

**Shambhala School of Buddhist Studies**  
**Vipashyana Weekend Program**  
**June 17-18, 2006**

**Handouts**

1. Shamatha: Obstacles, Antidotes, Stages and Characteristics
2. The Three Stages of Meditation Technique
3. The Four Reminders, the Four Immeasurables and the Dedications of Merit
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5. *The Treasury of Knowledge: 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, Vipashyana Section* (Root Text) by Jamgon Kongtrul
6. *The Stages of Meditation, Chapter Nine: Actualizing Special Insight*, by Kamalashila
7. Contemplations from *Essence of Ambrosia: A Guide to Buddhist Contemplations*, by Taranatha
8. Outline of the Path of Meditation
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# The Nine Stages of Shamatha

(Sem-ne pe thapgu = Nine Ways of Resting the Mind)

| 9 STAGES   | 5 Obstacles (nyepa)   | 8 Antidotes  | 6 Powers   | 5 Experiences            | 4 Mental Applications   | 3 Qualities   |
|--|---|--|--|--------------------------|---|---|
| <b>1 Placement</b> (Placing the mind on the object [mikpa]) (Sem jokpa) 21 breaths.                              | 1. Laziness (Lelo) Common laziness Attachment to bad activities Disheartenment Subterfuge | 1. Faith<br>2. Aspiration<br>3. Effort<br>4. Pliancy/Suppleness (Shinjang)<br>5. Mindfulness | Hearing (Topa)   | Movement (Waterfall)     | Engaging through concentration  |   |
| <b>2 Continual placement</b> (Gyuntu jokpa) 108 breaths. (p 59)  | 2. Forgetting the instructions  |  | Contemplation (Sampa)  |                          |   |   |
| <b>3 Repeated Placement</b> (Lente jokpa) (Coarse Elation) (p 60)  | 3. Elation/Laxity Göpa/Chingwa  | 6. Awareness /Introspection (Sheshin)  | Mindfulness (Tregpa)   | Attainment (Brook)       | Interruptedly engaging  | beginning Stability   |
| <b>4 Close Placement</b> (Nyewar jokpa) (Coarse Laxity) (Circling vulture, bee & nectar) (p 60-61)               |   |  |  |                          | (3 Areas: Preparation 1-3. Actual Meditation 4-7. Increasing Meditation 8-9.) | Stability (Necha)<br>beginning Vividness<br>Vividness/Clarity, Precision of Mind (Selcha) |
| <b>5 Taming</b> (Dulwar jepa) (Subtle Laxity) (Bee in jar) (p 61)  |   |  | Alertness/Awareness (Sheshin)  |                          |   | beginning Strength  |
| <b>6 Pacifying</b> (Shiwar jepa) (Subtle Elation) (trickle beneath ice. 20 2 <sup>nd</sup> affictions) (p 62-63) |   |  |  | Familiarity (Slow river) |   | Strength/Intensity/Potency/Powerful (Ngar)  |
| <b>7 Thoroughly Pacifying</b> (Nampar shiwar jepa) (Subtle Laxity & Subtle Elation)                              |   |  | Exertion (Tsöndrü)<br>1. Effort of intent<br>2. Continuous effort<br>3. Seamless effort<br>4. Present effort<br>5. Unperturbed/undisturbed effort<br>6. Perfect effort |                          | Uninterruptedly engaging  |   |
| <b>8 Making One-pointed</b> (Tsechig tu jepa) (Seamless) (p 64)  | 4. Not applying the antidote  | 7. Applying the antidote   |  |                          |   |   |
| <b>9 Placement on Evenness/Equality</b> (Nampar jokpa)(p64-5)  | 5. Over applying the antidote   | 8. Resting in equanimity   | Thorough Familiarity   | Perfection (Mountain)    | Effortless engaging   |   |

## Six Obstacles & Eight Antidotes

1979 Hinayana-Mahayana Seminary Transcripts, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche)

| 6 Obstacles   | 8 Antidotes   |
|---|---|
| <b>1. Laziness</b><br>1. Common laziness<br>2. Too many activities<br>3. Being disheartened | 1. Faith<br>2. Respect<br>3. Effort<br>4. Shingang              |
| <b>2. Forgetfulness</b>   | 5 Developing a folksy attitude<br>6 Light handed warning system |
| <b>3. Drowsiness &amp; Depression</b>   |   |
| <b>4 Wildness</b><br>1. Lust<br>2. Hatred<br>3. Regret                                      |   |
| <b>5 Carelessness</b>   | 7 Return to mindfulness, workability<br>8 Equanimity            |
| <b>6 No Coordination (Not Being Able To Coordinate The Whole Thing)</b>                     |   |

