

# GOM

*A Course in Meditation*



ALSO BY GELEK RIMPOCHE

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# GOM

## *A Course in Meditation*

Based on Tsongkhapa's *Lamrim Chenmo*  
and *Lamrim Chungba*

GELEK RIMPOCHE



A JEWEL HEART TRANSCRIPT

2005

Gelek Rinpoche, *Gom—A Course in Meditation*  
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Jewel Heart Transcripts are lightly to moderately edited transcriptions of the teachings of Kyabje Gelek Rinpoche and others teachers who have taught at Jewel Heart. Their purpose is to provide Rinpoche's students, as well as all others who are interested, with these extremely valuable teachings in a way that gives one the feeling of being present at the teachings.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is the transcription of a Course in Meditation [Tib. *gom*],<sup>1</sup> given by Kyabje Gelek Rimpoche in the New York Jewel Heart Center, in 2004. The course is part of the long-term weekly *Odyssey to Freedom* teachings.

Subject is the development of Shamatha [Skt.] or *zhi nay* [Tib.], *i.e.* the way or *how* to meditate. At the same time Rimpoche gave a course in Ann Arbor, also on a weekly basis, on the Eighth Chapter of the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*, the Bodhisattva's Way of Life, by Shantideva, in which was dealt with the object, the *what* to meditate *on*. After finishing the meditation course, Rimpoche gave a brief introduction into mahamudra.

Inserted into this are a few pieces of text from Rimpoche's Lam Rim Teachings as well as a few verses with commentary from the Ann Arbor teachings on the Eight Chapter of the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara*.

A special feature of this transcript is the wonderful series of pictures *Meditator's Journey*. The picture, taken from a thangka from the collection of the late Tomo Geshe Rimpoche, shows the story of how one trains in shamatha, what stages one goes through, what powers are used at each particular stage and what effect they have. Besides the total

journey in overview, parts of the painting that explain a certain level have been blown up and an explaining commentary has been provided. That way the nine stages and six powers, are made clear page by page.

Another special feature is the explanation on how to meditate on the mind.

The terminology on this topic kept changing during the course, in trying to find the most suitable translations for the original Tibetan. The variety of synonyms used in the process has been preserved in the text, while the final terminology is used in the outlines as well as in the *Meditator's Journey*.

The transcription was done by the New York mandala members. As a help to the reader references to further literature, notes and charts are added. Any mistakes are due to my lack of knowledge.

Ann Arbor, June 4th, 2005

Marianne Soeters

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# I GOM

Welcome everybody to the beginning of our course on meditation.<sup>2</sup> Before we go into the meditation itself, I'd like to give you some background information.

## THE ESSENCE OF BUDDHA'S TEACHING

As many of you know, Tibetan Buddhism is part of the Mahayana tradition. What is the difference between Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism? A lot of people will say that it is the difference between having and not having compassion. That is not right. The Theravadin tradition also gives you tremendous compassion. The bottom line really is that in the Mahayana tradition the practitioner thinks, 'Whatever it may take, I myself, single-handedly will take total responsibility of liberating every single sentient being.' That is the difference. Whether you can do it or not is a different story.

In the Tibetan tradition this is called 'special mind.' When you take that responsibility, then when you look at your own situation you realize that you are unable even to figure out how to look after yourself, yet you promise to liberate all. So the question is: how do I carry out this responsibility? The answer is: you have to become fully

enlightened, yes! Then you will be able to liberate everybody else. That's why in the Mahayana practice the goal you are trying to achieve is becoming a buddha.

In the Theravadin tradition the goal you are striving for is to become an arhat. An arhat is free of suffering and the causes of suffering, free of the state which is known as samsara. Samsara is a Sanskrit word. In Tibetan it is called *khor*, which means anything that is circling. The state of being free from samsara is called nirvana in Sanskrit and in Tibetan *de*, which means 'beyond.' The combination, *khor de*<sup>3</sup> means samsara and nirvana. When you look at it, it is fantastic, just these two little words *khor* and *de* contain the four noble truths, the first teaching of the Buddha.

*The Four Noble Truths.* These are:

1. The truth of suffering,
2. The truth of the cause of suffering,
3. The truth of the cessation of suffering
4. The truth of the path that leads to the cessation of suffering.

The circling of *khor* is related to the first two noble truths, the truth of suffering and the truth of the cause of suffering. The cause of suffering is what makes the individual circle continuously in suffering. Suffering makes the individual run. We are running away from fear and we can't get away, so we are circling. Fear combined with confusion is the source of suffering. We have had that for so long. We are running but we can't get away. Why can't we get

away? Because we are sort of hooked in by links. It is like a wheel where the inside runs but the spokes cannot fall apart because of the rim that keeps them together. Exactly like that we are running and we cannot get away because of the twelve links of the system of interdependence. You know about these, I am sure. We have heard and read about it and had teachings about that a number of times.<sup>4</sup> These links of the rim, that stops the system from falling apart, keep you running around. When Buddha talks about *khor*, circling, just that one word gives you the first two noble truths. *De*, the going beyond, gives you the other half of the four noble truths. The first two are the negative aspects and the second are the positive aspects of the four noble truths. That is why Buddha is really great. In these few simple words combined together he expresses the nature of our life. That's exactly what it is.

We are all running, all the time, physically, mentally and emotionally. That is the life we are in. That is our reality. Buddha's idea of liberation is based on these four. It tells you how people get into it and how they can get out of it. In the *Lankavatara sutra*<sup>5</sup> Buddha says,

Why are people running around and suffer so much? Because they don't get emptiness straight, the nature of reality, what is really going on. They don't get the meaning of peace, [Skt. nirvana] straight. That's why they are circling, life after life.

That is very important. Life after life, we're continuously doing the same thing. We may think, 'Well, I am okay, I am not doing anything terrible and miserable.' In

one way it is true. We are greater than many others. But on the other hand, we are not liberated, we are not free. That much we know.

For me the goal of spiritual practice, spiritual work, is that first we have to liberate ourselves, then help liberate others. Liberate from what? From running around. The fear combined with confusion is traditionally called *ignorance* [Tib. *marigpa*], which might not be exactly ignorance as we understand it. This one beats us so badly. It takes shelter in one of the emotions—it can be hatred or obsession. We are running around within that.

If you watch carefully, it becomes clear to you whether what you are doing is okay or not. What is your mind really influenced by? Only for a very short time you will find the mind influenced by positive emotions. Most of the time, however, the mind is influenced by negative emotions, such as dislike, dissatisfaction, fear. That is our problem. It causes misery and suffering and unhappiness.

Sometimes we think we don't have this problem, and it may not look like we do. There is no one with horns and tail and fangs that says, 'I am the problem.' But it is there, occupying the individual subconsciously. Without our knowledge it controls us completely. These are the points Buddha refers to when he says that we are suffering. We do not necessarily have to be in a hot or cold hell, where you are either getting fried or frozen. Suffering is everywhere—mental, physical and emotional suffering.

Physically we have tremendous suffering. Everyone of us looks different from ten years ago. Just visualize what you looked like at that time and then put a mirror in front

of you. You won't like what you see. Well, I don't. That alone is physical suffering, even without specific aches and pains. When Buddha talks about *khora* and about suffering, that is what it is. Life after life we repeat the same thing again and again.

Now is the time for us to stop that and make ourselves into something different. Get out of the circle of *khora*, get beyond. Shift from the first two noble truths to the second two noble truths. Everything good and bad is included in those four. We have the opportunity and possibility and capability to make the difference now. It is the right time and the right opportunity. Whether we do it or not is our choice and our business.

If you try to cut that circle, the only link at which that this is possible, the only point where you can get out of it, is the root link. The root is fear and confusion combined, which we usually call ignorance. This can only be cut by wisdom, nothing else. In order to get that wisdom, we have to have meditation.

Yes, it is true, in Vajrayana Buddhism you are told that you can go and say certain mantras and do rituals and develop wisdom. These things are there and they are very nice, and it is worth putting effort in. But, without really putting the hard work of meditation in we will not get that wisdom at all. The hard work of meditation is needed [in vajrayana as it is in sutrayana]. Saying mantras and rituals are the icing on the cake. If you don't have the cake, the icing alone will be too sweet and too creamy to eat. It is not fun and won't do any good either. That is why we have this particular meditation course running.

INTRODUCTION TO THE MEDITATION COURSE

We have been working for a long time on a variety of topics based on the Lamrim<sup>6</sup> *Odyssey to Freedom*.<sup>7</sup> Now we have come to the point of the fifth paramita, the paramita of meditation,<sup>8</sup> which is mainly concentrated meditation.

We have two parallel programs running on this topic. One is the course in Ann Arbor on Tuesdays, based on Chapter Eight of the *Bodhisattva's Way of Life*,<sup>9</sup> the longest chapter in the text. In addition, every Thursday in New York I will teach the meditation chapter of Tsongkhapa's bigger Lamrim, the *Lamrim Chenmo*,<sup>10</sup> for the *Odyssey to Freedom*. Both are on the same subject, but based on different texts.

When finished, this will be one of the most detailed, comprehensive and complete meditation courses ever given in the United States. We already have been doing a lot of meditation activities throughout these teachings, but we don't usually call them meditation. The combination of shamatha teachings on the basis of Lamrim and teachings on the meditation chapter of the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* is going to be a wonderful teaching on meditation,<sup>11</sup> I think, because we're allowed the time and the sources are extremely rich. This course we is not going to be finished in the regular course period of eight weeks, but hopefully we can finish by the end of the year.

*Concentrated meditation.* Concentrated meditation is called shamatha in Sanskrit. The word in Tibetan is *zhi nay*.<sup>12</sup> I do not know what shamatha really means, because I

don't know Sanskrit. But the word is *zhi nay* in Tibetan has a specific meaning: *zhi* means 'pacified, peace,' and *ne* is 'remains.' So, *zhi nay* is about pacifying all difficulties, obstacles and imbalances within your mind and reaching, maintaining and remaining in a state of peace, mental quiescence.

I don't think the word meditation conveys all that. It may give you an idea of being at peace and concentrating, but does not really convey bringing yourself to peace in the sense of overcoming and pacifying all obstacles, bothers and worries, all those pressures. There are many words in Tibetan that can be translated as meditation, but among those what we are talking about today is *zhi nay*.

*Balancing.* Another word in Tibetan important in this context is *nyam par shak par* or *nyam shak*.<sup>13</sup> Translated directly it says 'equalizing and remaining.' Again, I don't think it means equalizing but rather balancing the mind. Normally we have too much struggle, too much push and pull in our mind. For economic or social reasons, for the sake of happiness, name or fame or whatever, we struggle a lot. The word *nyam shak* here means balancing between too much obsession on the one side and too much hatred on the other side. By meditation we try to balance this and make our mind stable, which means not be swept away by the force of hatred nor be sucked in by the force of obsession. We try to be balanced in between and maintain the mind at that level.

The learning part of Buddhism will not end until you become enlightened. The working part of it—helping other

beings—is never going to end until every sentient being is fully enlightened, so it is a bottomless ocean. In the meantime it is great we have this and you cannot do anything better than practice it, so be very happy about it.

#### A. SHAMATHA AND VIPASHYANA<sup>14</sup>

[Tib. *zhi nay* & *lhaktong*]<sup>15</sup>

Actually, there are two kinds of meditation. The first is the shamatha-oriented focusing meditation, *zhi nay*, and then there is the vipashyana or ‘specially seeing.’ It is basically translated in this country as insight, but the word in Tibetan, *lhak tong*, means ‘specially seeing.’

