dots, but they hang together. Do you see what I mean?

Q: Well, how did they feel about space, then?

R: Well they feel it's sort of a bouncy world.

Q: Bouncy, I see.

R: They push in, they come back. The whole world is made out of rubber. [Laughter]. That's pretty good. We don't think that way, usually we don't; we say this is rubber, this is wood, this is me, this is my wife, this is my husband, and none of them are made out



of rubber. [Laughter]. It's the first discovery of plastic world, which is great. That makes the whole thing very disgusting, right? My wife is plastic. Everything is made out of particles. [Laughter], That really makes you disgusted with the world and yourself, which is made out of that too. So there's nothing really monumental and solid, and nothing monolithic at all—everything is styrofoam. Can you imagine experiencing that? Really? Down to everything, including your food and your time, plastic time—everything is made out of little things. [Laughter]. That's actually what Americans talk about, the plastic age: that's what they are beginning to see. And people are beginning to buy more antiques—but antiques are also plastic. So that's actually the idea, that there's nothing terrible about that.

The Vaibhasikas were right, you know; everything is made out of things which are not monolithic. Nothing is put together solidly. There's still some gooeyness to the whole thing, to everything that exists, everywhere, including one's own body, one's own intellect, one's own time—concept, one's own concepts of security and of death, of eternity and all kinds of things. And you can imagine drinking a glass of water and thinking that it is not one solid water going to quench your thirst, but it is little things that supposedly make you think, in your equally spotted mind, that your thirst will be quenched. Everything, the whole situation of life, begins to change at that point.

So we must not look down upon it as if they thought up some silly ideas. But in everything that we do, such as when we begin to practice mindfulness in the sravakayana, we always practice that way, that everything is not really solid: the place you walk, the walking itself. And when you breathe, it is not really one breathing, it's questionable breathing. You have a lot of breathing in and out happening together, so ordinarily you call that one breathing, but it's not really one breathing. And the whole thing works that way, which makes you see things very much with microscopic vision all the time.

Q: How do Sautrantikas feel space?

R: Well, they are trying to be more smart than that. They say, there are not only just little things put together, but there is also space for them to rub each other—which is just a little further question. It doesn't say very much. Basically it's the same thing. The only problem is that they don't discuss the psychological attitude of the whole thing, which is the possibility of shunyata.

But at this point, if we are ordinary persons, experiencing things in the ordinary way, and have never heard of such a thing as shunyata, this is something that we can actually learn. It can be taught to the man in the street. One can give exercises to such a person,

telling him to feel that the chair he is sitting on is made out of little things, it's not solid; and the mind he is thinking with is made out of little things, he's not really thinking with it. And that really breaks down the whole thing into details; so that's a very powerful thing actually. We mustn't look down upon it as being somebody's idea of a second-rate Einstein theory, or some-thing like that.

Q: Rinpoche, why are you explaining in such detail such things you have never explained before: the basics of hinayana and things that don't seem necessarily to have a tremendous amount of relevance to us, like the two hundred and fifty rules?

R: Well, you see, this is dharma. The hinayana is real dharma in its own way, and everything is real dharma in its own way. So we are not talking about hinayana being hina, "lesser," particularly; but it is the first step of how to teach the common man, how to relate with the ordinary person, and how to experience the real truth, some kind of reality of satdharma. So at this point, how the hinayanists viewed the world is very profound, and it is workable.

And we also have our children, as you know; and we could relate with our children and develop them that way in their early days: we could teach a little bit of hinayana to them and say to them how things are impermanent, how things are suffering, in the hinayana way. As children begin to grow older, when they come to their teens maybe, we could teach them some kind of nonaggression and other topics of the mahayana; and as they mature, quite possibly we could teach them vajrayana. So that's a natural process which applies to a lot of other things; it's not just simply saying one little thing alone. The hinayana makes sense if you tune your mind into it.

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Q: I'd like to know if I heard you right in this one section when you were talking about mindfulness, and you asked the audience what possibilities could come out of mindfulness, and people said, egolessness of individuality. The sravakas did not recognize egolessness of dharma? It's just a possibility at this point?

R: That's a possibility, yes, but they still haven't recognized egolessness of dharmas. Maybe the next person (next yana) will realize that such a thing as ego of dharma doesn't exist. I hope you all realize the Vaibhasika's approach. I would like you to understand that particular approach as not being unreasonable, some philosophical trip; which actually makes them seem—for instance, if you read Guenther—as if they were a lot of little people running around with lots of ideas about buddhism, altogether eighteen schools of them; and they say this and that, they say that a toothpick is a Q—tip, and all the rest of that whole kind of approach. That's not quite true, and we

mustn't look at them that way at all. Actually each of them had his beautiful wisdom that was very appropriate.

In fact, I was thinking about whether eventually you could write some kind of book on the dharma for kids, infants, and the vision of these early approaches might be more workable for them. Building up through the various philosophical traditions of the abhidharma, and developing towards shunyata as kids begin to become teenagers and adults, would be a great idea actually. There are possibilities of a complete development in that way. So please don't think that what we are discussing here is just reviewing and paying homage to a dead horse at all. It's very real.

Q: Can I ask a further question?

R: Yes.

Q: It's related to a previous talk. Can you say a little more about dompa, the binding factor. Is that an experience or a quality?

R: Well, it doesn't say very much; it's just simply a binding factor, in that you begin to commit yourself completely into the teaching. Having committed yourself completely, you find that you're completely bound by your commitment. So therefore there are no further problems of commitment, because the binding factor is not so much that somebody has bound you—which would be a kidnap—but in this case you kidnapped yourself. Therefore dompa happens.

Q: Is it sort of your own sense of commitment?

R: Yes—as when you commit yourself into jail.

Q: I'm kind of interested in the similarity between this styrofoam vision, or vision of everything as atoms, and the Western-science vision. As you were talking about it, it seemed like some kind of childhood or cultural experiences of that way of looking at the world were running through my mind. Obviously in American experience there's this overlay of theism, which probably confuses that kind of thing, but do you see the Western—science view and the sravakayana view as very similar?

R: I think they're similar. And actually this whole approach is going to happen, I hope, when we have the vipashyana retreat. I was hoping to go through all those things. First, students would go through some kind of contemplation on substance—that things are made out of nonsubstantial situations, the Vaibhasika approach. Then if they have

enough concentration and a sense of sympathy, they could approach the Sautrantika vision, and slowly grow up. And that way we would be able actually to present vipashyana properly.

Maybe we should close at this point, which is approaching the hour of the monkey—no, not quite, the ox.

# **Union of Shamatha and Vipashyana**

## **Meditation Without Technique or Goal**

**From *The Profound Treasury of the Ocean of Dharma, Vol. 2***  
**By Chögyam Trungpa, Edited by Judith L. Lief, pp. 131-133**

At the same time, shunyata is a meditative experience that regards neither the awareness nor the achievement of awareness as important. Your mind is not focused on any technique; there are no techniques whatsoever, not even techniques of awareness. Your mind is just open, simply open, simply being—or nonbeing. So the shunyata experience is not awareness as such; it is just being open. Awareness is still a reference point of some kind, in that you are aware of something. With the egolessness of vipashyana, you are more aware of the doctrine, but once you get into shunyata, you are less aware of the doctrine. It is just a question of being.

Nagarjuna quite rightly said that if people viewed shunyata wrongly, if they viewed it with very little prajna, they could be devastated.<sup>6</sup> If there is little experience of vipashyana awareness or prajna-like wakefulness, then the shunyata experience becomes just a bundle of vague nothingness, which doesn't mean anything. Therefore, it is necessary to know that from awareness comes warmth, and from warmth comes nonreference point. That process is very important to know and appreciate. The point is that you can't begin with nonreference point. If you try to do so, you are simply making it up.

It is very difficult to grasp a principle such as shunyata. It is not something you can do. However, awareness or mindfulness practice *is* something you can do. When awareness is no longer a battle, warmth arises as a natural process. You develop warmth through dissolving the possessiveness of you being aware and the world being strange. Having experienced that warmth, you begin to realize that you don't have to label it as belonging to a certain territory. So warmth brings nonreference point. As it is said in the *Heart Sutra*, there is no path and no goal. Your accustomed reference point has been completely cut through; it is gone forever.