## Six Requirements For Shamatha

1. Staying in a Good Place
  - Nourishment
  - Mental Nourishment
  - Nourishment of Intent
  - Nourishment of Consciousness
  - Free From Danger
  - Free From Harm
  - Where People of Similar Views Reside
2. Having Few Desires
3. Being Satisfied
4. Reducing Activities
5. Good Discipline
6. Thoroughly Abandoning Thoughts  
 (“Essentials of Buddhism” Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche )

## Five Obstacles & Eight Antidotes

Talk 2, “Nine Stages of Shamatha”, (pages 26-66). 1999 Seminary Transcripts, Book Two. The Sakyong, Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche

| 5 Obstacles   | 8 Antidotes  |
|---|--|
| <b>1. Laziness</b><br>1. Common laziness<br>2. Attachment to bad activities<br>3. Disheartenment<br>4. Subterfuge | 1. Faith<br>2. Aspiration<br>3. Effort<br>4. Pliancy/Suppleness (shinjang) |
| <b>2. Forgetting the instructions</b>   | 5. Mindfulness   |
| <b>3. Elation/Laxity</b><br>Göpa/Chingwa  | 6. Awareness /Introspection  |
| <b>4. Not applying the antidote</b>   | 7. Applying the antidote   |
| <b>5. Over applying the antidote</b>  | 8. Resting in equanimity   |

## Mindfulness (Trenpa [Tibetan], Sati [Pali], Smrti [Sanskrit])

1. Familiarity
  - Introduction (ngo trö)
  - Familiarity (kom)
2. Remembering, Not Forgetting
3. Not Moving, Non-distraction, Not losing the object of meditation

## Awareness (Sheshin)

1. Seeing the meditator in the context of meditation (spy)
2. Notifying the mind when consciousness leaves the object (spy)
3. Detecting present and future obstacles to mediation (sheriff)

## 6 Circles of Minds Activity (Concentric Circles)

1. Daily life
2. Fantasies
3. Emotions
4. Discursive thoughts
5. Subtle thoughts
6. Peaceful abiding

### **Three Approaches or Stages of the Meditation Technique**

There are three major approaches or stages in our shamatha meditation practice and instruction. These various techniques can be viewed both as stages one goes through as one's practice matures, and as stages one might go through in any particular meditation session as one goes from the flurry of our fast paced lives to a more settled state of mind.

**Precise Technique:** A technique in which we are working very closely with the breathing process, gaze, posture, and thought process. The emphasis here is on drawing in the mind, relaxing, and stabilizing our mindfulness so that our mind begins to rest in itself. The technique is to be with both the in and out breath, lightly but continuously - be as precise as you can, but not tight. Labeling can be used, but it is not emphasized. See every thought as soon as it arises; if you stray, come back to your posture and breathing. The eye gaze is relaxed and close in, about 2-3 feet in front.

**Open Technique:** A technique in which we have stabilized our mind to a degree that the technique becomes more natural and spacious. The main point is to enjoy the space of our mind, using the out breath as a bridge, and to include sense perceptions as part of our awareness. Labeling of thoughts as "thinking." The gaze is relaxed, downward, about 6 feet in front. The mouth is slightly open as if saying "ah." One can breathe through both the mouth and the nose. Maintain a light touch - a focus of only 25% on the breath, 75% panoramic. Identify with the out breath, go out into space in all directions (not just in front). Disown, let go, but don't space out. Let the in breath be a gap and happen naturally. Recognize small thoughts that arise; if distracted completely, label "thinking," see what arose, and come back to the breath.

**Beyond Technique:** A "technique" in which our mind is well stabilized and naturally rests within itself, feeling very spacious and not needing to apply any technique. In fact, the main technique here is to disown any attempts to "meditate," and yet not to wander for an instant. Labeling of thoughts is relaxed or non-existent. Raise your gaze (between 45 degrees and straight ahead depending upon what is comfortable) and let go of any technique or object (relax the eyes - soft gaze). Let thoughts come and go, like small fish in a vast ocean. Sense perceptions are included as part of being present. Do not stray, but be present (acknowledge you are already present). If you stray, come back to simply being present—awareness of being in the room. If you start focusing on the breath, gently dissolve it.