What does specially seeing mean here? It does not mean just insight only. It means seeing the true nature, the true reality. It is deep insight. So it is talking about the wisdom.

Buddha used these two kinds of meditation for his own development and shared them with us. What do these two do to the individual? Tsongkhapa has presented here a number of points.

#### I. BENEFITS OF SHAMATHA AND VIPASHYANA

The first point is what benefit one gets if out of this shamatha and vipashyana meditations.

*Qualities.* Buddha himself said that every good quality we have, whether it is samsaric or non-samsaric, is the result of either one of those meditations. As it says in *the Samdhinirmocana Sutra*, one of the sutras that explains Buddha’s thoughts,

All samsaric and non-samsaric qualities of Hin-ayana and Mahayana are the result of either *zhi nay* or *lhak tong*.

I think Buddha refers to special qualities here. Both *zhi nay*, shamatha, and *lhak tong*, vipashyana, are special qualities that one develops by putting in efforts in the meditation. Every good virtue requires careful focusing and thinking, both. Therefore, if focused on properly it is going within the category of shamatha and if analyzed, it goes in the category of vipashyana. That's the reason why Buddha says every quality is a result of one of those.

Though we explain vipashyana and shamatha both on the basis of Buddha's teaching and experience, these two qualities basically are not just special to Buddhism. Every traditional eastern religion carries these two. Almost every tradition carries them. The difference lies in how detailed they are, what is focused on and all this.

As we quoted Buddha's saying that every quality we have is a result of these two types of meditation, do we really have to talk about specific benefits? We don't. Whatever quality we want to get, if we do not meditate, *i.e.* if we do not analyze and we do not focus, we will practically gain nothing. That's why every quality we do gain is a result of these two. I purposely say these two. I hope you notice that I'm bringing in the two together—not separately, but together.

*Familiarization.* What do *zhi nay* and *lhak tong* do? Tsongkhapa uses here the word *gom*, meditation, in the past tense, 'one who is completely familiarised, one who is used

to it. This is why when you ask teachers who are following the Tsongkhapa tradition, ‘What is meditation?’ they say, ‘It is not a big deal, it is getting used to.’ A very simple statement you get: getting used to, getting familiarised. Some others may make a big deal out of it and say, ‘Meditation is something deep, profound, secret, mystical’, but Tsongkhapa has the system of, ‘Well, *gom* is getting used to it and *gom* in its past tense is: you got used to it.

In other words, in *zhi nay* you try to train your mind in not unnecessarily getting distracted. You just train your mind in being able to think on the subject or object you are concentrating on, in being able to make use of your mind.

What does *zhi nay* do? It provides the capability of growing the mind in the opposite direction of where you don’t want it to grow. It increases the capacity of the mind to observe, to analyze, to go deeper into the subjects you do not to want go in to, to be able to cut that, reduce that; not only reduce that, but even reduce the imprint of this. That is why meditation directly reduces the delusions; and even the imprints of the delusions get reduced.

What does *lhak tong* do? *Lhak tong* takes you away from wrongly perceiving the truth, from wrongly perceiving the true nature of all phenomena.

In short, *zhi nay*’s work is to make you withdraw from the undesirable objects that you want to concentrate on and *lhak tong* will cut the wrong perception.

Tsongkhapa’s style is to always put it in negative terminology. So *zhi nay* reduces the mind’s capability to go deeply into things you don’t want to go in to. So, naturally the

opposite of that is that you gain the concentration on the thing you want to concentrate on. *Lhak tong* will cut the wrong perception, so you will get the opposite of it: the true seeing.

*Mental pliancy or suppleness.* What do these, both *zhi nay* and *lhak tong*, do? They bring a tremendous joy to body and mind both. For these joys that you bring in the body and mind, is a name: *shin jangs*.<sup>16</sup> There are two kinds: *lus shin jangs* and *sems shin jangs*—body pliancy and mind pliancy. The mind *shin jangs* makes your mind tremendously joyful, happy, peaceful and satisfied. The body *shin jangs* brings tremendous pleasure in the body; it makes your body very light, and that is why you'll be able to fly. Flying is nothing but riding on the air waves, so you'll be able to do that. And it also is full of joy. I hate to use the word bliss here, because that is special for Vajrayana. I don't think it is bliss here, but it is definitely far better than the ordinary pleasures we look for, from ordinary massage to sexuality. It goes far beyond that. That is why people who develop this, will have no interest in sex for whatsoever. That sort of body pleasure and mental pleasure, yet with alertness and control, that state of mind, tremendously clear, lucid and in control is what you gain.

The difference between what you get from the use of certain materials like drugs and what you get from the meditative state at that level, is the *control*. Not only the lucidity, not only the clarity and capability of seeing beyond, but also the control. And it will not have side-effects. So it is far better than using drugs or sex.

*Delusion-reduction.* And then of course it reduces the delusions automatically. So whatever you do at that stage will become tremendously virtuous, almost every single thing you do is going to be for your benefit.

The person who has a wandering mind is always in the embrace of the heavy delusions. Whether you say a lot of mantras or take hardship in doing prostrations, do mandala offerings, say Vajrasattva-mantras or do circambulations, no matter how much you do it, if you don't have concentration it is totally useless, a waste of time. Just keeping on doing it with no understanding and no concentration, is useless. From the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*:

The Knower of Reality has said  
That even if recitation and physical hardships  
Are practised for long periods of time,  
They will be meaningless if the mind is distracted  
elsewhere.

Shantideva, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*,

Ch. 5, vs. 16

*Answer for our problems.* And it is probably an answer for our mental problems, companionship, family, emotional problems, work, study, exams, whatever; probably it is an answer for all of those. That doesn't mean you give up everything and go for that, okay? Try to do it at the side. But those who don't have work, probably can spend a lot of time on that; it would be very useful.

*Easy to achieve.* Compared with enlightenment or getting out of samsara or even determination to be free, this is a

stage you can easily achieve. It is a kind of package of which you can even say, ‘Well, that is my goal.’

*Lhak tong* is difficult, but *zhi nay* is not that difficult at all. When the time and conditions are right, it could easily be done within a year. First read more about the benefits of *zhi lhak*.<sup>17</sup> And then really build a strong interest to build up the *zhi lhak* properly. Really, it gives you tremendous harmony. I am not going to say it is the enlightened state, it is not. Even when the actual *lhak tong* develops and you’ll probably see the true nature of emptiness face to face, it doesn’t mean you are an enlightened being. One really has to be careful about that, because particularly in the west a number of people say so.

## 2. HOW SHAMATHA AND VIPASHYANA ARE THE BASIC FORMULA

The second point Tsongkhapa emphasizes here, is that these two are the basic formula for whatever you’re dealing with in your own mind in order to uplift the level of your consciousness, or for the betterment of your mind. In the Judeo-Christian tradition they will say to bring you closer to God. In our tradition, we call it upliftment, betterment, improvement, or you could say, ‘bringing you closer to enlightenment.’ In short, the formula on which you work with your mind, has to be either one of these two. There is no third or extra formula available that works with the mind. Physically, yes, you can have a lot of formula, but for the mind, no. Because mind doesn’t have a shape or color, is not tangible, therefore, also the method has to be something like this, I guess. According to Tsongkhapa it does not really

have to be pure shamatha [*zhi nay*] or pure vipashyana [*lhak tong*], but sort of within its framework. This is the reason why this is the formula applicable to anything dealing with the mind. It's very hard to work with the mind without either one of these formulas, focusing or analyzing. So, the highlighting point Tsongkhapa is making here is that *zhi nay* and *lhak tong* are the two categories that basically cover the whole mechanical system of meditational practice. This is really the formula to use for uplifting our consciousness.

### 3. THE NATURE OF SHAMATHA AND VIPASHYANA

*What is zhi nay?* Though I explained to you earlier what the word *zhi nay* means, the way Tsongkhapa explains it in his *Lamrim Chenmo*, is beautiful. I wish I had all the time and the knowledge of doing it the way he has done it. You know, what's beautiful is that he just doesn't say, 'This is this, this this,' but he quotes Buddha's word and then he explains it. This is why Tsongkhapa's works are fantastic! Not only one, but five, six or maybe ten different sources from the Buddha and the earlier Indian masters he quotes from. And then he gives you the logic behind all this. That is so beautiful, really. But if we keep on digging into those, we'll be nowhere.<sup>18</sup>

Here Tsongkhapa makes the point: what is shamatha and what is vipashyana? He quotes Buddha:

Shamatha or *zhi nay* here means that the mind is focused on one thing only and not running around, not shifting. And because of your efforts to put your focus in one point only, somehow your

mind will learn this, it will be able to focus and that becomes natural to your mind.

In other words, your mind really gets trained; it won't run around any more, like right now.

There was a very good healer, called Norbu Chen, in Texas. He was the one that came to India and brought me to Texas to give him some initiations and teachings, mid-'70s. He is supposed to have cured Yul Brenner's voice. Yul Brenner was supposed to sing somewhere in Washington, if I remember correctly, with President Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. He had lost his voice completely and went to several places to get cured and wasn't, and finally ended up with Norbu Chen, who said, 'Spend the night with me' or something like that. And the next day Brenner was okay. Norbu Chen was a great healer, no doubt about it, but if you had to deal with him, he was extremely difficult, absolutely crazy and wild. Anyway, he was trying to tell me about meditation. I didn't know the word 'meditation' in English and so he was trying to show me by having me watch incense burning and not losing the focus. Actually he was trying to tell me about *zhi nay*. So watching the incense burning, was my learning of meditation in the US. It was funny.

Tsongkhapa tells you here what *zhi nay* is about. It means focusing your mind on one point. Not have your mind running around, but keep on focusing. You can learn that. When you have learned it, your mind will automatically remain with its object, without having to put the focus forcefully again and again. The mind will automatically do it. I'm not talking about how to do it, I am saying it is

learning. Your mind learned to sit on the object without wandering.

Right now we have a completely wandering mind. Traditional Tibetan teachers tell us our mind is like a monkey in the temple. Do you have an idea of an old Tibetan temple? It's a little dark room where there are a lot of images, a lot of jewelries, a lot of food offerings and a lot of water offerings. And if you let a wild, crazy monkey loose in there, it will jump from one image to another, eat all the food, knock down every butter lamp and drink all the water or throw all the bowls off. That is exactly what our mind does with us now. In the temple of our body, this monkey is running around and taking everything. That is where we are, mindwise.

So mind itself is given a training, it learns how to focus and how to remain with its object of focus by the mental force itself. We can remain with it, because we are holding our mind. Because we hold our mind, we hold our energy, too. That is, we hold the 'air' [Tib. *lung*],<sup>19</sup> that travels with the mind [Tib. *sem*].<sup>20</sup> When the mind goes around, there's also air that travels together with it. Traditional Vajrayana teachings will tell you the air is the horse and the mind is the one who rides the horse, the jockey. So mind and air—or you can say mind and energy—always travel together, inside or outside the body.

The air or energy, which is a sort of vibration, has no way of holding, but the mind has, because there is imagery. Even if you are not focusing on anything, there is imagery. The imagery of the individual person enables the mind to hold. Though mind has no color, no shape, no tangibil-

ity, there's some kind of energy. If you look within yourself and you sort of think of your mind, you're probably focusing on something in the middle of your brain. Each and every one of us will have that, though it may differ slightly with individual people. Because of that imagery, focusing or holding becomes possible.