Nonreference point does not mean just going berserk and getting so confused that you don't know who is who or what is what. Nonreference point is an intelligent perspective in which you begin to see that nothing is its own primary spokesperson. You see that everything is a repetition of something else, so things do not speak for themselves; they

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<sup>6</sup> From the *Mulamadhyamakarikā*: “Shunyata wrongly conceived destroys the dimly witted. It is like a snake grasped by the head.” Quoted in Nancy McCagney, *Nagarjuna and the Philosophy of Openness* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1997).

are just an echo of themselves. The experience of nonreference point is not a process of collecting reassurances so that you could be nonreferential. It is just simple and straight nonreference point—absolutely open.

Actually, you may find yourself very confused, wondering what to do. But instead of asking, “What does one do in meditation?” you just do it. There is an absence of technique, absence of reference point, absence of any purpose and goal. You just sit like a rock. You can do that; you can just sit there and do it. It is like the Zen *shikantaza* technique of just sitting. The spiritual desire to attain enlightenment accompanies the entire bodhisattva path, and there is also the desire to help other people. But those ideas are based on the perspective of nonreference point, so it is not at all personal. The whole thing is based on impersonality.

Without the background of shamatha and vipashyana, you cannot actually experience the shunyata state of meditation. If you did not have any experience of awareness or mindfulness, you could quite possibly have problems if you tried to jump ahead into the mahayana jargon of shunyata. You might try to imitate the shunyata experience, to make it up without going through it. You might think, “Wow, that's a great idea,” and expect some kind of direct confrontation with reality. But somehow it is not all that direct, and it is not warfare. It is a very simple personal experience.

The craving for sudden experience could instead lead to sudden nuttiness. It is like the story of the meditator who was trying to see that everything is empty and nonexistent. He was trying to subjugate his invented perceptions, his perceptual obstacles or demons. One evening when he was in retreat he went out for a walk, and while he was gone his sister brought him a pot of yogurt. She waited and waited, and finally she got tired of waiting so she left the pot of yogurt in his meditation cell. When the meditator came back from his walk and entered the room, he saw the pot of yogurt. It was getting very dark and hazy, and he saw this huge eye staring at him. He said to himself, “I'm going to have combat with this. It is obviously an obstacle to my path, some kind of demon.” So he hit the pot of yogurt with his shawl, and the yogurt began to splatter all over the cave. The whole cave became filled with eyes, and the more he hit the pot, the more eyes he produced.

## **Meditation and the Fourth Moment**

### **From *Mindfulness in Action***

**By Chögyam Trungpa, Pages 114-121**

Mindfulness is a process of growth and maturing that happens gradually rather than suddenly. You may celebrate your birthday on a particular day, but this doesn't mean that you suddenly go from being two years old to being three, when you blow your candles out at your party. In growing up, there is a process of evolution and development. Meditation practice is a similar evolutionary process, one that takes place within you in accordance with your life situation.

There is continuity in the journey. You begin solidly, you progress solidly, and you evolve solidly. Don't expect magic on the meditation cushion. The idea of a sudden magical "zap" is purely mythical.

In reality, nothing can save us from a state of chaos or confusion unless we have acknowledged it and actually experienced it. Otherwise, even though we may be in the midst of chaos, we don't even notice it, although we are subject to it. On the path of meditation, the first real glimpse of our confusion and the general chaos is when we begin to feel uncomfortable. We feel that something is a nuisance. Something is bugging us constantly.

What is that? Eventually we discover that *we* are the nuisance. We begin to see ourselves being a nuisance to ourselves when we uncover all kinds of thought problems, emotional hang-ups, and physical problems in meditation. Before we work with anyone else, we have to deal with being a nuisance to ourselves. We have to pull ourselves together. We might get angry with ourselves, saying, "I could do better than this. What's wrong with me? I seem to be getting worse. I'm going backwards." We might get angry with the whole world, including ourselves. Everything, the entire universe, becomes the expression of total insult. We have to relate to that experience rather than rejecting it. If you hope to be helpful to others, first you have to work with yourself.

The first step, as you certainly know by this time, is to make friends with yourself. That is almost the motto of mindfulness experience. Making friends with yourself means accepting and acknowledging yourself. You work with subconscious gossip, fantasies, dreams—everything that comes up in your mind. And everything that you learn about yourself you bring back to the simple awareness of your body, your breath, and your thoughts.



Beginning to make friends with yourself brings relief and excitement. However, you should be careful not to get overly excited about your accomplishment. If last night's homework assignment was done well, it doesn't mean that you are finished with school. You are still a schoolboy or a schoolgirl. You have to come back to class, you have to work with your teacher, and you have to do more homework, precisely because you were successful. You have more work to do.

You begin to experience a greater sense of fundamental awareness. Such awareness acknowledges the boundaries of non-awareness, the boundaries of wandering mind. You begin to realize the boundary and the contrast. Your mindfulness is taking place, and your confusion, your mindlessness, is also taking place. You see both, but you don't make a big deal about it. You accept the whole situation as part of the basic overall awareness.

Not only are you mindful of your breath, your posture, and your thought process, you are also fundamentally aware. There is a quality of totality. You are aware of the room; you are aware of the rug; you are aware of your meditation cushion; you are aware of what color hair you have; you are aware of what you did earlier that day. You are constantly aware of such things.

Beyond that there is a non-verbal, non-conceptual awareness, an awareness that doesn't rely on facts and figures. You discover a fundamental, somewhat abstract level of awareness and of being. There is a feeling that "This is taking place. Something is happening right here." A sense of being—experience without words, without terms, without concepts, and without visualization—takes place. It is unnamable. We can't call it "consciousness" exactly, because consciousness implies that you are evaluating or conscious of sensory inputs. We can't even really call it "awareness," which could be misunderstood. It's not simply awareness. It's a state of being. Being what? It is just being without any qualification. Are you being Jack? Are you being Jill? Are you being Smith? One never knows.

This may sound rather vague, but the experience is not as vague as all that. You experience a powerful energy, a shock, the electricity of being pulled back into the present constantly: here, here, here. It's happening. It's really taking place.

There is an interesting dichotomy in this situation. On the one hand, we don't know what it's all about. On the other hand, there is enormous precision, directness, and understanding. That is the state of fundamental awareness, or insight. You begin to see inside your mind on the level of nonverbal awareness. Nonverbal cognitive mind is functioning. You may say, "Now I hear the traffic; now I hear the cuckoo clock. Now I

hear my wrist watch ticking. Now I hear my boss yelling at me.” But you also have to say, “I hear, but I don’t hear at the same time.” Such totality is taking place. A very precise something or other is happening. That is the ultimate state of awareness. It is nonverbal, nonconceptual, and very electric. It is neither ecstasy nor a state of dullness. Rather, a state of “here-ness” is taking place, which we have referred to earlier as nowness.

Nowness in this sense is very similar to the fourth moment, which was introduced in Chapter 8, “The Present Moment.” This term, “the fourth moment,” may sound more mystical than what is meant. You have the past, present, and future, which are the three moments. Then you have something else taking place, a gap in time, which is called the fourth moment. The fourth moment is not a far-out or extraordinary experience. It is a state of experience that doesn’t even belong to now. It doesn’t belong to what might be, either. It belongs to a noncategory. We have to call it something, however. Thus, it is called the fourth moment. The fourth moment is the state of non-ego, going beyond the limitations of your habitual self. It is a very real experience, an overwhelming experience, in which nothing can be misunderstood. It is sometimes called the knowledge of egoless insight. The experience comes at you rather than you searching for it.

You are able to work with yourself and your life on the basis of that experience, through the constant reminders arising in everyday life, all your little daily hassles. You forgot to pay the telephone bill, and the message from the phone company is getting heavier and heavier. They are about to turn off your phone or sue you. Your motorcycle is about to catch fire, because you are over-revving the engine. Your grandmother is dying. Your family is demanding your attention. You can’t afford to forget about them. All kinds of past and present reminders appear.

Many problematic situations or even a general state of turmoil may arise in your life. When you look closely at where the problems came from and what they are all about, you may begin to experience the fourth moment. Problems come and problems go, but still remain problematic. That may seem like a cryptic statement, but in that enigma you may encounter the fourth moment. Even when you appear to have solved it, a problem remains a problem. Nothing dissolves into a love-and-lighty beautiful creamy honey lotus lake. The problems remain potent, slightly painful, and sour—as if the world, the universe, were staring at you with a disapproving look. You haven’t been quite as good or as wakeful as you should be. The world gives you that look of disapproval. When the sun shines, it looks at you. When the rooster cries cock-a-doodle-doo, it is saying the same thing. When someone’s car honks, when the telephone rings, they are saying the same thing. There are ironic mockeries all over the place.