## **The Four Reminders**

### *Precious Human Birth*

First, contemplate the preciousness of being free and well-favored.  
This is difficult to gain, easy to lose; now I must do something meaningful.

### *Death and Impermanence*

Second, the whole world and its inhabitants are impermanent;  
In particular, the life of beings is like a bubble.  
Death comes without warning; this body will be a corpse.  
At that time, the dharma will be my only help; I must practice it with exertion.

### *Karmic Cause and Effect*

Third, when death comes, I will be helpless.  
Because I create karma, I must abandon evil deeds  
And always devote my time to virtuous actions.  
Thinking this, every day I will examine myself.

### *Faults of Samsara*

Fourth, the homes, friends, wealth, and comforts of samsara  
Are the constant torment of the three sufferings,  
Just like a feast before the executioner leads you to your death.  
I must cut desire and attachment and attain enlightenment through exertion.

## **The Four Immeasurables**

May all sentient beings enjoy happiness and the root of happiness.  
May we be free from suffering and the root of suffering.  
May we not be separated from the great happiness free from suffering.  
May we dwell in the great equanimity free from passion, aggression and prejudice.

## **Dedication of Merit**

By this merit, may all obtain omniscience.  
May it defeat the enemy, wrong doing.  
From the stormy waves of birth, old age, sickness and death,  
From the ocean of samsara, may I free all beings.

By the confidence of the golden sun of the great east,  
May the lotus garden of the Rigden's wisdom bloom.  
May the dark ignorance of sentient beings be dispelled.  
May all beings enjoy profound brilliant glory.

## The Satipatthana-Sutta

Thus have I heard. At one time the Blessed One was living among the Kurus, at Kammasadamma, a market town of the Kuru people. There the Blessed One addressed the bhikkus thus "Monks," and they replied to him, "Venerable Sir." The Blessed One spoke as follows:

This is the only way, monks, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering and grief, for reaching the right path, for the attainment of Nibbana, namely the Four Foundations of Mindfulness. What are the four?

Herein a monk lives contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome, in this world, covetousness and grief; he lives contemplating feeling in feelings, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome, in this world, covetousness and grief; he lives contemplating consciousness in consciousness, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome, in this world, covetousness and grief; he lives contemplating mental objects in mental objects, ardent, clearly comprehending and mindful, having overcome, in this world, covetousness and grief.

### I. The Contemplation of the Body

#### A. The breath:

1. In and out; short and long, wholly or calming
2. He lives contemplating this -
  - a) Internally or externally or both
  - b) Origination factors or dissolution factors or both
  - c) Simply mindful that the body exists

#### B. The four postures: going, standing, sitting and lying down

#### C. The 32 impure components of the body

#### D. Composed of the four great elements: earth, water, fire, wind

#### E. The nine stages of decomposition

### II. The Contemplation of Feeling

#### A. The three feelings, worldly and spiritual; he lives contemplating these -

1. Internally or externally or both
2. Origination factors or dissolution factors or both in them
3. Simply mindful that feeling exists

### III. The Contemplation of Consciousness

#### A. With and without the three root poisons; he lives contemplating these -

1. Internally or externally or both

- 2. Origination factors or dissolution factors or both in them
- 3. Simply mindful that consciousness exists
- B. Shrunken or distracted
- C. Developed or undeveloped
- D. Lower or higher
- E. Concentrated or not concentrated
- F. Freed or not freed

#### **IV. The Contemplation of Mental Objects**

- A. The five hindrances: Sense desire, Anger, Sloth and torpor, Agitation, Doubt
  - 1. He knows:
    - a) Present or absent
    - b) Arising and abandoning
    - c) The non arising in the future
  - 2. He lives contemplating these:
    - a) Internally or externally or both
    - b) Origination factors or dissolution factors or both in them
    - c) Simply mindful that consciousness exists
- B. The five aggregates: form, feeling, perception, formations, consciousness
- C. The six internal and external sense bases
  - 1. He knows:
    - a) The fetter that arises dependent on both
    - b) The abandoning
    - c) The non arising in the future
- D. The seven factors of enlightenment
  - 1. Mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy, tranquility, concentration, equanimity
  - 2. He knows:
    - a) When present or absent
    - b) Arising
    - c) Perfection
- E. The four Noble Truths: suffering, origin, cessation and path

This is the only way, monks, for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering and grief, for reaching the right path, for the attainment of Nibbana, namely the Four Foundations of Mindfulness.