Holding the imagery improves that very energy that combines with our mind. Because of that, you experience some kind of pleasure or joy in the body. Because of that joy and pleasure in the body, you also get joy or happiness in the mind. This joy in body and in mind both is called *shin jangs*, *shin tu jang ba*—very well trained. And so it gives very good joy and happiness. On the basis of that joy and happiness, then you can get a samadhi, in Tibetan called *ting nge 'dzin*, meaning concentration, contemplation.<sup>21</sup> Such a meditative level is called *zhi nay*.<sup>22</sup> That's what Buddha's words and the great Indian pandit's words say and what Tsongkhapa tries to present.

In other words, simply sitting and focusing for a long time, doesn't become *zhi nay*. *Zhi nay* must have that physical and mental joy [also called pliancy or suppleness]. Samadhi is the meditative state which develops for the individual due to the influence of this physical and mental joy and the power to be able to [hold]. The power of holding [actually] comes [already] before the joy. Because of the power of being able to focus, the joy is brought about. The joy and the power to hold, together bring the meditative state called *zhi nay*.

*Zhi nay* does not have to be wisdom-oriented. Tsongkhapa quotes the Buddha, saying,

This joy will develop once you are able to focus and hold your mind and energy within yourself. By that only, this joy will develop. It does not require to have wisdom.

*What is lhak tong?*

Because of the joy you already experience in body and mind, you are able to use your mind to discriminately look into the points. Whatever point you focus on, you will be able to see clearly, detailedly, wholly. You will be able to analyze it, to observe it on a gross level and on the subtle level. Being able to do that, we call 'special seeing' or vipashyana or *lhak tong*. When it becomes that, the bodhisattva has *lhak tong*.

These are the Buddha's words. So, *zhi nay* means to pacify or balance the mind that is running towards external or internal objects, instead of remaining with what you are focusing on. A good American expression for that is 'being busy for nothing.' You are doing something, you are sitting down, you may sit three hours or days or even weeks, but if our mind is not focused on the subject or object you are focusing on, then those sittings are not necessarily directly contributing towards *zhi nay*.

*Zhi nay* really means to have a focusing mind. To be able to focus two, three seconds is extremely difficult. As I told you, when looking at incense burning, I can sit there, I can watch the incense burning, I can even physically put my mind on it, but my mind is thinking something else.

As a matter of fact, I remember what I was thinking. While I was looking at the incense burning I was thinking of the dinner the night before in Forth Worth. This shows how our mind works.

Tsongkhapa says,

Some people will simply tell you that when there is stability of the mind, then it is *zhi nay*, and when there is not only stability but also clarity, then it is *lhak tong*. On the basis of some sutras some earlier teachers have tried to explain it that way.

Tsongkhapa says,

If that were correct it would contradict earlier made statements. Furthermore, clarity and tightness of concentration depend on whether or not there is a sinking mind.

All *zhi nay* must be absolutely lucid and tight and if you are free of the problem of sinking, it automatically becomes lucid.

He says they are talking about the subtle sinking mind, not really talking about *zhi nay* itself. Maybe it's too early to mention to us right now.<sup>23</sup> So, here Tsongkhapa highlights these points: what is *zhi nay* and what is *lhak tong*.

In short, *zhi nay* is not just a focus and concentration but a focus and concentration that brings peace and sustains that peace. *Zhi nay* also refers to having obtained that peace and remaining in that peace. *Lhak tong* or vipashyana is

special seeing, one who has special insight, insight meditation. Looking at these two, we see the first one provides the point of stability, where you can completely focus and stay with your object of meditation, and the second point gives you a penetrating deep insight, it enables you to really look in depth, look in detail.

The old Tibetan masters gave the following example: If I focus on something, say the pillar over here, and I develop *zhi nay* and *lhak tong*, my mind would be such that even if somebody hit me on the head with an ax, my focus would not budge from here. And as I look at the pillar, I'd not only be looking at the pillar itself, I'd be looking deep into it, seeing every molecule or (borrowing Professor Thurman's term here) 'subatomic particle' in it. You really have to think, 'Not only can I see it, but I can clearly count every particle inside that pillar.' That sort of mind is the example given of *zhi nay* and *lhak tong*.

#### 4. WHY WE DO NEED BOTH

The question rises, why do we need both? In this country we never raise that question. Everybody talking about meditation talks about focusing: sit down, count your breath. But no one really talks about the penetrating mind, the mind that goes deep down and finds out. For example, if we talk about addiction to negative emotions—where the addiction is, what it does to us, how we stop it—if we would do a penetrative meditation on it, we would get the answer, so we would know how to handle it.

On one hand, we are getting all this information through teachings, through books. Many Buddhist books

are available these days. That is unlike a few decades ago, when there hardly may have been any books. There were Alexandra David-Neel's books,<sup>24</sup> there was Evans-Wentz.<sup>25</sup> And we had Anagarika Govinda.<sup>26</sup> And many people read Lobsang Rampa's novels. All of them are very authentic spiritual books, but that was all. Now there's plenty of true, genuine Buddhist material available.

So on one hand, you're going to get all this information and on the other hand, one has to develop that very mind within oneself.

What we need besides the focusing mind is the meditation with the laser-sharp mind, what we call vipashyana [Tib. *lhak tong*], specially seeing. If you don't have that sharpness, if you only have the focusing, then you will never penetrate the causes of the problems. We all have a superficial idea of what hatred is about. We all have a very superficial idea of what obsession is about. But we really don't know it deeply enough. What is hatred really? How does it work? Where does it come from? what makes it function? How do you cancel it? For that, you need this other half of meditation. That's why the two are necessary.

First of all, focusing is necessary. If you don't have that, your mind is never going to be focused enough to be able to penetrate. It's going to run here and run there, even though you meditate for a long time. You will develop a tremendous wittiness, but the witty mind will touch and touch and run and run. That's what happens. Information is available, so the mind picks it up, and it's very good in saying, 'Ah, this is this, this is that.' But you cannot deal with it.

Even in our Gelugpa tradition we sometimes do have that problem. It is a big problem, because they are great scholars, who learned a lot, and were great at debating, too. In the debate you can see the movement, you see whatever is wrong, you get it, the whole thing comes up in your head, you can go ‘boop, boop, zing, zing, zing!’ and cut it. But then when you really have to get it within yourself, when you have to deal with it in your personal life, you have a problem. In some other traditions, they might keep on sitting and meditating and not know sharpness. That becomes a problem, too.

It is not the problem of the Gelugpa, it is the problem of the practitioners who learned a lot and became great scholars but never applied what they learnt. It’s not the problem of the Kagyupa or other traditions, it is the problem of practitioners being only interested in learning how to sit and sit with open eyes waiting till the cows come home. So, it’s not the problem of the tradition, it’s the problem of the practitioner.

Every tradition will tell you that you need both: shamatha as the base, and vipashyana as the necessary instrument. Very often they say that shamatha is like the horse, and vipashyana is like the horseman riding the horse. Or: shamatha is like the stable shoulder, and vipashyana like the sharp ax that cuts through the wood. You need both. And if you don’t have both, it will be a big problem.

*An old example.* The earlier teachers have given an example here. There are beautiful wall paintings in the temple, so you want to see them. Old temples are normally dark. If

you've been in Tibet, you know; even during the daytime you probably need a flashlight. In those days, we didn't have flashlights, so when you really wanted to have a good look at a painting you needed light. The best possible source of light at that time was a candlelight or butter lamp. But if there is wind blowing, the candle will keep on flickering, so you're not going to see properly. Therefore, when you want to see that beautiful painting on the temple wall, you need nice light burning well and no air blowing.

Just like that, if you want to see the beautiful reality, the truth, you need to have the good light of 'special seeing', the vipashyana or *lhak tong*, and also you need stable light of the concentrated meditation, shamatha or *zhi nay*. Shamatha provides the stability and vipashyana enables you to strike the point, to penetrate it and see it nicely. So this old example still works for us today.

Tsongkhapa quotes from Kamalasila's *Middle Stages of Meditation*,

Having vipashyana [*lhak tong*] only, if you keep on analyzing, only, it makes you develop, but you will never be able to get yourself free from the wandering mind. Your mind will be like the candlelight blowing in the miserable wind. Therefore [what you see will not be seen clearly]. You not only need the wisdom, the special seeing, but you also need the stability.

Because of shamatha, *zhi nay*, your meditation will be like a candlelight free of blowing air. When the mind gets free of wind-like thoughts and doubts, it becomes stable. And because of the

vipashyana, you cannot be influenced by the wrong things, you cannot go wrong. That's why you need both.

*Joy as force behind.* You might say, 'Well, I don't need shamatha. I can just focus on emptiness and understand emptiness.' Fine, great, nothing wrong with that. You can understand emptiness without having shamatha. Yes, you can. You can understand impermanence, you can understand compassion, you can understand bodhimind, you can understand all of those points without shamatha. However, though you understand emptiness, it does not become vipashyana. Why not? Because it does not come with the joy that you develop out of shamatha. Shamatha gives you tremendous joy. (It's not like Vajrayana, that is different, please do not misunderstand.). Even if you understand emptiness or you have wisdom, without the joy that wisdom will not be able to work well, because it is lacking the force behind.

By gaining some control, by holding your mind inside, you also hold your energy together, you hold your forces together. There's all kinds of energy systems in our body; different types of energy do different things. Traditional Tibetan teachings refer to them as *rlung*; directly translated as air. It doesn't really mean air but rather *movement* or *circulation*, the *force* that you have. Some forces provide a base for remaining in life. That is called the life-sustaining force. If you lose that, you lose your life, because that *rlung* provides the base to keep our consciousness within the

boundary, within our body. Likewise other forces uphold bodily fluids. And certain forces provide circulation. In short, all these forces are working. When we, for example, are thinking of something on Canal Street over there, the mind is not completely gone from here, but the force is. Remember, the mind is like a horseman and the forces are like a horse.

Keeping them together, bringing them inwardly and giving them a rest, make both the force and the mind workable. Our mind is like a big piece of iron. If it is not properly treated, you cannot mold it. If you try to bend it, it'll break. But if the metal is hot enough or properly treated, then you can mold it into different shapes. Just like that, the mind and the energy forces become workable through meditation.

When the mind and forces are becoming workable, the joy I'm talking about comes automatically. Even if you don't particularly want it, it'll be there. It is happiness and joy, a physical good feeling. Not the kind of good feeling that makes us say, 'I feel good.' Wit that we mean that our elements are quite well balanced. The water is not more powerful than the earth element, the fire is not more powerful than the air element, they're all quite balanced so we don't have aches, pain, heat and any of that, and we feel good. The joy I talk about means something beyond that: a real good sensation on the physical and on the mind level. And that sensation enables us to focus better, to analyze better. Without that physical and mental sensation, your focusing power doesn't become *zhi nay*.

*Mental and physical pliancy—shin jangs.* Focusing with these sensations is traditionally called *shin jangs*, which stands for *shin tu jang ba*, perfection. This physical and mental pliancy or suppleness only gives you joy, but also brings a lot of clarity in the individual. Not only clarity; to a certain level it will also bring some powers, like the power to be able to read others' mind, the power to be able to know the future, clairvoyance. There are five types of clairvoyance, and all of them can be brought about by just bringing the mind within ourselves. Shamatha is capable of delivering that. Even pre-shamatha is. It is not that you need it; you don't need to have clairvoyance and so on. It is simply that this level can bring it.