It is not that the devil is against you and trying to destroy you. It is not that some magicians have put a spell on you and are trying to get at you. Rather, the world is very powerfully in a subtle way trying to remind you to remember your fourth moment—*the* fourth moment.

That moment is the essence of insight and awareness. Experience becomes so real and precise that it transcends any reference point of any doctrine that you are practicing. Whether you are practicing mindfulness, Christianity, Buddhism, or psychology, you are practicing life. In fact, ironically, you find that you can't escape. You find that life is practicing you. It becomes so real and obvious.

Experiencing the fourth moment is quite important in the development of meditative awareness. At this point in your journey on the path of mindfulness, everything in your life begins to haunt you. Sometimes the haunting process takes the form of pleasurable confirmation. Sometimes it is painful and threatening. There is the feeling of a ghost haunting you all the time. You can't get rid of it; you can't even call someone to exorcise it. That state of insight and simultaneously of being haunted is the experience of the fourth moment.

You feel that you are sitting and camping on the razor's edge, making campfires quite happily, yet knowing that you are on the razor's edge. You can't quite settle down and relax and build your campfire, yet you still stay on that point, on that spot.

That state of hauntedness is the state of ego, actually. Somebody in your internal mental family, some part of your being, is beginning to complain that they are getting uncomfortable messages. The awareness of the fourth moment cannot materialize unless there is that slight tinge of being haunted by your own egotism. The hauntedness of ego and the egoless insight work together. That is what creates our experience.

On the whole, we should regard our practice and our journey as experiential rather than as being based on programmed stages of development. At the moment you may be following a particular program of practice and study. You've made it to the first level, and now you want to progress to the second level, which begins on September 2. Although we do all kinds of things in that fashion, we should understand that in reality our experience isn't programmable in that way. Often students try to examine themselves so that they will know where they are on the path of meditation, but this doesn't seem to work. We have no way of knowing where we are in our practice or how we are doing on the path of mindfulness, as far as some standard evaluation is concerned. However, we do know that we started on a journey, that the journey is

continuing, and that the journey takes time and requires real commitment to our individual experience.

Experience cannot happen unless both black and white, sweet and sour, work together. Otherwise, you are just absorbed into the sweet, or you are absorbed into the sour, and there is no experience. You have no way of working with yourself at all.

We should be a little circumspect, however, when we use the term *experience* to describe our journey on the path of meditation. Conventionally speaking, when you refer to a future experience, you have an idea and an expectation, some premonition of what the experience might be. Somebody tells you about it; you know roughly what it is and you prepare for it. You wait for that experience to come to you. When it does, you exert yourself to fully experience whatever arises. In this scenario, everything is quite predictable.

But the experience of the fourth moment is not a programmable experience at all. It is an unconditioned experience that comes from the unconscious mind. This underlying consciousness, or the unconscious, is an abstract state of mind, a state of literal thinking that doesn't have logic formulated yet. It is an ape instinct or a radar instinct. In fact, we don't know where this experience comes from. It just comes. There is no point in trying to track it back to a source. The fourth moment doesn't come from anywhere. It simply exists.

It is as if you are taking a cold shower, and suddenly hot burning water starts to come out of the showerhead. It is so instant and so real. For a moment, when the hot water first hits your body, you still think it's cold. Then you begin to feel that something is not quite right with that particular coldness. It begins to burn you. It is unprogrammed experience, where you simultaneously experience hot and cold water, each in its own individuality.

The present is the third moment. It has a sense of presence. You might say, "I can feel your presence." Or "I can feel the presence of the light when it's turned on. Now there is no darkness." The present provides security: you know where you are, right here. You keep your flashlight in your pocket. If you encounter darkness, you take out your flashlight and shine the light to show yourself where you are going. You feel enormous relief, created by that little spot of light in front of you.

The fourth moment, on the other hand, is a state of totality and total awareness that doesn't need reassurance. It is happening. It is there. You feel the totality. You perceive

not only the beam of light from the flashlight but also the space all around you at the same time. The fourth moment is a much larger version of the present.

The experience of the fourth moment sharpens your intelligence. Without this experience of egoless insight, you may just accept things naïvely, and such naiveté may be the basis for self-deception. You turn on the cold shower, and you expect everything to be okay. Everything seems predictable. You are not prepared for any reminders. Then this little twist of hot water takes place. Whenever there is that kind of a reminder, it is part of the fourth moment. If there is a reminder, everything becomes very real. If you don't have any reminders, you are at the mercy of chaos and confusion. The sitting practice of meditation provides constant reminders, and that is why it is so important. It boils down to that.

**The Way of Maha Ati**  
**By Chögyam Trungpa and Rigdzin Shikpo**  
*The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa, Volume One, Pages 461-465*  
**Ed. by Carolyn Rose Gimian**

**THE ALAYA**

The ground of samsara and nirvana, the beginning and end of both confusion and realization, the nature of universal shunyata and of all apparent phenomena, more fundamental even than the trikaya because it is free from bias toward enlightenment, is the alaya, sometimes called the pure or original mind.

Although prajna sees in it no basis for such concepts as different aspects, yet three fundamental aspects of complete openness, natural perfection, and absolute spontaneity are distinguished by upaya as useful devices.

**COMPLETE OPENNESS**

*All aspects of every phenomenon are completely clear and lucid.  
The whole universe is open and unobstructed, everything  
mutually interpenetrating.*

*Since all things are naked, clear, and free from obscurations, there is  
nothing to attain or to realize. The nature of things naturally appears  
and is naturally present in time-transcending awareness.*

The everyday practice is simply to develop a complete acceptance and openness to all situations and emotions and to all people, experiencing everything totally without mental reservations and blockages, so that one never withdraws or centralizes onto oneself.

This produces a tremendous energy which is usually locked up in the processes of mental evasion and generally running away from life experiences.

Clarity of awareness may in its initial stages be unpleasant or fear inspiring. If so, then one should open oneself completely to the pain or the fear and welcome it. In this way the barriers created by one's own habitual emotional reactions and prejudices are broken down.

When performing the meditation practice one should get the feeling of opening oneself out completely to the whole universe with absolute simplicity and nakedness of mind, ridding oneself of all “protecting” barriers.

Don’t mentally split in two when meditating, one part of the mind watching the other like a cat watching a mouse.

One should realize that one does not meditate in order to go deeply into oneself and withdraw from the world.

Even when meditating on chakras in Buddhist yoga there is no introspective concentration—complete openness of mind is still the keynote.

## **NATURAL PERFECTION**

*Everything is naturally perfect just as it is, completely pure and undefiled.*

*All phenomena naturally appear in their uniquely correct modes and situations, forming ever-changing patterns full of meaning and significance, like participants in a great dance.*

*Everything is symbol, yet there is no difference between the symbol and the truth symbolized.*

*With no effort or practice whatsoever liberation, enlightenment, and buddhahood are already fully developed and perfected.*

The everyday practice is just ordinary life itself. Since the underdeveloped state does not exist, there is no need to behave in any special way or to try to attain or practice anything.

There should be no feeling of striving to reach some exalted goal or higher state, since this simply produces something conditioned and artificial that will act as an obstruction to the free flow of the mind.

One should never think of oneself as “sinful” or worthless, but as naturally pure and perfect, lacking nothing.

When performing meditation practice one should think of it as just a natural function of everyday life, like eating or breathing, not as a special, formal event to be undertaken with great seriousness and solemnity. One must realize that to meditate is to pass beyond effort, beyond practice, beyond aims and goals, and beyond the dualism of bondage and liberation.

Meditation is always perfect, so there is no need to correct anything. Since everything that arises is simply the play of the mind, there are no bad meditation sessions and no need to judge thoughts as good or evil. Therefore one should not sit down to meditate with various hopes and fears about the outcome—one just does it, with no self-conscious feeling of “I am meditating,” without effort, without strain, without attempting to control or force the mind, without trying to become peaceful.

If one finds one is going astray in any of these ways, stop meditating and simply rest and relax for a while before resuming.

If one has experiences that one interprets as “results,” either during or after meditation, do not make anything special of them, but just observe them as phenomena. Above all, do not attempt to repeat them, since this opposes the natural spontaneity of the mind.

### **ABSOLUTE SPONTANEITY**

*All phenomena are completely new and fresh, absolutely unique at the instant of their appearance and entirely free from all concepts of past, present, and future, as if experienced in another dimension of time.*

*The continual stream of new discovery and fresh revelation and inspiration which arises at every moment is the manifestation of the eternal youth of the living dharma and its wonder, splendor, and spontaneity are the play or dance aspect of the universe as guru.*

Learn to see everyday life as a mandala in which one is at the center, and be free of the bias and prejudice of past conditioning, present desires, and future hopes and expectations.