Thus spoke the Blessed One. Satisfied, the monks approved of his words.

*Adapted and summarized from the translation of Nyanasatta Thera*

**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**

**Vipashyana Section  
Root Text**

*Translated by Kiki Ekselius and Chryssoula Zerbini  
Under the guidance of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche*

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 paramitayan'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.

Though Madhyamikas differ with respect to the method of development, they agree on what is to be developed, namely shamatha and vipashyana conjoined; 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 difiniendum, 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.

# The Stages of Meditation

By Kamalashila

Translated by Ven Geshe Lobsang Jordhen, Losang Choephel Ganchenpa, and Jeremy Russell  
(Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, NY)

## Chapter Nine: Actualizing Special Insight

### *The Motivation:*

After realizing calm abiding, meditate on special insight, thinking as follows: 'All the teachings of the Buddha are perfect teachings, and they directly or indirectly reveal and lead to suchness with utmost clarity. If you understand suchness with utmost, you will be free of all the nets of wrong views, just as darkness is dispelled when light appears. Mere calm abiding meditation cannot purify pristine awareness, nor can it eliminate the darkness of obscurations. When I meditate properly on suchness with wisdom, pristine awareness will be purified. Only with wisdom can I realize suchness. Only with wisdom can I effectively eradicate obscurations. Therefore, engaging in calm abiding meditation, I shall search for suchness with wisdom. And I shall not remain content with calm abiding alone.'

What is suchness like? It is the nature of all phenomena that ultimately they are empty of the self of persons and the self of phenomena. This is realized through the perfection of wisdom and not otherwise. *The Unraveling of the Thought Sutra* reads, "O Tathagatha, by which perfection do Bodhisattvas apprehend the identitylessness of phenomena?" "Avalokiteshvara, it is apprehended by the perfection of wisdom." Therefore, meditate on wisdom while engaging in calm abiding.

### *Meditation on the Selflessness of Persons:*

Yogis should analyze in the following manner: a person is not observed as separate from the mental and physical aggregates, the elements and sense powers. Nor is a person of the nature of the aggregates and so forth, because the aggregates and so forth have the entity of being many and impermanent. Others have imputed the person as permanent and single. The person as a phenomena cannot exist except as one or many, because there is no other way of existing. Therefore, we must conclude that the assertion of the worldly "I" and "mine" is wholly mistaken.

### *Meditation on the Selflessness of Phenomena:*

*Discriminating the Identity of Things:* Meditation on the selflessness of phenomena should also be done in the following manner: phenomena, in short, are included under the five aggregates, the twelve sources of perception, and the eighteen elements. The physical aspects of the aggregates, sources of perception, and elements are, in the ultimate sense, nothing other than aspects of the mind. This is because when they are broken into subtle particles and the nature of the parts of these subtle particles is individually examined, no definite identity can be found.

*Discriminating the Identity of the Mind:* In the ultimate sense, the mind too cannot be real. How can the mind that apprehends only the false nature of physical form and so forth, and appears in various aspects, be real? Just as physical forms and so forth are false, since the

mind does not exist separately from physical forms and so forth, which are false, it too is false. Just as physical forms and so forth possess various aspects, and their identities are neither one nor many, similarly, since the mind is not different from them, its identity too is neither one nor many. Therefore, the mind by nature is like an illusion.

*Investigating their Nature:* Analyze that, just like the mind, the nature of all phenomena, too, is like an illusion. In this way, when the identity of the mind is specifically examined by wisdom, in the ultimate sense [1] it is perceived neither within nor without. It is also not perceived in the absence of both. [2] Neither the mind of the past, not that of the future, nor that of the present, is perceived. [3] When the mind is born, it comes from nowhere, and when it ceases it goes nowhere because it is inapprehensible, undemonstrable, and non-physical.