Without that stability, without that joy, also analysis won't work properly. The moment you analyze, your mind will be forcefully taken by certain points of division of the analyzing mind, and you will lose the major focusing point. That is true for all of us. When we try to focus on a certain point in our body, we lose the major physical body points. This is a fact. Within our mind we cannot do it. The moment we divide, subdivisions come in and if you follow the division, you lose the main point you came from. But when you develop this *zhi nay*, this stable mind, you can make any division and any connection without losing the basis. Then it becomes perfect. That is why [the analysis gained by a stable mind] is called wisdom, not just simple knowledge.

Once you have that *shin jangs*, your focusing point can be anything you decide, such as karmic functioning, samsara, love-compassion, all of them. And the result you're

going to get will make a big difference. In American we say, ‘Don’t work too hard, work smart.’ The ‘work smart’ part comes in here. Once you have this stable mind, that is, shamatha or *zhi nay*, then even if you go around different points, like impermanence, karma, samsara, compassion, all of them, they are not only linked together but all focused on together. That’s what you get. Right now, if we talk about karma, we think about karma, then karma may link to suffering, suffering may link to compassion, compassion to love, and love to bodhimind—we can only link one to the other. But when you have this *zhi nay*, then when you focus, you don’t lose any of them, you get them all together. It doesn’t become a jumble, you will be able to penetrate them separately and work with all the points together.

This cannot be done without shamatha, and that’s why shamatha, *zhi nay*, is necessary. And without penetrating wisdom, we cannot overcome all our problems. That’s why vipashyana, *lhak tong* is necessary. So both are necessary. *Balancing.* To conclude this, we need to be able to balance the mind between wandering and sinking. With a wandering mind we can’t think straight, our mind travels. With a sinking mind, while focusing on something, you’re going to sleep. This is a very gross level of wandering and a very gross level of the sinking mind. Balancing the mind between wandering and sinking will make you to free of imbalance: *zhi*, peace and *ne*, remain. If we can utilize that stable mind to analyze, then there will be no difficulty to the individuals. That’s what the Buddha talks about.

*Balancing our priorities.* One of our biggest struggles is laziness. We don't want to do it. Even if we want to do it, we don't want to do it right now, but later, tomorrow. That is because our priorities differ. Traditionally practitioners didn't have other priorities. I don't mean they had nothing to do. They had a lot to do to obtain enlightenment, but it was their priority. And every practice was explained as simple as possible because simplicity makes things easier. Sophisticated, complicated things require a lot of work and a lot of work will take time. So the old masters tried to make life as simple as possible, so that time would be in their hand. Those earlier people went and meditated either in the forest or in a cave in the mountains. Their priorities were not wrong.

In a sense we got all wrong priorities, though these are not necessarily wrong from our life point of view. What in earlier days they didn't have and we do have is paying our bills. We have to, otherwise they're going to get us. Forget about meditation, we'll land in jail. Maybe that provides you with a good opportunity to meditate. Maybe not.

That's where we have a special problem, an additional balancing point. We have to balance our life because we have to live a reasonable, respectable good life. Along with that, we have to have an opportunity to practice. Some people are lucky. Especially when you are retired from work, you have an opportunity. But if you utilize that opportunity for something else, then it is nobody's fault if you won't get anywhere.

## 5. WHAT SHOULD BE THE ORDER OF PRACTICE

Having understood that disturbing conceptions  
 are completely overcome  
 By superior insight endowed with calm abiding,  
 First of all I should search for calm abiding  
 [*zhi nay*].

Shantideva, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*,

Ch. 8, v. 4

What Shantideva meant is, that such a focus, *zhi nay*, used in wisdom really destroys our addictions and the sources or causes of all addictions. Knowing this, first try to work towards *zhi nay*, focus on stabilizing the mind.

If you have the wisdom but you don't have the concentration power, it doesn't work. You can't see mural paintings in a dark temple very well with a butter-lamp flickering. But if you have the concentration and you have the wisdom on the basis of the concentration, then it cuts the root of samsara. Therefore, first gain concentration. Tsongkhapa says,

So the first is *zhi nay*, no question. Then you  
 develop *lhak tong* on the basis of *zhi nay*.

So first it boils down to *zhi nay*. *Zhi nay* you can do on anything. It can be done on an external object or an internal one or on mind, on anything. You can develop *zhi nay* by focusing on wisdom, but that it doesn't mean you are learning the wisdom first. You learn how to focus first. Many of you here do have some idea about what we mean when we talk about wisdom, when we talk about empti-

ness. You can use that as a focal point in developing *zhi nay*. Tsongkhapa says,

In all three lower tantras and in the sutra path, the spiritual growth out of meditation has to be out of wisdom meditation. That wisdom meditation depends on the analytical meditation. And that analytical meditation will never be able to bring that sort of result unless you have a strong concentration. That is why *zhi nay* necessarily goes before *lhak tong*.

If you only have the *zhi nay*, but you don't have the *lhak tong* way of doing, you may have concentration power, but that special insight is not going to grow within you. Therefore it is necessary to follow both of them, which is the essence of the thought of Kamalashila in his *Gom rim, Stages of Meditation*.

What do you have to understand by this? You have to understand that the sixth paramita—and out of the three higher trainings, the training of wisdom—has to grow on the training of concentration. Tsongkhapa says:

That is affirmed in Asanga's *Bodhisattva Stages and Disciple Stages*, in Bhavaviveka's *Heart of the Middle Way*, Shantideva's *Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, Kamalashila's *Stages of Meditation* and all of them.

When you have grown *zhi nay*, the *lhak tong* out of *zhi nay* is automatically a combination. If you have only *zhi nay* and you don't have *lhak tong*, then it is not the combination.

This system of *zhi nay* going before *lhak tong*, is talking about developing it<sup>27</sup> the first time. Once you developed it, it is no longer necessary to have the concentration before that every time. So the rule is applicable to the beginning stage.

Tsongkhapa goes on and raises another question:

There is a teaching by Asanga, that says, ‘Some developed *lhak tong* first and they have not developed *zhi nay*; their *lhak tong* helps to develop *zhi nay*.’ What does that statement of Asanga mean?

Tsongkhapa’s explanation for this is:

Asanga is not talking about the *zhi nay* we talk about. The *zhi nay* we are talking here is the *zhi nay* of the preliminary stage of the first *samadhi*. What Asanga is talking about is the *zhi nay* of the actual stage of the first *samadhi*.<sup>28</sup>

The first to fourth *samadhi* are the four form-stages. Each one of these *samadhi*’s will give you rebirth in the future in a samsaric-gods level above the desire-realm. Outside the desire realm you have these stages one up to four and each one of these stages corresponds to a form stage, is a cause for rebirth in there. So the power of concentration of the *zhi nay* as we are talking here, is developed at the preliminary level of the first *samadhi*. Did you get it? Thereafter they will continue the *zhi nay*. The *zhi nay* becomes much more powerful and much more strong and all this goes on and on and keeping on concentrating the *zhi nay* will go

beyond the preliminary stage, reach the actual stage of the first *samadhi*, go beyond and reach the preliminary of the second stage and so on.

The difference between the followers of Buddha's path and the followers of other paths—the Tibetans call it the difference between insiders and outsiders—is this. Buddha recommends over here: stop concentrating and move to *lhak tong*. The outsiders don't talk *lhak tong*, insiders talk *lhak tong*. So Buddha introduced *lhak tong* at this point; he does not recommend to go on in these *samadhi*-stages. Naturally. The buddhist aim is to cut the root of *samsara* rather than to go into higher levels of concentration.

But these higher *samadhi* stages are not 'greek' to buddhists; they are known to them. But also there is a problem. Because of not understanding emptiness properly, you can misunderstand the strong and very powerful *zhi nay*. In going beyond, into the *samadhi* stages, a misunderstanding of emptiness could come in. You get then this concentration on nothingness, which is bringing the formless stages. The four *samadhi*'s or four concentrations are the four form stages. Beyond that you get four formless stages of which the fourth is called 'peak of samsara' or 'neither consciousness nor non-consciousness', the meditative stage of 'recognition but not without consciousness.' It is a very, very strong, happy, vegetable stage over there—really happy, joyful vegetable.

*To conclude.* When in our normal language we say 'meditate,' we may think that if we just simply sit and focus, it becomes meditation; but not so according to the great Bud-

dhist masters. From their point of view, meditation must achieve some peace in the mind, and one should be able to remain within that peace. That is the bare minimum for meditation.

Then on top of that, there is the razor sharp mind that really cuts through the point you are focusing on and sees it deeply. That's called 'specially seeing.' These two are known as shamatha and vipashyana, or in Tibetan *zhi nay* and *lhak tong*.

What is meant by shamatha, what is meant by vipashyana? There are different interpretations but there's also a common meaning. Whenever we talk about shamatha, almost every tradition and everybody in this country, knows it has something to do with focusing. How deep, how strong and what problems you encounter, may change, but everyone agrees on the focusing. Then vipashyana is sort of translated as looking in, or insight meditation. That also is common to all of us.

But what is not clear is what shamatha really is. Translated into Tibetan, the word is *zhi nay*. *Zhi* means free of all obstructions of mind and that becomes peace. And *ne* is remaining, remaining in that peaceful mind. So, you see, just sitting down and focusing is not enough. When I go down in detail, you're going to see it. Right now we might almost consider concentrating on the breath that we take in and out, as shamatha, but probably it isn't. You will see that later.

So we try to achieve two meditative states: number one, *zhi nay*; number two, *lhak tong*, special seeing. I'd like to emphasize how Maitreya Buddha put it,

## Gelek Rimpoche

Your mind finding an extraordinary base and remaining on that is called *zhi nay*. With that mind, the laser-sharp mind, really finding the deep truth is called *vipashyana*.

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Audience:** In terms of practice, is there a certain amount of time that we should do something?

**Rimpoche:** Well, many of you, vajrayana people, have your own little commitments of saying a sadhana, the *Six-session Guru yoga*, the *Ganden Lha Gyema* or *Lama Chöpa*. When you fulfill your commitments and try to focus, try not to do it the parrot way: ‘pa, pa, pa, pa, pa.’ If you think a little bit, it will be helpful, extremely helpful. If you have many practice commitments, you can’t do all of them that way every day. So you may just say a few of them, so that you don’t break the commitment, but on one you focus, say for a week. I don’t think you should change it daily. If you change weekly it will be helpful. Then the focusing will build up. (And I do expect at the end of this course everybody will not only be able to meditate, but able to fly!)

**Audience:** If we’re Vajrayana, do we work on the *zhi nay* separately?

**Rimpoche:** On the Vajrayana level, developing *zhi nay* is slightly different. I refer to the teachings of last winter retreat, the Cittamani Tara. Also you can read the Vajrayogini transcript, or the Yamantaka transcript. They talk about developing *zhi nay* slightly different from what we

say here, but not that different.<sup>29</sup> The major method we apply there comes from here. There is a general Vajrayana way of moving and I think the pattern is slightly different. But apart from that, all the bullets you have to bring from here.

**Audience:** Why the two aspects of practice, *zhi nay* and *lhak tong*, aren't, in fact, simultaneous?

**Rimpoche:** The reason is you cannot find a way to simultaneously do it. Even if you use wisdom as a focal point to develop *zhi nay*, it will not develop the wisdom. It will develop the *zhi nay*, so then you have to develop the *lhak tong* again, even if you use the same *lhak tong* point. In other words, *zhi nay* is a necessary prerequisite for *lhak tong*.