The figures of the mandala are the day-to-day objects of one’s life experience, moving in the great dance or play of the universe, the symbolism by which the guru reveals



profound and ultimate meaning and significance. Therefore be natural and spontaneous, accept and learn from everything.

See the ironic, amusing side of irritating situations.

In meditation see through the illusion of past, present, and future. The past is but a present memory or condition, the future a present projection, and the present itself vanishes before it can be grasped.

Free oneself from past memories of, and conceptions about, meditation. Each moment of meditation is completely unique and full of the potentiality of new discovery, so one is incapable of judging meditation by past sessions or by theory.

Just plunge straight into meditation at this very moment with one's whole mind and be free from hesitation, boredom, or excitement.

## **THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION**

It is traditional, and best if possible, to sit cross-legged when meditating, with the back erect but not rigid. However, it is most important to feel comfortable, so it is better to sit in a chair if sitting cross-legged proves painful.

One's attitude of mind should be inspired by the three fundamental aspects, whether the meditation is with or without form, although in the latter case the three aspects constitute the whole meditation itself, with particular emphasis on complete openness.

Meditations with form are preceded by, followed by, and contain periods without form and similarly it may often prove desirable, if not essential, to precede a period of formless meditation by a period with form.

To provide for this eventuality many preliminary meditations have been developed over the centuries of Buddhist practice, the most important classes being meditations on breathing, mantra repetitions, and visualizations.

The second and third of these classes need personal instruction from [page 465] one's guru before they can be attempted, but a few words on the first would not be out of place here, since the method used varies little from person to person.

First, let the mind follow the in-and-out rhythm of the breath until it becomes calm and tranquil; then rest the mind more and more on the breath until one's whole being seems to be identified with it.

Finally, become aware of the breath leaving the body and going out into space and gradually transfer the attention away from the breath and toward the sensation of spaciousness and expansion.

By letting this final sensation merge into complete openness, one moves into the sphere of formless meditation proper.

In all probability the above descriptions of the three fundamental aspects and the meditation practices involved will seem very vague and inadequate.

This is inevitable since they attempt to describe what is not only beyond words but beyond thought, and invite practice of what is essentially a state of being.

The words are simply a form of upaya (i.e., skill in means), a hint, which if acted upon may enable the innate natural wisdom and the naturally perfect action to arise spontaneously.

Sometimes in meditation there is a gap in normal consciousness, a sudden complete openness.

This only arises when one has ceased to think in terms of meditator, meditation, and the object of meditation. It is a glimpse of reality, a sudden flash which occurs at first infrequently and then gradually more and more often. It may not be a particularly shattering or explosive experience at all, just a moment of great simplicity.

Do not make the mistake of deliberately trying to force these experiences to recur, for this is to betray the naturalness and spontaneity of reality.

**Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana**  
**From**  
***The Treasury of Knowledge* by Jamgon Kongtrul**

**The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana**  
**From *The Treasury of Knowledge* by Jamgon Kongtrul**  
***Translated by Kiki Ekselius & Chryssoula Zerbini with Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso***  
***Rinpoche***

**Summary Outline**

- 6) The Samadhi of Shamatha-Vipashyana**
  - a) The Essential Nature of Shamatha and Vipashyana
  - b) The Etymology of Shamatha and Vipashyana
  - c) The Necessity of Both
  - d) Their Progressive Order
- 7) Shamatha
  - a) Basics of the Practice**
    - i) The Prerequisites for Shamatha
    - ii) The Progressive Classification
  - b) Progression of the Practice**
    - i) The Way to Meditate: The Eight-Fold Posture
    - ii) The Methods for Setting the Mind: The Objects of Observation
    - iii) The Progression of the Actual Meditation
    - iv) Identifying the Experiences Arising from Meditation
  - c) Fruition of the Practice**
    - i) The Measure of Accomplishment of Shamatha and its Benefits
    - ii) The Necessity of Accomplishing Shamatha
- 8) Vipashyana
  - a) Basics of the Practice**
    - i) The Prerequisites for Vipashyana**
    - ii) The Particular Types of Vipashyana**
    - iii) The Classifications of Vipashyana**
      - (1) The "four types of vipashyana investigating the essence":
      - (2) The "three gateways":
      - (3) The "six investigations"
      - (4) Summary of the Six Investigations as Three**
      - (5) Twofold Condensation**
  - b) Progression of the Practice**
    - i) The Way to Meditate**
    - ii) The Stages of the Actual Meditation on Vipashyana**

- c) Fruition of the Practice**
  - i) The Measure of Accomplishment - Suppleness**
- 9) Union of Shamatha-Vipashyana
  - a) The Training in Shamatha and Vipashyana Conjoined**
- 10) Supplementary Issues
  - a) The Different Categories of Shamatha and Vipashyana**
  - b) The Accomplishment of Shamatha and Vipashyana:**
  - c) Supplementary explanation of the three stages of concentration**

# **The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana**

*The Treasury of Knowledge by Jamgon Kongtrul*

*Translated by Kiki Ekselius and Chryssoula Zerbini*

*Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche*

## **Detailed Outline**

### **The Necessity of Practicing Samadhi**

- 1) Identifying the Samadhi to be Practiced
  - a) Shamatha
  - b) Vipashyana
- 2) The Essential Nature of Shamatha and Vipashyana
- 3) The Etymology of Shamatha and Vipashyana
- 4) The Necessity of Both
- 5) Their Progressive Order

### **Shamatha**

- 1) The Prerequisites for Shamatha
  - a) Having few desires refers to food and clothing.
  - b) Being content is being satisfied with just the bare essentials.
  - c) Forsaking excessive activity refers to buying and selling etc.
  - d) Adopting pure ethics means not transgressing one's vows of personal liberation or bodhicitta.
  - e) Giving up discursive thoughts refers to that mental activity which, arising out of desire, results in many shortcomings in both this and future lives.
- 2) The Progressive Classification
  - a) the mind of the desire realm
  - b) the concentrations
  - c) the formless absorptions
  - d) the absorption of cessation
- 3) The Way to Meditate: The Eight-Fold Posture
  - a) The legs should be in vajra posture or half-crossed.
  - b) The eyes should be half-closed.
  - c) The body should be held straight.
  - d) The shoulders should be level.
  - e) The gaze should be in the direction of the nose.

- f) There should be a slight gap between the teeth and between the lips.
  - g) The tongue should be touching the palate.
  - h) The breathing should be natural and effortless.
- 4) The Methods for Setting the Mind - The Objects of Observation
    - a) pervasive objects
    - b) objects for purifying deeds
    - c) objects that render skillful
    - d) objects for purifying afflictions
  - 5) The Progression of the Actual Meditation
    - a) Setting the mind with a concrete support
    - b) Setting the mind without concrete support
    - c) Setting the Mind in the Essential Nature
  - 6) Identifying the Experiences Arising from Meditation
    - a) The Tradition of the Great Treatises:
      - i) The five faults
      - ii) The eight antidotes
      - iii) The nine mental abidings
      - iv) The six powers
      - v) The four mental engagements
    - b) The Tradition of Oral Instructions:
      - i) The five experiences
  - 7) The Measure of Accomplishment of Shamatha and its Benefits
    - a) The Way Shamatha is Accomplished
    - b) The Signs of Correct Mental Engagement
      - i) Bliss
      - ii) Clarity
      - iii) No concepts of designations
  - 8) The Necessity of Accomplishing Shamatha

## **Vipashyana**

- 1) The Prerequisites for Vipashyana**
  - a) To rely on a wise person**
  - b) To seek the view by listening extensively and reflecting accordingly**
- 2) The Particular Types of Vipashyana**
  - a) The non-buddhists' mundane vipashyana
  - b) The shravakas' and pratyekabuddhas' contemplation of the four noble truths
  - c) The paramitayana's contemplation of emptiness
  - d) The mantrayana's teaching that emptiness is endowed with bliss
- 3) The Classifications of Vipashyana**

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



- a) The nature of the percept is understood to be empty like space;
- b) The perceiver is examined as to origin, abiding, shape, etc.;
- c) Discriminating knowledge itself, like a fire produced by rubbing wood, vanishes in the expanse of "not finding";
- d) Thus one rests free of grasping.