*Resting in Not Finding:*

If you ask, "What is the entity of that which is inapprehensible, undemonstrable, and non-physical?" *The Heap of Jewels* states: "O Kashyapa, when the mind is thoroughly sought, it cannot be found. What is not found cannot be perceived. And what is not perceived is neither past nor future nor present." Through such analysis, the beginning of the mind is ultimately not seen, the end of the mind is ultimately not seen, and the middle of the mind is ultimately not seen. All phenomena should be understood as lacking an end and a middle, just as the mind does not have an end or a middle. With the knowledge that the mind is without an end or a middle, no identity of the mind is perceived. What is thoroughly realized by the mind, too, is realized as being empty. By realizing that, the very identity, which is established as the aspect of the mind, like the identity of physical form, and so forth, is also ultimately not perceived.

*Conclusion:* In this way, when the person does not ultimately see the identity of all phenomena through wisdom, he will not analyze whether physical form is permanent or impermanent, empty or not empty, contaminated or not contaminated, produced or non-produced, and existent or non-existent. Just as physical form is not examined, similarly feeling, recognition, compositional factors, and consciousness are not examined. When the object does not exist, its characteristics also cannot exist. So how can they be examined? In this way, when the person does not firmly apprehend the entity of a thing as ultimately existing, having investigated it with wisdom, the practitioner engages in non-conceptual single-pointed concentration. And thus the identitylessness of all phenomena is realized.

*The Necessity of this Meditation:*

Those who do not meditate with wisdom by analyzing the entity of things specifically, but merely meditate on the elimination of mental activity, cannot avert conceptual thoughts and also cannot realize identitylessness because they lack the light of wisdom. If the fire of consciousness knowing phenomena as they are is produced from individual analysis of suchness, then like the fire produced by rubbing wood it will burn the wood of conceptual thought. The Buddha has spoken in this way.

*The Cloud of Jewels* also states, "One skilled in discerning the faults engages in the yoga of meditation on emptiness in order to get rid of all conceptual elaborations. Such a person, due to his repeated meditation on emptiness, when he thoroughly searches for the object and the identity of the object, which delights the mind and distracts it, realizes them to be empty. When that very mind is also examined, it is realized to be empty. When the identity of what

is realized by this mind is thoroughly sought, this too is realized as empty. Realizing in this way one enters into the yoga of signlessness.” This shows that only those who have engaged in complete analysis can enter into the yoga of signlessness.

It has been explained very clearly that through mere elimination of mental activity, without examining the identity of things with wisdom, it is not possible to engage in non-conceptual meditation. Thus, concentration is done after the actual identify of things like physical form and so forth has been perfectly analyzed with wisdom, and not by concentrating on physical forms and so forth. Concentration is also not done by abiding between this world and the world beyond, because physical forms and so forth are not perceived. It is thus called the non-abiding concentration.

[Such a practitioner] is then called a meditator of supreme wisdom, because by specifically examining the identity of all things with wisdom he has perceived nothing. This is as stated in *The Space Treasure Sutra* and *The Jewel in the Crown Sutra*, and so forth.

*Working with Obstacles to this Meditation:*

In this way, by entering into the suchness of the selflessness of persons and phenomena, you are free from concepts and analysis because there is nothing to be thoroughly examined and observed. You are free from expression, and with single-pointed mental engagement you automatically enter into meditation without exertion. Thus, you very clearly meditate on suchness and abide in it. While abiding in that meditation, the continuity of the mind should not be distracted. When the mind is distracted to external objects due to attachment, and so forth, such distraction should be noted. Quickly pacify the distraction by meditating on the repulsive aspect of such objects and swiftly replace the mind on suchness. If the mind appears to be disinclined to do that, reflecting on the advantages of single pointed concentration, meditate with delight. The disinclination should be pacified by also seeing the defects of distraction.

If the function of the mind becomes unclear and starts sinking, or when there is a risk of it sinking due to being overpowered by mental torpor or sleep, then as before, quickly attempt to overcome such dullness by focusing the mind on supremely delightful things. Then the object suchness should be held in very tight focus. At times when the mind is observed to be excited or tempted to become distracted by the memory of past events of laughter and play, then as in the earlier cases, pacify the distractions by reflecting on such things as impermanence, and so forth, which will help subdue the mind. Then, again endeavor to engage the mind on suchness without applying counter forces.