## II PREPARING FOR MEDITATION

We said *zhi nay* has to be before *lhak tong*, or, said the other way round, vipashyana has to follow shamatha. Now the next important question is: how do we develop them individually. Here we have three points:

- How do I develop *zhi nay* or shamatha—the focus
- How do I develop *lhak tong* or vipashyana—the seeing inside
- How do I combine these two together and maintain them.

### B. HOW TO DEVELOP SHAMATHA, *Zhi Nay*

How do I get into this shamatha business? This is a traditional Tibetan teaching so you have to bear with me that there will be three of this, and three of that *etc.* This one has three major points.

- What are the necessary prerequisites?
- How do I actually do the meditation?
- How do I know I have achieved it?. What is the measurement or sign?

I. THE PREREQUISITES<sup>30</sup>

There are first of all six requirements.

A. DWELLING IN AN APPROPRIATE PLACE

Where are you going to meditate? You do need a place. What kind of a place should it be? The place should have five qualities.

*Good supplies.* Traditionally it is said it should be a place where you can find the food and clothes without much difficulty. This was told 2,500 years ago, right? There were no McDonald's there yet. If you have to work hard to find food, you'd waste a lot of time. So you are advised to choose a place where you can find what you'll need easily, which may be applicable even for us today.

*No dangers.* Then make sure there are no strange animals that might eat you. That is a traditional thing again, but at the same time... it should be a place where there is not much danger or threat to your life like snakes, mosquitoes, and no enemies of yours around. A place where there are no threats to life, is called a good place.

*A healthy place.* Though no tiger will come to eat us, certain places may create illnesses, some environment does not suit you, e.g. too wet, too cold. Also still there are plenty of toxics around and like a tiger they are sometimes a threat to our life.

I have a friend, a very interesting guy, who had some kind of disease he wanted to get rid of through mantra.

I recommended a certain mantra with certain things to do, did an initiation and told him, ‘Say about a million mantras.’ So he went to Colorado, up in the mountains somewhere, sat there, did his practice and said that mantra a million times. The day he was finishing and going away, he saw two or three people down there, blowing something up in the snow. So he went over there and talked to one of the men. The man said, ‘Where are you?’ He said, ‘Well, I’ve been up there.’ The man said, ‘You have been sitting on top of some huge deposit of World War II ammunition.’ He had been sitting and meditating on top of that ammunition base for a month or two! There was no tiger, but this could have blown him up. So choose a place that does not cause you illness.

*Quietness.* Lay people like us—we are learning, we are not perfect—need for this particular meditation a quiet place, with not so much noise. For a normal practice of meditation I’d say that if there is noise it doesn’t matter. Whether it’s somewhere in the middle of downtown Manhattan, on Avenue of the Americas or Canal Street, you can sit there and meditate. However, if you try to develop shamatha, you cannot. To develop shamatha you’ve got to go to a quiet place.

A quiet place also means not having many friends around. Friends aren’t the problem. Chit-chat is the problem. So quietness here literally means quietness. Whether it’s chit-chat in the chat-room of the computer or chit-chat literally sitting around with people, both are equally bad.

*Good friends.* You should have a companion, if you have a good one. Generally, everybody is good, but everybody's definition of good is different. Here good companion means the person should have a good moral standing and a good view, just like yours. If you want to develop shamatha for spiritual development, and the companion has a good moral standing but would like to make money, or would like to do this and that, then it's not going to work. A friend who can agree with the things you agree with rather than doing all things in the opposite direction, is what you need. Certain people have that by nature, when everybody is saying yes, they say no. In such a place you should not be meditating. So the companion should be good for this specific period and this specific purpose. This meditation on shamatha can be achieved within six months time. That's why I'm talking about a specific period, not about all life long.

Companions make a tremendous difference. Though a companion is literally mentioned, what is really meant is the quality of the sangha. We all are members of a sangha and as such we must have the quality to support each other. That is extremely important. Support is really necessary. Not only you need support for your spiritual practice, but also for whatever you do. Our society is wonderful, beautiful and a great, no doubt. But at the same time it is an extremely lonely society. Very sorry to say that., but it is really true. This is a very, very lonely society. And when you have spiritual interest, it becomes even more difficult. Number one, you will be thinking, 'Should I talk about this or should I not? If I do talk about it, will it help or

harm me, and is it going to come back and haunt me in my job?' All those things. So, it is important to have support; everybody needs it. Sangha means supporting each other.

*Two sides of companionship.* The point of the companionship has two ways of looking at it. For every Buddhist teaching, particularly a Tibetan Buddhist teaching, you'll find that it's always a two-way street. When we talk about the quality of a friend or companion, we automatically talk about how non-virtuous friends function. You always have to read forward as well as backward. In the Lamrim teachings you're told there is no such thing as a non-virtuous friend with horns and a little tail that comes to you and says, 'I'm your non-virtuous friend.' A non-virtuous friend will say, 'Well, this practice is too much for you, you shouldn't do this. This is not good for you, you are wasting your time. And time is money, so you are wasting a tremendous amount of money.' Someone who tells you all those normal little things that really make you want to drop out of the practice, that is the real definition of a non-virtuous friend. Also a friend that has a very strong emotional effect on you, that has strong negative emotions such as hatred, anger, obsession, or jealousy is not right for you in this period.

Well, to a certain extent jealousy is a necessary thing; you wouldn't like it if your companion didn't get jealous. It's probably a nice little spice you need in your food. But too much of it is not right. Too much of it will make you withdraw from the correct thing you are doing.

Particularly the verses I read last Tuesday in the Ann Arbor teachings from the Eight Chapter of the *Bodhisat-*

*tvacharyavatara* are interesting here. When Shantideva talks about companionship he says that because negative emotions are so strong, a companion can influence you to have them. If you are spending time with an angry person, sooner or later you're going to be angry too. Although you may think, 'I can correct that,' you may or may not be able to. Chances are 99.9% you can't, with the exception of a few persons. You may think, 'I am the exception', but if you do, you will be hurting yourself.

This *Odyssey to Freedom* meditation chapter tells you very briefly what sort of facility you should look for to meditate, what sort of companionship you should keep. In the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* text it tells you what sort of companionship not to keep. All the following verses talk about the importance of role models and companions.<sup>31</sup>

If I behave in the same way as the childish,  
I shall certainly proceed to lower realms.  
And if I am led there by those unequal (to the  
Noble Ones),  
What is the use of entrusting myself to the  
childish? (Ch. 8, vs. 9)

For people who want to meditate it is extremely important to have good role models as well as have good companionship. Usually in western tradition we don't have role models as companions. We like to keep them separate. We all like to have great role models and inferior companions. We think, 'I have to be the most important person, so I am able to make the right decision and guide him or her.' That

is the normal western culture, no big shock. There is nothing fancy about it.

Tibetan Buddhism and particularly Vajrayana Buddhism always talks about the importance of the guru. Hinduism does too. The role of the guru is considered to be very important. There are many reasons behind that. One is that the guru acts as role model. Every time when I have difficult decisions to make I will think, 'If this teacher of mine were there, what would he do?' Then I will get some perception and on that basis I will try to function. Whenever I have a problem, dealing with addictions and delusions and anything, I will do that.

One moment they are friends,  
 And in the next instant they become enemies.  
 Since they become angry even in joyful situations,  
 It is difficult to please ordinary people. (ch. 8, v. 10)

Childish companions are not good to be around. They change minute to minute. One minute you show them a nice face and say something and they are very happy. The next minute when you say something else, you get it. Not only in a small way, but sometimes they even change extremely. A friend can become an enemy, just because of a mere word.

They are angry when something of benefit is  
 said,  
 And they also turn me away from what is  
 beneficial.

*Gelek Rimpoche*

If I do not listen to what they say,  
They become angry and hence proceed to the  
lower realms. (Ch. 8, vs. 11)

If such people tell us something they are probably giving us mostly wrong advice. We hear people telling someone, 'If I were you I would do this and that.' That's what we do, don't we? When the other person doesn't listen to us, we get upset.

They are envious of superiors, competitive with  
equals,  
Arrogant towards inferiors, conceited when  
praised,  
And if anything unpleasant is said they become  
angry;  
Never is any benefit derived from the childish.  
(Ch. 8, vs. 12)

Actually, for *zhi nay*, for concentrated meditation, this attitude is considered a waste of time. For that you are not supposed to do anything else except focusing, focusing, focusing. We have got to focus on the points that are important for us. That is why Shantideva says, if you want to focus you shouldn't have a companion who influences you in a different direction. He is telling us about the bad qualities of companions. A companion who is jealous towards someone better than them, competitive towards someone equal to them and who looks down arrogantly on the weaker section of society, is not a good person for you.

Through associating with the childish,  
 There will certainly ensue unwholesomeness  
 Such as praising myself and belittling others  
 And discussing the joys of cyclic existence.  
 (Ch. 8, vs. 13)

If people keep on praising you all the time and you don't have the qualities that they are praising and you keep on thinking, 'Yes, I am doing great', then at the end you could be in a similar situation to Saddam Hussein. That's exactly what happens.

Devoting myself to others in this way  
 Will bring about nothing but misfortune,  
 Because they will not benefit me  
 And I shall not benefit them. (Ch. 8, vs. 14)

If you have such a companion and spend time with them—not necessarily being devoted, as the text says—then instead of helping each other you are going to hurt each other. This is the example of the non-virtuous friend.

I should flee far away from childish people,  
 When they are encountered, though, I should  
     please  
 Them by being happy. I should behave well  
 merely out of courtesy, But not become greatly  
     familiar. (Ch. 8, vs. 15)

Why should you get away from these childish companions? If you have strong attraction and you see them you will be very happy. 'So nice to see you, you are wonderful,

you are beautiful and great.’ How many times do we have to say that? Then you are happy and they are happy. There is nothing wrong with being happy to see them. There is nothing wrong with saying ‘Good to see you.’ If you can leave it there, happy to see a good friend, that is wonderful. But if you can’t, if you want to go more inside, if you want to develop more attachment, more attraction, more obsession, then we begin to develop the distinction of ‘Mine’ and ‘yours’ and that will bring these two powerful emotions of obsession and hatred. That brings us a lot of difficulties.

So the important thing here is to remember what we are doing. We are working towards spiritual development, we try to build a concentrated meditative level, a samadhi level. And if you have such a level, it will cut down the negativities and negative emotions. And if you spend time adding up more negative emotions, it isn’t helpful. It would be helpful if you were at a level where you can take everything and transform it. At that level it is a great help. Before then, no.

On the other hand, if you look at it from another angle, if you have a good companion and you yourself have quite strong negative emotions, that good person may be able to influence you and to reduce your negative emotions. If that happens, it’s a great thing. So it’s a two-way street, as I said. What’s not necessarily good for you is not necessarily bad for them. What’s not necessarily good for them is not necessarily bad for you. That’s what it is.

So, particularly on our level where we have a tremendous amount of negative emotions completely overpowering us;

if at this moment, you add negative companionship, it is more a problem than a help. Of all six, I think the most important ones are the right place and the right companion.

#### B. HAVING SMALL NEEDS

During the period of meditation, you should not have so much desires. If you say, 'Oh, I need this many shirts, and I must have a computer here, and a camera, I must have this, this this', it won't work. Number one, it will create a big attraction. Number two, your computer won't work, and you'll spend all your time try to fix the things. That won't do.