## **7) The Measure of Accomplishment - Suppleness**

### **Union of Shamatha-Vipashyana**

#### **1) The Training in Shamatha and Vipashyana Conjoined**

- a) **The Actual Method of Training**
- b) **The Union of Shamatha and Vipashyana**
- c) **The Fruition of Shamatha and Vipashyana**

### **Supplementary Issues**

#### **1) The Different Categories**

- a) **Of Shamatha**
- b) **Of Vipashyana**

#### **2) The Accomplishment of Shamatha and Vipashyana:**

- a) **By means of analytical meditation**
- b) **By means of stabilizing meditation**

#### **3) Supplementary explanation of the three stages of concentration:**

- a) First by child-like concentration, one perceives signs such as smoke, etc.;
- b) By the discrimination of phenomena, the sameness of pairs of opposites is realized and supreme concentration is accomplished;
- c) By focusing on suchness, all phenomena are seen to be emptiness, which in turn is realized to be peace by nature.

# **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*  
*Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche*  
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### **Contents**

Translator's note	2
<b>The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha and Vipashyana</b>	
The general basis of all samadhis	3
The detailed explanation	4
<b>The training in each particular practice:</b>	
Shamatha	7
Vipashyana	19
The training in shamatha and vipashyana conjoined	28
A general summary of the categories	31
Appendix I: Outline of the Text	34

### ***Translator's Note***

*This text has been translated under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, a scholar and accomplished meditator. The notes are given by him in order to clarify this very condensed text. The first draft of the translation was done by Kiki Ekselius. Robert Lowman did a word by word translation, based on this first draft. A revised version of the part dealing with shamatha has been used for this present translation. We would like to thank all our friends in Brussels and Dhagpo Kagyu Ling whose help and encouragement made this work possible. It is hoped that this translation will be of some help for those striving to accomplish shamatha and vipashyana.*

*Kiki Ekselius - Chryssoula Zerbini*  
*Dhagpo Kagyu Ling, 21 June 1985*

## **The General Basis of All Samadhis**

Through the superior knowledge arising from reflection, one eliminates misconceptions and finds certainty regarding the deep view and the general and specific character of phenomena; this understanding should then be applied to one's own being through meditation. Thus, the eighth chapter deals with the progressive classification of the training in superior samadhi.

### **The Necessity of Practicing Samadhi**

One needs to practice by meditating on the meaning of what one has listened to and reflected upon, just as a farmer needs to make use of a good crop. One needs to practise, focusing inwardly on what one has understood through the superior knowledge arising from listening and reflecting. No matter how deeply one listens and reflects, if one does not also meditate, one will not be freed from bondage, just as a farmer needs to make use of his crop, since no matter how good it is, if it is not used for food, it will not dispel hunger. Similarly, no matter how skillful one may be in reading and understanding medical treatises, one cannot dispel the pain of a sick person unless one actually applies one's knowledge.

### **Identifying the Samadhi to be Practiced**

***One should gain certainty in both shamatha and vipashyana, which comprise the ocean of samadhis of both the greater and lesser vehicles.***

*The Sutra Unravelling the Thought* states,

“As the Bhagavan has said, one should know that the many types of samadhi of the Sravakas, Bodhisattvas and Tathagatas are all included in shamatha and vipashyana.”

Thus, since it is said that shamatha and vipashyana comprise all the samadhis of both the greater and lesser vehicles, and since it is impossible for anyone striving for samadhi to fathom the great number of divisions, this ocean of samadhis is classified into just shamatha and vipashyana. Therefore, one should first gain certainty in these two. This is necessary because, as stated in the same Sutra, all the qualities ensuing from the practice of the greater and lesser vehicles, whether

mundane or supramundane, are the fruit of shamatha and vipashyana. Also, Maitreya has said,

“One should know all mundane and supramundane virtues of the Sravakas, Bodhisattvas or Tathagatas to be the fruit of shamatha and vipashyana.”

## **The Detailed Explanation**

### **The Essential Nature of Shamatha and Vipashyana**

***The essential nature of these is: one-pointedness and individual analysis which fully discriminates phenomena.***

Shamatha is to rest the mind one-pointedly, using a correct object of observation, and vipashyana is to completely analyze suchness by means of superior knowledge that fully discriminates and individually analyses phenomena. *The Cloud of Jewels Sutra* says,

“Shamatha is one-pointedness, vipashyana is individual analysis.”

Also, Vasubandhu's *Commentary* on this says,

“One should know shamatha and vipashyana respectively as resting the mind in mind and fully discriminating phenomena on the basis of perfect samadhi; without samadhi there is neither. These are the defining characteristics of shamatha and vipashyana.”

Kamalashila's *Stages of Meditation II* says,

“Having calmed distraction towards external objects, one abides in a state of mind which is supple and delights in focusing inwards continuously and naturally; this is called shamatha. While focused on this calm, abiding mind, one thoroughly analyses its suchness; that is called vipashyana.”

### **Etymology**

***Having calmed distraction, one completely abides, and the superior nature is seen with the eyes of wisdom.***

The etymological definition of shamatha and vipashyana is as follows: 'shama' means 'calms' and '-tha' is 'abiding' so "shamatha" means 'calm abiding'. It is thus called since distraction towards objects such as form etc. Has been calmed, and the mind abides one-pointedly in whichever concentration one is practicing. In the word 'vi(shesa)pashyana,' 'vishesa' means 'special or superior,' and 'pashyan' means 'seeing' or 'observing' so 'vi(shesa)pashyana' means 'superior seeing.' It is thus called since one sees 'the superior,' i.e. the nature of phenomena, with the eyes of wisdom.

### **The Necessity of Both**

***Just as in the example of the bright oil lamp not blown by the wind, one realizes the true nature by bringing both together.***

In order to understand the necessity of both shamatha and vipashyana, consider the example of an oil lamp: if the flame is bright and there is no wind, one will see clearly; however, if the flame is bright but it is being blown by the wind, one will not see by it. Similarly, if one has both the superior knowledge which is certain and unmistakable concerning suchness, and the concentration which stays at will on the object of observation, one will see suchness clearly.

However, if one has undistracted concentration but lacks the superior knowledge that realizes the true nature, it will not be possible to realize the nature of mind. Also, if one has the view which comprehends selflessness but lacks the samadhi in which the mind rests one-pointedly, it will not be possible to see the true nature clearly. Therefore, since it is considered that by bringing both shamatha and vipashyana together one will be able to realize suchness, it is advised in all the Sutras and Tantras to combine these two.

### **The Progressive Order**

***The progression is from the support to that which is supported.***

The progression from shamatha to vipashyana is such that one depends on the other, like the oil and the flame of an oil lamp. In *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* it is said, "Having understood that the afflictions are completely overcome by vipashyana which fully incorporates shamatha, one begins by practicing shamatha." Thus, having first accomplished shamatha, one proceeds to practice vipashyana. The reason for this is that vipashyana is seeing the nature of the mind as it is by observing it through discriminating knowledge; and in order to see it, one must start with shamatha, since it is absolutely necessary to have control over the mind to be observed, by making it workable.

# Shamatha

## The Prerequisites for Shamatha

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

1) Staying in a favorable area means:

- a) To have good facilities, i.e. To easily obtain food and clothing;
- b) A wholesome environment, with no danger from robbers, thieves, etc.;

- c) A healthy place, free from disease;
  - d) Good friends of like view and conduct;
  - e) And the requisites for happiness, i.e. freedom from commotion and disturbing noises.
- 2) Having few desires refers to food and clothing.
  - 3) Being content is being satisfied with just the bare essentials.
  - 4) Forsaking excessive activity refers to buying and selling etc.
  - 5) Adopting pure ethics means not transgressing one's vows of personal liberation or bodhicitta.
  - 6) Giving up discursive thoughts refers to that mental activity which, arising out of desire, results in many shortcomings in both this and future lives.

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

### **The Progressive Classification**

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

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

### **The Way to Meditate: Posture**

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

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

1. The legs should be in vajra posture or half-crossed.
2. The eyes should be half-closed.



3. The body should be held straight.
4. The shoulders should be level.
5. The gaze should be in the direction of the nose.
6. There should be a slight gap between the teeth and between the lips.
7. The tongue should be touching the palate.
8. The breathing should be natural and effortless.