If and when the mind spontaneously engages in meditation on suchness, free of sinking and mental agitation, it should be left naturally and your efforts should be relaxed. If effort is applied when the mind is in meditative equipoise, it will distract the mind. But if effort is not applied when the mind becomes dull, it will become like a blind man due to extreme dullness and you will not achieve special insight. So, when the mind becomes dull, apply effort, and when in absorption, effort should be relaxed. When, by meditating on special insight, excessive wisdom is generated and calm abiding is weak, the mind will waver like a butter lamp in the wind and you will not perceive suchness very clearly. Therefore, at that time meditate on calm abiding. When calm abiding mediation becomes excessive, meditate on wisdom.

*(All headings in italics have been added for further clarity)*

and meditating. By way of listening, understanding develops. By way of reflecting, doubts are cut. Through meditation, true realization is attained. I will definitely engender these three wisdoms in my mind.

*This is the general training in the contemplation of wisdom.*



{Next you must train in the practice of the perfection of wisdom. The practice of wisdom has three steps: meditation on the selflessness of persons, meditation on the selflessness of phenomena and training in emptiness endowed with the heart of compassion.}

### CONTEMPLATION 53

#### The Selflessness of Persons

*The preliminaries for a session and the conclusion are the same as explained before. For the main practice, sit with your legs crossed<sup>10</sup> and your hands in the position of meditative equipoise. Straighten your spine. Pull in your chin (lit. crook your neck). Square your shoulders. Let your jaw and lips rest naturally. Join your tongue with your upper palate. Look at the tip of your nose. Exhale slowly and deeply through your nostrils three times, then just breathe naturally. First, meditate on renunciation and weariness intensely. Then meditate on love and compassion until you feel deeply moved. Finally, mentally focus on your body, speech and mind—scrutinize them. Contemplate as follows:*

Throughout beginningless cyclic existence, having become accustomed to clinging to the concept of “I” as being the “self,” I have become convinced that a continuous self exists. However, this “I” or “self” in truth has never existed.

*This is the basis of the contemplation.*

If that which is called an “I” or a “self” truly exists, there must be something designated as an independent personal entity, a self of person. But the material existence of such a thing has never been established. Therefore, since no material existence can be found, the essence of a self of person<sup>11</sup> cannot be proven either. Nevertheless, the ego has a way of clinging to this non-existent self as if it did exist. In accord with this deluded perception, I believe the self to be permanent,

singular, and independent. From that, I have the thought “Last year I did that” and “This year I will do this” and “Last year’s self was like that” and “My self in the present is like this.” Thinking that I will continue to exist like this is what is called “clinging to the self as permanent.”

When these present thoughts arise, I consider outer and inner occurrences to be other than I. It seems to me that there is an essence of a self that is established at the core of my being that is unmixed with this multitude of experiences and appearances. That is “clinging to a self as singular.”

It seems to me as if the self is the owner of certain enjoyments, substances and possessions. That is “clinging to a self as independent.”

Even though those various ways of clinging are my mode of perception, things cannot be proven to be like that in truth. If the self were permanent, then if I experienced happiness one time, I would always have to experience it. If I experienced suffering one time, I would always have to suffer. If I were initially trapped in cyclic existence, a time of future liberation would never occur. Similarly, using the same logic in reverse, if a time of future liberation did come about, it would mean that a previous cyclic existence was never experienced. However, happiness and suffering are both experienced and individual incidents of bondage and liberation do occur. Therefore, I should resolve that there is no permanent self.

The self as singular is also not an acceptable proposition. Although it seems as if the various parts that make up the body and mind exist, the eyes are not the self. The ears, nose, tongue and mind are also not the self. If each of them were the self, then there would be many selves. If each one of them is not the self, then a self cannot be found.

Moreover, if the self were an aggregate, it would have to be impermanent.<sup>112</sup> If it were something other than an aggregate, then, when something is seen by the eye consciousness, it would contact the entire body of the seer.<sup>113</sup> I would have the perception that I touched the object. Therefore, an “I” or “self” that has the nature of singularity is not established. Since its singularity is not established, neither is its independence. Moreover, since I can patently see that all occurrences depend on conditions, the existence of an independent self is impossible.

Hence, a self cannot be established outside of the aggregates. A self does not abide within the aggregates. Each of the aggregates individually is not the self. The self is not some kind of sheath encasing the aggregates.