We like to keep a lot of things, we collect a lot of things. One shouldn't be doing that. How many unnecessary things we keep? So many. When you move, you realize how much you have; 20 or 25% of the things you don't even take with you, you just leave them there and whoever moves in, has to either dispose of them or use them. We do that, right? We are extremely good at collecting things. I have an interesting character. I throw things out. Honestly, I do. There are times I'll pick up a garbage bag and take whatever is being stored, out. Also things that are left in my basement or garage I will clear. When I first came to Ann Arbor and had that little house on Cherry Street there were so many things in the basement, I couldn't even walk. So I kept on saying if such and such a thing belonged to anyone, please take it, otherwise, I set a date and will clear it that day. Nobody really believed it, but I hired a truck and got a person and threw everything out, bicycles and everything. One of my students thought, 'Those Tibetan lamas are a

little different. Sometimes they really mean it when they say they are going to throw things out. Let me go and have a look.' So he came by just as the truck was moving with the three bicycles on top. He saw the truck, chased it on his bike and was able to bring two bicycles back.

One of the most difficult things is that we look at something and say, 'I may need this one day.' But when will you need it? Maybe once a year, or maybe not in five years. So why keep it? Let it go. Here they tell you, don't keep those things. And don't have too many desires. You don't need three hundred pairs of shoes. If you have too many things, you can't even look after them.

Having many desires, wanting too many things, is one of the important points against developing *zhi nay*. It takes up all your time and we already have very little time. We have to get up early, run, work, because we have to pay our bills, come back, do this and that, and then on top of that you have all those things to look after, they require maintenance. The best thing is to be satisfied without all that, at least for the period you are sitting.

### C. BEING CONTENT

This is a beautiful point. If you have a great house, take it, nothing's wrong with it. If you have a Rolls Royce, take it, nothing's wrong with it. But if you don't have one, don't cry over it. Satisfaction is one of the Buddha's best gifts. It gives you peace, gives you time and gives you happiness. In our American culture, we use dissatisfaction to continuously push ourselves. If you have a nice job, it's not good enough, you have to have a better job. And if you have a better

job, you have to have a better paying job. And if you have a better paying job, that's not good enough, you should have a job where you work less and have more benefits. All those ideas are the build-up for American culture. It may be good, but it makes you unhappy.

If you are satisfied with what you have, you may not make that much progress in the material world but you get tremendous happiness and satisfaction. Competition is the key in our culture and I doubt whether competition is the best way to build ourselves up. According to Buddha it's not. Buddha wants us to be satisfied. They even say that satisfaction is the Buddha's best gift. If we look at our life, and look at the lives of our ancestors, or even at people a few decades ago, what we have is tremendous. But if you keep on looking at Donald Trump, you are never, never going to be satisfied.

So, whatever you have, you should be satisfied with. You should not be thinking, 'Hey, for his meditation period he brought a color TV and a satellite connection; I must have it, too.' No, you don't need it. If he has it, fine, you don't need it. Be satisfied with whatever you have.

#### D. GOING AWAY FROM THE DEMANDS OF SOCIETY

For that meditation period, do not have too many activities, such as 'I have to buy this, I have to change my car, I have to sell my house and buy another one and all this and that.' Or in the middle of the meditation you say, 'Oh, my God, this is a good time to sell stock, I must go.'

In the Buddha's traditional teaching, too many activities such as purchasing, selling and unnecessary chit-chatting

with a lot of people are specifically mentioned. Also acting as a medical doctor, particularly mentioned are Ayurvedic or homeopathic doctors, is considered as too much here. Why? Because they take a lot of time. Also astrologers are included because for the astrological readings they are busy calculating all the time, a lot of time goes into it. So, if you want to develop *zhi nay*, many of the usual activities should not be there. Give them up for that period. Reduce all the different activities.

#### E. HAVING PURE ETHICS

Pure morality is important. Pure morality means protecting your vows. I'm sure every religious tradition has vows, but in the Buddhist tradition, we have a tremendous amount of them, really. When we take refuge, we take a refuge vow. Then next there are the different self-liberation [Skt. pratimoksha] vows, like those of a monk, bikshu, or nun, bikshuni, those of novices and the laymen's self-liberation vows. That way there are eight different self-liberation vows:<sup>32</sup> So what is perfect morality and what is it not? That is the question here.

When you look at the vows, there are two types. One type is in keeping the Buddhist rules and the other type is vowing not to engage in what is by nature negative. If you break a vow that is just a rule, it doesn't necessarily break your perfect morality. It's not fine, but it's sort of okay. If you break a vow that has to do with negativities, even that doesn't necessarily break your perfect morality either, because some are negativities simply by rule, not by

nature. Harming others and hurting others for example are by nature a negativity.

So, if you protect your vows and you have hesitation to engage in negativities, it is good enough to be qualified as perfect morality. Once when Buddha was asked, ‘What do you mean by perfect morality?’ he said,

Among the monks and nuns, if they don’t have the four root downfalls, and they hesitate to engage in negativity, I consider that as perfect morality.

So, one should hesitate to commit what is by nature a negativity. That means, you don’t just do it and think, ‘It doesn’t matter.’ Just have a little hesitation. Even if you have to do something negative, do it with hesitation. It’s funny. In our culture, we say: either you do it or you don’t, right? In this context it’s different. Having hesitation gives you a lot of leeway. Why? Because it means you know how negative emotions function, so you have hesitation.

*The four root downfalls.* What are those four?

1. *Killing a human being.*

2. *Stealing something of value.* The value depends on time and conditions. If in the United States, you steal something worth fifty cents, it’s not a big deal. But if you do the same in a very, very poor country, it can hurt the other person quite badly. That’s where one has to judge. In Buddhism, there’s tremendous freedom as well as tremendous confusion both, because you are not told that Buddha doesn’t do such and such. It more or less depends on the economic

conditions how much stealing hurts the other person. That's how it is evaluated.

3. *Black lies*. It's not the used-car dealer's lie; that doesn't count here. A black lie is for instance pretending to spiritually be something, pretending, 'I have tremendous development' while one has no way of judging it. That is a black lie. But if I say I have it because I really think I do? Then there's a question. If the person who is claiming to have spiritual development, is confused, then do you get the black lie downfall? I don't know. Probably not. There are people who claim to be such and such to the point that they literally believe it themselves. In Nepal there was a person, called China Lama, who lived near the stupa and believed himself to be the highest Mahayana priest that ever existed in the area. He really believed this and told people so openly. Is that a lie? He's a pathological liar, but still I don't know whether he gets a downfall. Probably not. If a lie is such that I cheat a person into believing something untrue, and that is my motivation and I use any tricks at my disposal to change the other person's mind, then that is a really complete act of the lying.

4. *Sexual misconduct*. That is any sexual activity that hurts an other person. A very vivid example of sexual misconduct is rape.

*Openness and regret*. A very important point is this. If you get one of those downfalls—and given our lack of conscientiousness because we are not a buddha yet, we are bound to have them—don't rejoice, but regret and purify it. That is counted in the points for perfect morality. If you get a

downfall, don't use it to show off. The traditional Tibetan instruction is: 'don't carry your dirty underwear as a banner.'

For example, if people with a vow of celibacy have sex, they have broken their vow and there's no excuse whatsoever. If you get any one of those downfalls and you are a full-fledged monk, you broke your vow and you are no longer a monk. Can you repair it and become a monk again? That depends. If you hide your downfall, if you conceal it, then you cannot become a monk again. If you don't hide it, but tell 'I did this and that', then you can purify it. A person with an open downfall, a person that won't hide anything, can get purified and re-ordained and become a monk again. Though they may not be as good as someone who never broke their vow, still they can become monks again.

If you start concealing something, you lie. And to cover that lie, you tell another lie, and then it will be never-ending. You get into a huge pit, and can't get out. That's why you are told, if you get a downfall, since one is not perfect, regret it and do not conceal what you did. At least tell a couple of people straightaway, within the hour, and definitely before sunset or sunrise the next day. Then the downfall is lessened.

Lessening of the downfall by being open does not apply to what are by nature negativities, but to what falls under the category of Buddhist rules.

#### F. LESSEN THE THOUGHTS OF DESIRE

You should not have many desires running around in your mind. Even if you don't physically accumulate computers, cameras, cell phones and all that, the mental desire to have

all these kind of things, won't do either. What Buddha advises here is to think, 'All those things I am attracted to are by nature impermanent, they are going to be destroyed. Even if I were to get them, I wouldn't have them for long, I'd be separated from them. So why should I waste my time worrying about them? If I go, they won't go with me, I have to leave them.'

In general, one shouldn't have too many mental thoughts, thoughts going everywhere, not sitting still, just thinking this, thinking that. So this requirement for *zhi nay* is already telling you to keep your mind straight.

You need those six points. In the sutras itself, there are thirteen points listed. But out of the thirteen, these six are a must. They're even known as shamatha's necessary six points. Atisha says,

If you don't have those six things, no matter how much effort you put in for 1,000 years, you are never going to achieve it [*zhi nay*].

These are not just, but absolutely necessary requirements.

## 2. HOW TO DEVELOP ZHI NAY ON THAT BASIS

### A. PREREQUISITES FOR THE ACTUAL MEDITATION OF ZHI NAY<sup>33</sup>

How do I work to develop this *zhi nay*? First you do the six preliminaries<sup>34</sup> and then develop bodhimind. In order to develop bodhimind, you need to have the common with the medium and the common with the lower level practice.

In other words, the prerequisite for this is nearly the whole *Odyssey to Freedom*<sup>35</sup> or Lamrim.<sup>36</sup>

Why are you getting the meditation instructions at the end of the entire Lamrim? Because you need the prerequisites for it, especially the bodhimind [Skt. bodhicitta]. Developing bodhimind is extremely important. Why? If you don't have bodhimind, whatever you do in meditation will not be a Mahayana practice. And if you don't have the resolve to seek freedom, to liberate yourself from samsara, it will not even be a Theravada practice. And if you don't have the motivation to seek freedom in future lives and you don't even have the refuge part, it won't be a Buddhist practice. You see, the practice is consistent.

The *zhi nay* itself will be the same, whether you do it from the Hindu point of view, or from any other tradition's point of view. But what makes it a Buddhist practice, what makes it Mahayana, are these prerequisites. And then, to make it a Vajrayana practice, there's another set of prerequisites. But we are not talking about Vajrayana here, though many of you will probably develop *zhi nay* at the Vajrayana level. However, at the Vajrayana level you will find no instructions for *zhi nay* whatsoever, because when you reach that point, you will be referred back to this level. Then it says, 'as explained at that level.'

*Motivation matters.* At this level it won't particularly be mentioned because it's not necessarily part of *zhi nay*, but in general in any practice, particularly in a Buddhist-oriented one and even more so in a Mahayana-oriented

practice, whether Vajrayana-oriented or not, compassion is *the* one key you have to carry. The motivation matters and the motivation has to be influenced by compassion. Without compassion any effort we put in does not necessarily become great. That is why every teaching begins with,

‘For the benefit of all beings I’d like to obtain enlightenment, for that I would like to learn this practice and become...’

That may look like just a routine chore we do, but this is the reason why every practice has this. It needs to have it.

If all we want is some clairvoyance or some kind of relax and joy level, we may not need a good motivation. But then it does not become a spiritual practice, because it is not influenced by compassion, either for yourself or for others. Compassion for yourself is the Hinayana principle. Compassion for others and benefiting them—that includes yourself, it doesn’t exclude us—is the Mahayana principle.