## **The Methods for Setting the Mind: The Objects of Observation**

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

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

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

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

## **The Progression of the Actual Meditation**

### **Setting the mind with a concrete support**

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

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

### **Setting the mind without concrete support**

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

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

***“Shamatha is classified into observation, which is directed outwards, and attainment, which is directed inwards. Observation is of two kinds; special,***

which refers to statues and seed syllables, and *ordinary*. Attainment can be either *directed towards the body* or *towards something dependent on the body*. The former is of three types: visualizing the body as a deity, as an attribute of a deity or as a skeleton etc. The latter is of five types: concentrating on the breath, on subtle parts, on bindu, on light and on joyful bliss.”

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

### **Setting the Mind in the Essential Nature**

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

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

### **Identifying the Experiences Arising from Meditation**

#### **Brief Explanation**

***There are two ways of identifying the experiences arising from these.***

There are two ways of identifying the experiences arising from meditating on the three kinds of shamatha: with a concrete support, without concrete support and in the essential nature.

#### **Detailed Explanation**

The tradition of the great treatises - the eight antidotes to the five faults

***According to the treatises, there are five faults: three types of laziness, forgetting the instructions, laxity and agitation (each with two aspects), non-application, and over-application.***

***The eight antidotes to these are: aspiration, exertion, faith and suppleness which counteract the first; the samadhi of not forgetting with three particularities; examination; application; and equanimity when resting in a balanced state.***

According to the tradition of the great treatises, one must rely on the eight antidotes in order to remove the five faults which hinder the arising of experiences. The *Discrimination of the Middle Way and the Extremes* says:

“Abiding in that gives rise to workability and accomplishes all aims. This comes about through relying on the eight antidotes to the five faults which are laziness, forgetting the instructions, laxity and agitation, non-application and over-application. The basis, abiding in that, the cause, the effect, not to forget the object, to examine the mind for laxity and agitation, actual application which removes them, and resting naturally when calm are the eight antidotes.”

Here, “abiding in that” means abiding in joyous effort in order to dispel unfavorable conditions. From this, the samadhi of workability arises. This samadhi achieves all aims, since it is the foundation of miraculous powers, such as the supersensible cognitions etc. Such a samadhi results from the elimination of the five faults by means of the eight antidotes.

As for the five faults, they are as follows:

1. At the time of engaging in samadhi, laziness is a fault, since it prevents application to the practice. There are three types of laziness: the laziness of neutral activities such as sleep etc.; attachment to negative activities; and lack of self-confidence.
2. Forgetting the instructions when exerting oneself in samadhi is a fault, since if one forgets the object, one is unable to rest in equipoise.
3. When resting in equipoise, laxity and agitation are hindrances, since they make the mind unworkable. Each of these has two aspects, coarse and subtle.

Coarse laxity refers to obscurity of mind, the object being unclear through loss of firmness in one's awareness of it; subtle laxity refers to weak apprehension of the object even though clarity is present. Coarse agitation cannot be suppressed even by remedies, due to very strong attachment to sense objects; subtle agitation refers to slight movement of thought, the mind being unable to rest undisturbed.

4. Non-application of remedies when laxity and agitation have arisen is a fault, since then one is unable to pacify them.
5. Application of remedies when one is free from laxity and agitation is a fault since then one is unable to rest in equanimity.

If, as here, laxity and agitation are counted as one, this makes five faults; if they are counted separately, as in the Stages of Meditation it makes six.

The remedy to these five faults is to rely on the eight antidotes which remove them:

- The first four, namely aspiration, exertion, faith (the cause), and suppleness (the effect) remove the first fault of laziness.
- The remedy to forgetting is the samadhi of not forgetting the instructions, which has three particularities: strong clarity of mind, non-discursiveness, i.e. resting one-pointedly on the object, and a resulting experience of bliss which is accompanied by a sensation of well-being.
- The sixth remedy is introspection, which examines whether laxity and agitation have arisen or not; if they have arisen, one counteracts them by means of appropriate visualizations, gazes, and physical activities.
- The antidote for non-application of the remedies to laxity and agitation is to exert oneself in their application.
- If when resting undisturbed in a balanced state, one is still making effort in application, the remedy is to train in equanimity, without application.

### **The Six Powers, the Four Mental Engagements and the Nine Mental Abidings**

***The nine mental abidings such as setting the mind on the object etc, arise through the six powers of listening, reflecting, mindfulness, introspection, joyous effort and familiarity. To these mental abidings correspond four***

***mental engagements: forcible, interrupted, uninterrupted and spontaneous.***

The six powers, which are the means for developing shamatha, are:

1. the power of listening,
2. the power of reflecting,
3. the power of recollection,
4. the power of introspection,
5. the power of joyous effort and
6. the power of familiarity.

Through relying on the first power, the first mental abiding is accomplished; through the second power, the second; through the third power, the third and fourth; through the fourth power, the fifth and sixth; through the fifth power, the seventh and eighth; and through the sixth, the ninth.

There are four mental engagements corresponding to the nine mental abidings:

1. forcible engagement, which corresponds to the first and second mental abidings;
2. interrupted engagement, which corresponds to the third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh mental abidings;
3. uninterrupted engagement, corresponding to the eighth'; and
4. spontaneous engagement, corresponding to the ninth.

These describe the manner in which the mind engages in samadhi.

The nine successive mental abidings arising from the six powers mentioned above are as follows:

1. Setting the mind: having withdrawn from outer objects, the mind is directed towards an inner object of observation.
2. Continuous setting: having turned inwards, the mind is able to remain continuously on its object without being distracted elsewhere.
3. Re-setting: having become aware of distraction towards outer objects, the mind is set once again on its object of observation.

4. Close setting: setting the mind on its object, having refined it by withdrawing it again and again from its natural coarseness.
5. Disciplining: rejoicing in the qualities of samadhi, having reflected on them.
6. Pacifying: having seen distraction as a fault, one pacifies dislike of samadhi,
7. Thorough pacifying: here, attachment and mental discomfort are pacified.
8. Making one-pointed: making effort in order to be able to rest effortlessly.
9. Setting in equipoise: resting in equanimity when the mind is already balanced.

Thus the succession of the nine mental abidings reaches its perfection.

The nine mental abidings have been taught in the *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras* while the six powers and four mental engagements are explained in the Levels of Hearers.

### **The Tradition of Oral Instructions**

***In the oral tradition, the five experiences of agitation, attainment, familiarity, stability and perfection are illustrated by examples.***

In the oral tradition, the experiences which accompany the development of shamatha are summarized into five:

1. The first experience is that of mental agitation, which is compared to a waterfall;
2. the second is that of attainment, compared to a river flowing through a gorge;
3. the third is that of familiarity, compared to a large river flowing leisurely;
4. the fourth is that of stability, compared to an ocean free from waves; and
5. the fifth is that of perfect stability, compared to an oil lamp not blown by the wind, resting bright and clear, unmoved by anything.

Thus the different experiences are illustrated by individual examples.

### **The Measure of Accomplishment of Shamatha and its Benefits**

#### **The Way Shamatha is Accomplished and the Signs of Correct Mental Engagement**

***Shamatha is accomplished when suppleness is brought to perfection. The signs are bliss, clarity and no concepts of designations, as if merged with space.***

Even if one has accomplished the fourth mental engagement and the ninth mental abiding, if one has not also attained suppleness of body and mind, it is not perfect shamatha. The *Sutra Unraveling the Thought* says:

“Oh Bhagavan, from the moment a Bodhisattva turns his mind inwardly, focusing on mind, until he attains suppleness of body and mind, what is this mental engagement called? Maitreya, this is not shamatha, but should be known to be the associated mental factor of belief, which is a similitude of shamatha.”

And the *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras* says:

“From familiarity with shamatha comes non-application; from this comes the attainment of great physical and mental suppleness, which is known as 'having mental engagement'.”

Mental engagement is, in this context, shamatha. In short, shamatha is explained as being suppleness, which is workability of body and mind. Therefore, until that is attained, the samadhi is not actual shamatha, but is included in the levels of the desire realm and is known as “the one-pointedness of a mind of the desire realm.”

Suppleness is referred to in the *Compendium of Knowledge* as follows:

“What is suppleness? It is that which dispels all hindrances to workability of body and mind, since it breaks the continuity of physical and mental rigidity.”

“Physical and mental rigidity” refers to the inability to use body and mind for whatever virtuous purpose one wishes. The remedy to this is suppleness, where the body and mind, being free from rigidity, are completely workable, when employed in virtue.