## CONTEMPLATION 63

## How to Sustain Meditation on Selflessness and Emptiness

*Next, mediate synthesizing all of those previous contemplations on selflessness and emptiness. In order to synthesize the previous understandings, reflect as follows:*

My self and others, the world and its inhabitants are all lacking a truly existent self. No creator made all of this. It appears merely due to the assemblage of interdependent connections. Nothing can be at all established to exist as one thing or many. It all merely appears as the face of delusion; in reality, none of it truly exists. If I examine the matter carefully, "not established" and "non-existent" are also newly fabricated attributes created by the mind. In order to indicate something that seems to be the opposite [of existence], I merely impute the terms "non-existent" and "not established" to it.

*By analyzing back and forth in this way, the object of focus dissipates. In the void that is left, rest evenly without thinking about anything at all. After the previous object of focus is cleared away, a state arises that is free from all identification. For as long as that lasts, rest in that non-conceptuality. If that state deteriorates, rest in the mere non-conceptuality of the disappearance of the aspect of emptiness. Because it is necessary to do the meditation just described repeatedly, it is important to recognize the point at which this disappearance starts (to come to distinguish between the state of non-conceptuality and its deterioration).*

*At first, you will not be able to stay in this state for very long. Eventually, when you get the point of the experience, you will be able to sustain it for longer and longer periods than before. Concentrating the mind on the object of focus<sup>124</sup> is known as "placement"<sup>125</sup>, and extending that experience is called "continuous placement". When you become able to stop thoughts as soon as they arise, that is "repeated placement". Then, when the state of non-conceptuality extends for longer and longer periods, that is "close placement." Eventually, remembering the good qualities of trance, you will start to meditate more frequently and with joy, and enthusiasm will arise. This is the stage called "disciplined". Sometimes, by recollecting faults such as distraction, distraction will cease on its own. This stage is called "pacification". These two phases are also known as "engendering enthusiasm" and*

*"engendering renunciation." Whatever thoughts of hope and fear, attachment and aversion arise, look directly at their essence and seal them with the meditation on their unreality that you cultivated previously. This natural pacification is the stage known as "close pacification." As long as your mind sometimes uses and sometimes loses [its mindfulness], you should cultivate these methods again and again. At some point, when you concentrate the mind, you will be without the faults of dullness and restlessness and will be able to rest the mind for a long time on the object of focus, which is emptiness. At this time, it is necessary to concentrate, engaging in one-pointed focus of the mental continuum. Eventually, just by remembering the experience of the view that you cultivated previously, you will be able to simply rest and abide for a long time in the aspect of emptiness. At that time, you should relax your effort and rest naturally settled. At this point, you have achieved the state called "resting evenly."*

[The way of sustaining meditation presented above comes from the tradition of the Treasury of Phenomenology. It is the single way to meditate on tranquility that is preceded by insight. It can be construed as the same as the tradition presented in Stages of Meditation<sup>126</sup> by Kamalashila and so forth known as "the method of meditating with the precedent of non-conceptuality". It can also be construed as the tradition of glorious Arisha from the great Master Potowa's Annals<sup>127</sup> called "the only necessary preliminary". These instructions are in accordance with the sutra tradition such as the many instructions on mind training imparted by Arisha and with the many tantric instructions such as the teachings on mahamudra. Although there are a great many instructions that take this approach, in this case I have wished to present the instructions in a graduated way so have needed to rely on the teachings of Shenyen Potowa.<sup>128</sup>

In Potowa's tradition of sustaining the view, once the mind comes to rest, then insight meditation is again practiced. It is also asserted that from the beginning tranquility and insight may be cultivated in union.]



## CONTEMPLATION 64

## Emptiness with the Heart of Compassion

Realizing emptiness alone is not sufficient to achieve the perfection of wisdom. I need to practice emptiness and compassion in union. Because compounded phenomena appear and exist as ultimate truth, they cannot be established whatsoever as having inherent existence. They are like space. If I truly realize that only the non-establishment of phenomena is established, then sentient beings who experience suffering do not exist. The suffering they experience does not exist. The way that they experience suffering due to the cyclic interactions of karma, emotions and suffering has primordially never been established. Nevertheless, until that realization occurs, the appearance of sentient beings who experience suffering arises. The appearance of their suffering arises. The way they experience suffering and the way they are caught in the cycle arise. All these phenomena do not truly exist and yet appear. Even so, sentient beings are deceived by this illusion and, therefore, experience these various sufferings. Poor dear ones! Having dispelled their delusion, I must establish them in buddhahood, the realization of the true nature.