*Why we need zhi nay badly.* On the Hinayana level, the level of compassion for oneself, we are looking for freedom, freedom from negativities. We don’t have freedom. Really true. Because we do not know how to use our mind. Since we do not know how to use our own mind, our mind has a mind of its own, so you can never do anything with it. We try to focus, but we cannot. Even in extreme cases, in case you may be in some very happy state, like when you have received great happy news, even then your mind will

stay with that happiness for a short time only and then go roaming around again. Likewise in the case of extremely sad or terrible feelings, though we think we will never get out of it and say, 'I'm stuck in there, I can never get out of it', if you really look at it, the mind is not staying with that sorrow and sourness. Its influences may be felt but the mind doesn't stay there, it runs around all the time. That is a clear sign we have no freedom for ourselves. That is because we absolutely don't know how to deal with our mind. Our mind runs all over and most probably it just goes wherever it bounces: *bing, bong!* That is the number one reason why we need a focus.

Also, we don't get anything done. Even on the spiritual path we don't get much done. We say, 'Well, I was interrupted. There were so many things, so many phone calls,' so many this and so many that. Whether we blame the phone calls or whatever, in fact it is because we don't focus and we don't focus because we cannot focus. We cannot bring our mind to think and focus. That is the true reality. Because of that and because we have so many negative emotions popping up, swinging us right and left all the time, we have difficulties. The answer is *zhi nay*: bring the mind to the level of peace, and try to remain there.

## B. HOW TO DO THE ACTUAL MEDITATION

That has two:

- The meditative posture
- The meditative process

I. THE MEDITATIVE POSTURE<sup>37</sup>

How do I sit? It's very simple. The sitting has the seven or eight qualities of sitting<sup>38</sup> of buddha Vairochana. Tibetan Buddhism, even when talking on the level of sutra only, is always geared towards Vajrayana. So, therefore, right from the beginning, from the guru-devotional practice onwards to total enlightenment, there is a Vajrayana influence. So even here, with regard to the sitting.

In Vajrayana we talk about five buddha families. Out of those, the perfection of the form is represented by buddha Vairochana, Physical form, feeling, intellect, volition and consciousness are the five skandhas [or aspects of the person]. These five transformed become the five buddhas with the five wisdoms.<sup>39</sup> In other words, how do I, an ordinary human being sitting right here at this moment, go into the buddha level? By transforming the form, feeling etc. into the five buddhas with the five wisdoms. Vairochana is the buddha of the east. He is in the east of any mandala.<sup>40</sup> Vairochana's style of sitting is recommended here. If this or any other of the seven points are overly difficult for whatever reason, sit as is most convenient and comfortable. The seven-point posture is actually the most effective for meditation once one develops familiarity and comfort with it, but, until then, any of the points that are too difficult may be substituted by something more within one's reach.

1. *Legs.* Vairochana's style of sitting is the vajra posture,<sup>41</sup> with both feet crossed and the soles upturned, in the West called the lotus position. If you can't quite sit like that, the half-lotus will do. But if you cannot, that's also fine. You shouldn't force it, as Allen Ginsberg used to say

in his '*Do the meditation rock*' 'Sit yourself down on a pillow on the ground, Or sit in a chair if the ground is not there.'<sup>42</sup> It's permitted, but recommended here to sit in full lotus or in half-lotus. on a cushion, Unless and until you are practicing the completion stage of Vajrayana practice, for any meditation you can sit in whatever way is comfortable for you.

2. *Arms.* About four inches below your navel, put one hand on top of the other, palms upwards. The thumbs are joined together. If you have more hatred and less obsession, then you keep the right hand underneath and the left hand over it. And if you have more obsession and less hatred, put the left hand beneath and the right hand over it. It is said that according to some kind of nerve system there is a hatred nerve and a desire nerve, and one presses the other. I don't know. It doesn't matter as long as it doesn't draw your focus away. On the Vajrayana level it's different; there you have different mudras for different purposes. We need to be open right from the beginning.

3-4 *Spine.* Then the way you sit should not be too far back or too far forward. Sit straight.

4. *Shoulders.* Keep your two shoulders straight.

5. *Head.* The head shouldn't be held too upright or too tilted forward. That doesn't necessarily mean the many great meditators sit like this.

When I was a kid, about 5 or 6, I had a great master, Gen Rimpoche. He didn't have many students, only two at the time I was there. One was a former businessman, and the one was a very well-known geshe. The very well-known geshe later came to India, and His Holiness took a

lot of teachings from him. Gen Rimpoche was teaching the Lamrim to them, and they were meditating in the evening. There was a little courtyard where Gen Rimpoche's room was, and the courtyard happened to be the roof to the businessman's kitchen. There we sat at night and we were supposed to meditate. I was put in between those two and I just wanted to get up and run, but I couldn't. So I looked at this geshe and he would be sitting slumped sideways, eyes closed, all the time. No matter how many times I looked, he'd be sitting like that. And I'd look at the businessman, he'd be sitting slumped forward, not asleep, but sitting like that. And they wouldn't get up. I don't think it was more than two-and-a-half hours, but for me it felt like the whole night I had to sit there. And they did sit in a funny way. But here it says not to. Keep your head straight.

6. *Eyes.* Normally we close our eyes. It gives us a sort of quietness. But Buddha recommends here not to close your eyes. Closing your eyes will make you think something, gives you momentarily a boost, but doesn't last; it immediately goes away. So it is recommended not to close them, but not have open them completely and look everywhere either. They should be sort of half-closed, almost looking along your nostrils, wherever it feels most comfortable. And if you don't know, look at the Buddha images. They always have Buddha with the eyes slightly downcast. So the eyes should be cast along the line of the nose to an imaginary point five feet or so in front, but not looking at the tip of the nose. If you try to force that, your eyes may become crossed, so don't do that. Cast your gaze beyond the tip of your nose wherever it feels comfortable, whether

three or four or five feet away. If the eyes are cast too high, excitation is encouraged; if too low, sinking easily sets in. In order not to be distracted by environmental objects, many meditators sit facing a blank wall.

7. *Lips, teeth and tongue.* Your teeth and lips, let them rest wherever it's comfortable. It is recommended that the tip of the tongue should touch the gum on the inside of your upper teeth. That will automatically not let your mouth fall open. The reason to do this is also that you don't get thirsty too quickly. That's what they say. I don't know.

8. *Breath.* The breath should not be too heavy, not making noise or pushing strongly. Sort of slowly, gently let it go. Let it go in and out freely. That is how you do. It is also recommended to count. Sometimes the counting is difficult. When the counting becomes difficult at the beginning stage, it is not even necessary to count, just let the breath go.

When you begin to concentrate, first count the outgoing air. Acknowledge it is going out, naturally going out, and count that—one. Then take a holiday when the breath comes in and again count it when it goes out—two. That is recommended to do at the beginning, if you have difficulties. 'Normally you don't see that difficulties within the snow-bound area', Tsongkhapa says.

If you try to develop a good *zhi nay*, try from the beginning to have those structures. Pay attention to the sitting posture as well as to the air going out and later to the air going in and out. Keep on for a long time to get used to noticing the air going in and out.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Audience:** I have a very basic question. I learned how to meditate with my eyes closed and I've been trying very hard to focus on an object, and I was wondering if you have any suggestions for that.

**Rimpoche:** According to my own experience, if you close your eyes and try to focus, for a short period you can focus better but it doesn't last very long. But if you don't close your eyes and you project the object, let me say visualize an object—that sounds a little more romantic—it lasts a little longer. In the long run it helps not to close the eyes.

**Audience:** A few weeks ago you were talking about achieving *zhi nay* and the text said that the environment that you might be trying to meditate in should be of a certain quality. Do you have any advice how you can overcome the physical job-oriented or environmental obstacles?

**Rimpoche:** The purpose of meditation is to give training to our mind that we will be able to meditate all the time, with everything whatever we are doing. But, until we get used to it, until we develop to a certain level, we will not be able to do that. Particularly for this *zhi nay* type of meditation where we try to develop mental stability as well as lucidity together you need to be in a much more suitable environment. We began this course talking about the quality of environment, remember?<sup>43</sup> Even if you don't literally have all the conditions as the books describe, a suitable place is where there is not so much distraction. We may have to begin with that.

However, that doesn't mean you cannot have a spiritual practice. We need a spiritual practice that is oriented towards kindness and compassion. Most ways to make a living are fine. With the beautiful thought of bodhimind, love-compassion you can do more or less almost everything in your work, including during your daily chores such as doing laundry or sweeping. In the beginning of the Lamrim, how many times have we been talking about sweeping the floor as a spiritual practice? Remember, Buddha had a disciple who was quite dull and he made him sweep the floor for a long time and he developed, finally becoming an arhat. Like that you can perform any daily chores, express your feelings and thoughts through any art—painting, music, poetry, sculpture, whatever. To me art is actually translating the mind and an idea that you have into an art form and by doing that, bringing joy and relieving the pain, the tiredness of body and mind of the people who are observing it. In that way, you can do everything with a very spiritual attitude, the chores, the laundry, the sweeping, cooking, taking care of children, taking care of all other people, sick people, children, elderly, everywhere. So the spiritual opportunity is everywhere.

But if you go to train meditation in the formal way, shamatha, that will be a little difficult to do at the beginning in all kinds of environments.



# III

## THE MEDITATIVE PROCESS

### II. THE MEDITATIVE PROCESS

From the physical point of view, we now know how to sit. Next, what do we with our mind? Well, there are five points of what not to do. These are called the *five faults*.<sup>44</sup> And there are eight things you should do, called the *eight antidotes*.<sup>45</sup> On top of that, there are *six powers* and *four mindfulnesses* [or *four types of attention*].<sup>46</sup>

Mind you, these four mindfulnesses are different from the four mindfulnesses you are familiar with: mindfulness of the body, of the feeling, of the mind and of phenomena; That's the normal four mindfulnesses; this is different.

That's what you need to have. Tsongkhapa goes on and says, 'Why? Because Maitreya Buddha says this, Asanga says this, Dharmakirti says this, Kamalashila says this.' The earlier masters and Indian teachers all say why these are necessary. It all boils down to how to develop a perfect samadhi level, a samadhi without fault.

#### 1) HOW TO DEVELOP FLAWLESS CONCENTRATION

Whatever point you focus on, it has 3 major points to remember:

- What to do before focusing on an object of meditation?

- What to do while focusing on an object of meditation, i.e. when focusing, how do I focus?
- What do to after having focused, i.e. once I have focused, what should I do?

A) WHAT TO DO BEFORE FOCUSING ON AN OBJECT OF MEDITATION?<sup>47</sup>

*Our biggest obstacle.* This is interesting: what you have to do before, is focus. Really true. I have to focus. But what prevents me from focusing is: 'I don't enjoy meditation' or said the other way round, 'I like being lazy.'

The biggest obstacle we will face is our laziness, we do not want to meditate. And we can't blame anyone for being lazy if they don't know what is the use of meditation, what is to be gained from it. People say, 'Oh, meditation makes me feel good, makes me feel holy.' Meditation does that, but knowing that is not good enough to overcome laziness. Because meditation is not our priority, with any difficulty that comes up, the first thing to be eliminated from our schedule will be meditation. That's very true, because meditation doesn't bring any money. Our life is a money-oriented life, we've got to pay our bills. So in our list of priorities, meditation will be the last one. Ninety-nine percent of people doesn't worry about meditation. One percent maybe thinking about meditation, but only some of them might know something about the joy and happiness of mind it brings. They are the ones who may be doing something. But even for that small percentage, it

also is the last priority. That's why I say laziness is the first thing to stand in the way.