Furthermore, if one exerts oneself to remove the affliction of obstructing physical rigidity, one becomes free from unworkable states such as heaviness etc. and the body becomes light, as if made of cotton-wool. This is workability of body. Similarly, if one makes effort to remove the affliction of mental rigidity, one becomes free from the inability to take joy in correct meditation and one can concentrate without hindrance, which is workability of mind.

Mental suppleness arises first, and by its power, a particular prana flows throughout the body, causing the overcoming of physical rigidity and the attainment of physical suppleness. This is the explanation given in the Levels of Hearers. This physical suppleness is a particular and extremely pleasant inner physical tactile sensation, but not a mental factor.

As to the manner of development of suppleness, it is explained in the Levels of Hearers as follows: First a subtle experience of suppleness arises, which is difficult to recognize, and then a more obvious one, which is easier to recognize; after this, great bliss and joy pervade both body and mind. At that point, one feels very confident due to this joy and, by continuing to meditate without attachment to it, eventually the 'shadow-like suppleness' will arise, by the power of which one attains shamatha.

Having perfected suppleness, the measure of accomplishment of shamatha is that one abides free from laxity and agitation, unhindered by inner or outer distraction, the concentration being naturally stable and clear. The attainment of this mental engagement results in the attainment of the lesser level of a mind of the form realm, as well as the physical and mental suppleness and the one-pointedness of that same realm; and by means of the path of the truths and their attributes or of the coarse and subtle levels of the concentrations, one is able to purify the afflictions. When resting in equipoise, suppleness of body and mind arises very quickly and the five obstructions such as longing for sense objects, sleep, etc. for the most part do not occur. Upon rising from meditation, one may occasionally experience suppleness of body and mind. This is explained in the Levels of Hearers.

The signs of correct mental engagement are: the bliss of physical and mental suppleness; extraordinarily clear appearances, such as visibility of subtle particles; and no concepts of the ten designations — the five sense objects such as form

etc., the three times, male and female — as if mind had merged with space. Due to this experience, there is no feeling of the body during the absorption phase and mind is merged with space; upon rising from meditation, one feels as if the body had suddenly reappeared.

### **The Necessity of Accomplishing Shamatha**

***It is the foundation of all the concentrations taught in the Sutras and Tantras, and it suppresses all suffering and afflictions.***

This ultimate shamatha, which is the attainment of suppleness, is the foundation of all the concentrations, whether with or without an object, taught in the Sutras and Tantra, just as a fertile field is the ground for the desired crop. This samadhi has also the power to suppress and pacify all evident suffering and afflictions. Furthermore, the realization of the genuine suchness or selflessness just as it is depends solely on the phase of absorption.

It is said in the *Stages of Meditation I*:

“A mind not resting in equipoise will not know the genuine, just as it is. The Bhagavan also has said that by resting in equipoise, the genuine will be known just as it is.”

# Vipashyana

## The Prerequisites for Vipashyana

***The prerequisites for vipashyana are to rely on a wise person and to seek the view by listening extensively and reflecting accordingly.***

In his *Stages of Meditation II*, Kamalashila says:

“What are the prerequisites for vipashyana? To rely on a wise teacher, to spare no effort in listening extensively, and to reflect accordingly.”

Relying on a scholar who has full knowledge of the meaning of the teachings, one listens to authentic treatises and develops the view, i.e. the understanding of suchness, through the superior knowledge arising from listening and reflecting; such are the indispensable prerequisites for vipashyana. This is because without an unmistakable view, it is impossible to give rise to the realization of vipashyana. Moreover, it is necessary to rely on the definitive rather than on the provisional teachings in order to develop such a view; thus, an understanding of the deep definitive teachings must be preceded by a knowledge of the differences between these two levels of teaching. Furthermore, one should seek the view, that is, the understanding of profound emptiness, by relying on the genuine traditions founded by Nagarjuna and Asanga.

## The Particular Types of Vipashyana

***The types are the non-buddhists' contemplation of the peaceful and coarse levels; the shravakas' and pratyekabuddhas' contemplation of the four noble truths and their attributes; and the paramitayana's contemplation of emptiness, which in the mantrayana is taught to be endowed with bliss. The common preparatory stages are similar to those of the mundane path; however, those who have entered the mantrayana and the others do not strive for them.***

The classification of vipashyana in terms of types is as follows;

- i) Mundane vipashyana, which suppresses evident afflictions, and consists in contemplating the higher and lower levels as peaceful and coarse respectively—this is common to both buddhist and non-buddhist systems;
- ii) The Shravakas' and Pratyekabuddhas' practice of contemplating the four noble truths and their sixteen attributes such as impermanence, etc.;
- iii) The Paramitayana's contemplation of emptiness; and
- iv) The Mantrayana teaching according to which emptiness is endowed with bliss.

The latter three types are supramundane vipashyana, which completely eradicates afflictions. The way to accomplish the actual concentrations, common to buddhist and non-buddhist systems, by means of the seven preparatory stages of which the first is shamatha, has been described in the chapter dealing with the mundane path. However, those who have entered the Mantrayana and those who have realized the outstanding view of the Paramitayana do not particularly strive for these.

### **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.***

## **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.”

***The nature of the percept is understood to be empty like space; the perceiver is examined as to origin, abiding, shape, etc.; discriminating knowledge itself, like a fire produced by rubbing wood, vanishes in the expanse of "not finding"; thus one rests free of grasping.***

While resting in equipoise on form etc., one also realizes its empty nature by means of discriminating knowledge, and remains in that state without being attentive to the attributes of the object. One begins by familiarizing oneself with this practice, and as a result one comes to cognize emptiness as if suspended in the midst of space, with no reference even to the nature of mere percept. This is the yoga of non-referential percept and is the external aspect of meditation, i.e. meditation on appearance and emptiness as inseparable.

The internal aspect refers to the perceiver. When for example anger arises in consciousness, one should identify it and examine it with discriminating knowledge. First, one looks for the cause of its arising, then whether it dwells within or without, and if it has any shape or color; finding nothing whatsoever, one rests in equipoise within that understanding. This method is to be applied to whichever of the six root afflictions may arise, as well as to neutral thoughts, etc. In short, whatever type of thought arises, one should be aware of it and meditate as described above. This is the yoga of non-referential perceiver and is the internal meditation on awareness and emptiness as inseparable.

Finally, the object examined “and discriminating knowledge itself, just as a fire produced by rubbing wood together, vanish into the sphere of not finding.” At that point, one rests in a state free of grasping.

The main points regarding these two yogas are given by Atisha in his *Quintessential Instructions on the Middle Way* as follows:

“Thus, the mind of the past has ceased altogether; the mind of the future has not yet arisen and the present mind is extremely difficult to examine; this is because, just like space, it has neither shape nor color, and therefore cannot be established as truly existent. Alternatively, this lack of true existence can be proven by reasons such as “neither-one-nor-many” and “non-production,” or because it is by nature luminosity, etc. Thus, one investigates with the sharp weapon of reasoning and realizes this absence of true existence of the present mind.”

“In this way, when neither percept nor perceiver can be established as anything whatsoever, discriminating knowledge as well is understood to lack inherent existence. For example, by rubbing together two pieces of wood, fire is produced, which in turn consumes that very wood; as a result, the fire itself subsides. Likewise, when all abstract and concrete phenomena are established as non-inherently existent, then discriminating knowledge itself is beyond duality, it cannot be established as anything whatsoever, it is luminosity beyond mental fabrications. Therefore all conditions such as laxity and agitation are cleared away. At that point, awareness is totally free of concepts, nothing is perceived, and all recollection and mental activity have been eliminated. For as long as the enemy or thief of conceptuality has not arisen, let awareness rest in this manner.”

## **The Measure of Accomplishment**

***When suppleness is obtained, vipashyana is said to be accomplished.***

When practicing analytical meditation by means of discriminating knowledge, until suppleness is attained, one only cultivates a similitude of vipashyana; when suppleness has arisen, one has achieved vipashyana proper.

The essential nature of suppleness and the way it arises are as previously explained in the section dealing with shamatha.

According to the *Sutra Unraveling the Thought* and the *Quintessential Instructions on the Prajnaparamita* by Shantipa, as well as other scriptures, vipashyana is said to be accomplished when suppleness can be induced by the power of analytical meditation itself. This applies to both kinds of vipashyana, namely the one focusing on the varieties of phenomena and the one focusing on their mode of being.