Ultimately, I too do not exist. Those sentient beings do not exist. Delusion does not exist. Even the path that dispels delusion does not exist. However, from the point of view of relative confused appearances, suffering and obscurations seem to exist. The path seems to exist. Through the path of meditation, delusion is dispelled, and a person becomes a buddha who abides in the essence of the natural state. Therefore, my illusion-like self will show illusion-like sentient beings the illusion-like path and teaching. In this way, the adversities of their illusion-like suffering will be liberated into the expanse.

Since all experiences of suffering and those who experience it are not established as truly existent, it is also impossible to establish any phenomena of perception such as appearance or sound as truly existent. However, one might assert the extreme of permanence, suggesting that a second nature is superimposed on the non-existent nature. In this case, one might consider it possible that there is truly existent suffering. But there is no way to augment the experience of unreal suffering with

some other experience of truly existent suffering.<sup>129</sup> If this suffering were realized to be non-existent, it would be self-liberated. How I feel compassion for those who have not realized this!

*Meditate, thinking in this way again and again.*



# Essence of Ambrosia

## A Guide to Buddhist Contemplations

by  
Taranatha



Translated by  
Willia Baker

## An Outline of the Path of Meditation

### I. Shamatha

#### A. Mindfulness and Awareness

1. Mental Stability
2. Mental Pliancy

#### B. Mind Training – Mental Cultivation:

1. **Developing Renunciation**
  - a) The Four Reminders
2. **Developing Benevolence & Overcoming Complacency**
  - a) The Four Immeasurables
3. **Developing Bodhicitta:**
  - a) Tonglen - sending and receiving
  - b) Lojong - slogan practice

### II. Analytical Vipashyana: From Infant Stage to Simplicity/One Taste

#### A. Discriminating: Objects and Subjects

##### 1. Objects

- a) Non-Things
- b) Things
  - (1) Matter
  - (2) Mind

##### 2. Subjects

- a) Prime and secondary consciousness
- b) Mental and sense consciousness
- c) Mistaken and non-mistaken consciousness
- d) Conceptual and non-conceptual consciousness

##### 3. Discoveries:

- a) Meanings: verbalization/conceptual understanding of reality, dharma
- b) Things: substantiality, experience, internal and external
- c) Characteristics: mark/sign, range/dhatus, common/specific
- d) Directions: spatially, psychologically, spiritually
- e) Times: duration, the three times, nowness

#### B. Discriminating Fully: Cognition

##### 1. Valid cognition

- a) Direct valid cognition
  - (1) Sense
  - (2) Mental
  - (3) Self awareness
  - (4) Yogic
- b) Inferential valid cognition

##### 2. Non-valid cognition

- a) Doubting cognition



- b) Wrong cognition

### **C. Investigating: Cognition of Objects by Subjects**

#### **1. The Types of Object Cognitions**

- a) Referent objects
- b) Appearing objects
- c) Apprehended or Engaged Objects

#### **2. Aspects of the Conceptualization Process**

- a) The momentary process in four stages or moments
- b) Oneness or manifoldness; exclusion or inclusion
- c) Generality and specifically characterized phenomena

### **D. Investigating Fully: Reasoning into Reality**

#### **1. The Five Skills**

- a) Analyzing causes
- b) Analyzing results
- c) Analyzing both causes and results
- d) Analyzing one or many
- e) Analyzing interdependence

## **III. Resting Vipashyana: Seeing Things as They Are**

### **A. Mixing Mind with Space**

### **B. The Five Absolute Bodhicitta Slogans of Atisha**

1. All dharmas should be regarded as dreams
2. Contemplate the nature of unborn insight
3. Self-liberate the antidote
4. Rest in the nature of alaya
5. In the post meditation experience, once should become a child of illusion

### **C. The Six Non-Discoveries or Not Findings of Kamalashila:**

1. Not locating: things (objects/subject) - internal/external
2. Not discriminating: characteristics – one or many, general and specific
3. Not understanding: meanings - literal, explicit, definitive, etc
4. Not keeping track: three times - p/p/f
5. Not Doing/Engaging: wholesome or unwholesome activities
6. Not analyzing: the three/four reasonings/skills

### **D. The Six Points of Tilopa**

1. Do not contemplate
2. Do not think
3. Do not analyze
4. Do not meditate
5. Do not examine
6. But let the mind be at rest

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