# The Training in Shamatha and Vipashyana Conjoined

## The Actual Method of Training

***Though Madhyamikas differ with respect to the method of development, they agree on what is to be developed, namely shamatha, vipashyana and the two together; these three are to be practiced in succession and the main point is non-distraction.***

With respect to achieving the non-dual wisdom resulting from the conjoined practice of shamatha and vipashyana, the various Madhyamika masters explain the method of development differently. However, they all agree regarding what is to be developed, namely the union of shamatha and vipashyana.

According to the master Bhavaviveka, one first develops shamatha by contemplating ugliness, love, etc., after which vipashyana is generated by the power of reasoning. However, according to the master Shantideva, one begins with cultivating shamatha by means of meditation on bodhicitta, and then generates the superior knowledge of vipashyana by focusing on emptiness. According to the master Kamalashila in his *Stages of Meditation II*, one begins with developing shamatha by using an object of observation such as an image of the Buddha, etc., and then proceeds to accomplish vipashyana by analysing the nature of that very object. The master Chandrakirti considers that both shamatha and vipashyana are to be accomplished in dependence upon the view based on the analysis of suchness.

All of these methods are correct, unerring paths; all explanations agree in that these three practices, i.e. shamatha, vipashyana and their conjunction should be definitely accomplished in succession since they are related as cause and effect; and in all of them, the main point is an undistracted, one-pointed mind.

## The Union of Shamatha and Vipashyana

***When practicing meditation with designations, the full discrimination of phenomena focuses on the images arising out of shamatha; this is union. When non-conceptual vipashyana is attained, they have become one essence; thus they are unified.***

At which point can shamatha and vipashyana be said to be unified? When practicing shamatha and vipashyana with designations, both the non-discursive mind that focuses on the images arising out of shamatha, and the realization of the vipashyana which fully discriminates phenomena come together in a natural way - this itself is the union of shamatha and vipashyana.

Here, when both non-conceptual shamatha and non-conceptual vipashyana are attained, they have become one essence; therefore they are known as “unified.” *The Stages of Meditation I* says:

“When focusing on the essencelessness of all phenomena in a state free of laxity and agitation, etc., where awareness rests without any conceptual effort, the path of unifying shamatha and vipashyana is completed.”

### **The Fruition**

***This is the genuine samadhi, by the perfection of which non-abiding nirvana, freedom from the bondage of existence and peace, is attained.***

Such a samadhi, which is the union of shamatha and vipashyana, is authentic samadhi. Maitripa's *Commentary on the Ten Suchnesses* says:

“The phrase ‘by correct, authentic samadhi’ means that the conjoined practice of shamatha and vipashyana is correct, authentic samadhi; thus, this is what accomplishes the path.”

The perfection of this samadhi results in the attainment of non-abiding nirvana, freedom from the bondage of conditioned existence and peace. The *Sutra Unravelling the Thought* says:

“If the practitioner familiarizes himself with shamatha and vipashyana, he will be freed from the fetters of rigidity and conceptuality.”

In the post-meditative phase, with the understanding of the illusion-like nature of all phenomena, one should exert oneself in applying skillful means such as making

offerings to Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, practicing compassion towards all sentient beings, dedicating all virtue etc.

# A General Summary of the Categories

## Brief Listing of the Categories

### The Different Categories of Shamatha

***In brief, the meditations on ugliness, love, the cycles of breath, pratyahara, nadis, prana, generating phase, mantra recitation, resting the mind naturally - all are but methods for developing the concentration of shamatha.***

In brief, in the common path, one meditates on the nine aspects of ugliness; one trains the mind in love and compassion, and concentrates on the breath by counting its cycles of rising, falling and resting. In the Vajrayana, there are many methods such as the instructions of pratyahara, by which the ordinary connection between the sense faculties and their object is individually cut through and distraction is eliminated; visualization of the nadis as hollow pathways; prana-yoga; concentration on the bliss arising through the melting of bindu; visualization of deities, and mantra recitation. Finally (in the practices of Mahamudra and Maha-ati) one rests the mind in a natural, spacious and uncontrived state. All these are nothing but methods for developing shamatha and must begin with concentration on the object, in accordance with the faculties of each practitioner.

### The Different Categories of Vipashyana

***Analysis of definiendum, definition and example, and of general and specific character; dependent arising; the five reasons; pointing out the nature of mind by means of scripture, reasoning, spiritual influence and symbols - all are methods for developing supreme discriminating knowledge in accordance with the faculties of individuals.***

When practicing vipashyana, one uses methods such as the analysis of definiendum, definition and supporting example, as in the study of valid cognition; analysis of the general and specific character of phenomena, as in the Abhidharma; investigation of the twelve links of dependent arising in the order of production and in the reverse order; analysis of the cause, the effect, the combination of these and the essential nature of a given phenomenon, as well as

interdependence, these being the five great reasons of the Madhyamika tradition by means of which mental fabrications are severed; and various ways of pointing out the nature of mind directly and nakedly, as for example scriptures, reasoning, spiritual influence and symbols. All these are gradual methods for developing supreme discriminating knowledge in accordance with the faculties of individual practitioners. Since one can accomplish the samadhi of shamatha and vipashyana by any of these methods, it is not necessary for a single practitioner to use all of them together.

## **The Accomplishment of Shamatha and Vipashyana By Means of Analytical and Stabilizing Meditation**

***Shamatha and vipashyana can be equally accomplished by either analytical or stabilizing meditation.***

The accomplishment of shamatha and vipashyana by conjoining analytical and stabilizing meditation was described above. Moreover, if practiced profoundly, either or these types of meditation will result in the achievement of both samadhis; therefore, with regard to their essential point, analytical and stabilizing meditations are ultimately the same.

## **Supplementary Explanation of the Three Stages of Concentration**

***First by child-like concentration, one perceives signs such as smoke, etc.; by the discrimination of phenomena, the sameness of pairs of opposites is realized and supreme concentration is accomplished; by focusing on suchness, all phenomena are seen to be emptiness, which in turn is realized to be peace by nature.***

According to the scriptures, there are three stages to the development of concentration. First, by means of child-like concentration, the mind is slightly withdrawn from external distraction; at this stage one starts perceiving the “ten signs of empty form” such as smoke, etc. Then, by means of the concentration which discriminates phenomena, the illusion-like interdependent manifestations and the total pacification of mental fabrications are realized as “one taste.” By this the mind acquires the ability to genuinely rest in the sameness of all pairs of opposites, so that the concentration has now become unmistakable and supreme.



Finally, through the concentration focusing on suchness, one knows all dualistic phenomena to be emptiness, and realizing this emptiness to be by nature, primordially, peace, the effortless nature is accomplished.

*This completes the first part being the explanation of the stages of meditation of shamatha and vipashyana, the basis of all samadhis.*

# ***Appendix I***

## **The Treasury of Knowledge**

### **Book 8: The Progressive Classification of the Training in Superior Samadhi**

#### **Section 8.1: The Stages of Meditation of Shamatha And Vipashyana, The General Basis of All Samadhis**

#### **I) The necessity of practicing samadhi**

#### **II) Identifying the samadhi to be practiced**

#### **III) The detailed explanation**

A) The essential nature of shamatha and vipashyana

B) Etymology

C) The necessity of both

D) The progressive order

#### **E) The training in each particular practice**

##### **1) Detailed explanation of each practice**

##### **(a) Shamatha**

i The prerequisites for shamatha

ii The progressive classification

iii The way to meditate

- Posture

- The methods for setting the mind

- ◆ The objects of observation

- ◆ The progression of the actual meditation

- a. Setting the mind with a concrete support

- b. Setting the mind without concrete support

- c. Setting the mind in the essential nature

- Identifying the experiences arising from meditation

- ◆ Brief explanation

- ◆ Detailed explanation

- a. The tradition of the great treatises

- i. The eight antidotes to the five faults

- ii. The six powers, the four mental engagements and the nine mental abidings

- b. The tradition of oral instructions

iv The measure of accomplishment of shamatha and its benefits

- The way shamatha is accomplished and the signs of correct mental engagement
- The necessity of accomplishing shamatha

**(b) Vipashyana**

- i The prerequisites for vipashyana
- ii The particular types of vipashyana
- iii The classification according to the essential nature
- iv The way to meditate
- v The measure of accomplishment

**(c) The training in shamatha and vipashyana conjoined**

- i The actual method of training
- ii The union of shamatha and vipashyana
- iii The fruition

**2) A general summary of the categories**

**(a) Brief listing of the categories**

- i The different categories of shamatha
- ii The different categories of vipashyana

**(b) The accomplishment of shamatha and vipashyana by means of analytical and stabilizing meditation**

**(c) Supplementary explanation of the three stages of concentration**