*How to stop laziness?* This is interesting, again. The direct antidote to laziness is the physical and mental joy you develop with *zhi nay*. It is called *shin jangs*, which means 'perfectly trained.' What happens is, when this meditation is perfectly acquired, you will have tremendous happiness and tremendous joy. This joy in the body and this happiness in the mind is the actual antidote to laziness.

But the problem is we don't have that joy yet. [It only comes into full play when the practice reaches advanced stages].<sup>48</sup> So how can we develop this particular mental and physical joy? It depends on the *enthusiasm* or efforts we put in. The joy is caused by enthusiasm.

How can I practice with enthusiasm if I know nothing about it? For that I need to have a good *desire*<sup>49</sup> to do this. If I don't have a strong desire, if I don't have the aspiration, I'm not going to bring in enthusiasm and without having enthusiasm, I'm not going to get that joy. The joy depends on enthusiasm, the enthusiasm depends on desire.

What does the desire depend on? On *faith* or confidence, *dad pa*.<sup>50</sup>

How do I get confidence in it? I have to at least see some advantage, some *benefit*. If I put my time and energy into this, I need to know what am I going to get. If I don't, there's no reason why I should have any desire for it. And if I don't have any desire, why should I be enthusiastic about it? And if I don't have enthusiasm, I won't have the result,

the joy. So we need to know the potential benefits of this meditation.

*Benefits of developing zhi nay.* If I develop *zhi nay*, or shamatha, what do I get?

1. I will have tremendous happiness in the mind and joy in my body, and that is going to make me *happy* and joyful *in this life*. We are not talking about the long shot. We are not talking about enlightenment nor about a future life, nor about at the time of death, even not about twenty years from now. We are talking about right now. If one has a maximum amount of time and opportunity, within a year one can gain this. Actually, if one puts a lot of focus on this, it is said that *zhi nay* can be developed within six months. It's not that hard to develop. That does not necessarily mean that if you put in ten minutes a day, then after six months you should be thinking, 'Where is that *zhi nay*?' Probably it is not as quick as that. We really have to put quite a lot of time and effort into it. But it definitely is something that can happen within our lifetime.

2. Because of this level of mind and body, you'll have *complete control over your mind*. In other words, you can use your mind to whatever purpose. Wherever you put your focus, the mind will remain there and keep focused, so you'll be able to do whatever you want with your mind. Your mind will not be like a crazy monkey, but like a well-trained elephant. Because of that joy, your mind will not have a mind of its own and run around and play all its tricks on you, leading you on a wild goose chase. Somehow the mind will listen to you and you can use your mind for

as long as you want to and in whatever way you want to. You can use it in a positive way and for spiritual development. And that is what we want.

So, the mind gets trained so it doesn't go around in a zig-zag and then comes crashing down. Your mind will no longer be like a wild elephant, but like a well-trained elephant. A well-trained elephant is extremely helpful. Remember, at Buddha's time 2,500 years ago, there were no bulldozers *etc.*, all those big machines didn't exist. So the biggest, most effective force was an elephant. Whether you wanted to pull out the root of a tree or carry a tree or anything of that sort, an elephant was the most useful and most powerful means of transportation. That's why the example of an elephant is given. The mind is the most powerful tool we can ever have, but we cannot use it because we cannot focus. To concentrate and focus so much effort is needed. The mind has to be trained; at our stage it's a very raw mind. Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche had a drawing on the development of *zhi nay* with an elephant and some monks.<sup>51</sup>

3. For liberation seekers what happens is that at the level of *zhi nay*, the mind will totally focus on virtue rather than on non-virtue. *Non-virtuousness will be tremendously reduced.* That is a great achievement. In that way you will constantly, continually, have virtuousness running throughout every moment. So it's a very nice way of handling things.

4. If you develop *zhi nay*, you can attain the siddhis very quickly, you'll develop *clairvoyance*, like reading others' minds, seeing into the future, remembering past incarnations. You can also get physical powers such as flying and levitating. All of those are possible. They come as a side effect.

5. Another important benefit is that one's sleep is transformed into profound meditation.

6. The most important point according to the Buddha is that if you have *zhi nay*, you can develop *lhak tong*, vipashyana, and that can cut the root of samsara. Then the purpose of many lifetimes, not just the current one, will be served.

These are the basis on which you will develop the desire to develop *zhi nay*. By contemplating these, laziness will disappear.

We are not talking way down the road, we are talking where we can really reach. As far as I know, the great spiritual practitioners do not spend any time to developing clairvoyance or magical powers. They get them as a side effect of spiritual development, as a side effect of *zhi nay*. And if you are looking at the spiritual path, it is with *zhi nay* that you can achieve special seeing, *lhak tong* or vipashyana, seeing deeply inside, seeing the inner truth. That means we are cutting through the mystery of life. Cutting the mystery of life may not be so important. What is important is that with the power of vipashyana we can cut the root of samsara, which is the source of all suffering—mental, physical, and emotional sufferings.

There is a chance we may be able to do that, because if we develop *zhi nay* we get a tremendous mental power. Actually it's the individual's mind getting trained so you can use it for as long as you want to, in whatever way you want to without interruption. Once you have that, anything you

do will be very powerful. That is the real reason we need this. So there is a quality to be gained, therefore there is an incentive, there is a desire to put effort into it. The result of all our effort will be that quality of samadhi.

B) WHAT TO DO WHILE FOCUSING ON AN OBJECT OF MEDITATION?

On what do I meditate? Where do I focus? How do I maintain my mind? That's the real question now. How and where do I focus?

1) IDENTIFYING THE OBJECTS ON WHICH TO FOCUS

That has two:

- General presentation of objects of meditation
- Identifying the object of meditation for this context

(1) GENERAL PRESENTATION OF THE OBJECTS OF MEDITATION<sup>52</sup>

I have to go back to the source. Buddha was asked that same question: 'Where do we focus, how do we focus, what happens, what do you do?' And Buddha says, 'If you are a yogi...'

Yogi is old language for what we now call a practitioner. There are practitioners with achievement and without achievement. Yogis are those who have yoga. The word yoga does not just refer to physical yoga, hatha-yoga, the most important yoga is the mental yoga. (Yoga actually means amongst other things 'activity', but I don't want to

make yoga cheap.) The Tibetan word for yoga is *neljor*.<sup>53</sup> A yogi is a *neljorpa*, which really means: one who can keep the mind peaceful and maintain it like that.

Buddha was asked, ‘What do we do, where do we focus?’ All traditional Tibetan Buddhist texts, whether you read Buddha’s teaching on this meditation, or Nagarjuna’s or Shantideva’s texts, or Kamalashila’s *Stages of Meditation*—there’s three of them, the first, middle and last *Gom Rim*—all give you four different types of focal points:

- Universal objects of meditation, also called pervasive focusing
- Objects of meditation for purifying behavior according to the individual’s need, also called meditation according to the different addictions
- Objects of meditation for expertise, also called intelligence meditation
- Objects of meditation for overcoming obstacles

(A) UNIVERSAL OBJECTS OF MEDITATION—  
PERVASIVE FOCUSING

If you read the sutras or commentaries four meditational objects are mentioned, of which the first is the *khyab pa mig pa*, translated ‘pervasive focusing.’<sup>54</sup> That’s how the traditional teachings are worded. It carries three or four different points, but these are not separate meditations. Every meditation should carry those four qualities. This point actually explains how the meditation should be. That’s why it is called ‘pervasive.’

First of all there are two different types of focus:

*The object attended to without analysis.*<sup>55</sup> One simply focuses and leaves it there, without analyzing or digging deeper. Just focus and leave it at that. E.g. you see the nice beautiful nose of Nina. So we just see Nina's nose and leave it there. We don't go into whether it's beautiful or not beautiful, big or small, white or black. We just leave it there without analyzing it. That is the first part of it.

*The object of analysis.*<sup>56</sup> That is actually focusing and analyzing. We still see Nina's nose and now we analyze it: is it white? If white, how white is it? Is it brown? If it's brown, will that brown go away? Is it a sun-tan or is it really like that? How long is it going to last? Will it change color, why and how and where? And how long will it take for that to happen? All of that is analyzing. That is the second part of it.

*The limits of ontological and phenomenological realities*<sup>57</sup> This third point tells you that no matter what you are focusing on, there's always two points: the *relative* aspects and the *absolute* aspects of it. The absolute aspect is the truth *as it is*, and the relative is *whatever it appears as*.

*Achieving basic transformation.*<sup>58</sup> Whatever you are using, you meditate on it until it transforms, till it becomes perfect.

In short, these four points—not analyzing, analyzing, all materials and beings, and till it changes into perfection—is basically what meditation is all about.

Said in a different way, every meditation must have:

- *The focusing point:* whether it is the relative or absolute aspects

- *The method:* analyzing or not analyzing,
- *The result:* what comes about when it's transformed.

In short, within the pervasive focusing, you have the four we just discussed. This point is generally applicable to all kinds of meditation. The pervasive meditation first has been divided into two categories: analyzing the focal point and not analyzing the focal point. The third point in it is looking into the deeper reality of absolute and relative. And the fourth is, through those types of meditation being able to transform. Basically, any meditation should somehow fall into one of those categories and particularly into the last one. Whether you analyze or don't analyze, bottom line is that the meditative state should be transformed into a great positive state.

(B) MEDITATION ACCORDING TO THE DIFFERENT  
ADDICTIONS

This second point and also the third and fourth point are optional. You don't have to do all, there are options. For some people one thing works, for others something else may work; that's why Buddha gave options.

This point here totally depends on the individual's need. Do I have a very strong problem of obsession? Or do I have a very strong problem of hatred? Or do I have a very strong problem of ego, what Tibetans traditionally call ignorance; am I confusion-oriented? As a matter of fact, these are called the three poisons: obsession [or attachment], hatred, and confusion- ignorance- or ego-oriented behavior. These

three are the sources of all our difficulties and sufferings and problems.

A fourth one is the mind problem. By a mind problem, I don't mean being crazy. I mean having a mind like a monkey in a temple. I've told you many times, if you let a wild monkey loose in a temple, the monkey will jump from image to image, knock down every decoration, eat up all the fruit and any offering, drink all the water and pee here and there. It'll do all that, right? That's exactly what our mind is doing in the temple of our consciousness. Our mind is behaving just like a monkey. We cannot focus at all; our mind goes here, goes there and back here. It's much worse than American busy-ness, believe me. With American busy-ness, at least people can focus and do something and finish it, then do something else, half finish that, then come back or whatever . . . , still they can achieve something. But when our mind is jumping about, it does not achieve anything. It jumps so much. Our thoughts are countless. Why do you think all our confusions come up, that we cannot make a decision, cannot make up our mind and so have to wait for everything? We have no other alternative except to wait and see if things will become more clear so we understand them better. Often we can't make decisions because the mind jumps so much and there's a zillion different thoughts popping up in a short space of time.

#### NEGATIVE EMOTIONS AND ANTIDOTES

Buddha saw all of those—too much obsession or too strong an obsession, too much hatred, too much ignorance

or craziness—as comparable problems. He had antidotes for all of those.

*a. Obsession.*<sup>59</sup> Let's say my major problem is obsession. In that case I have a very specific focusing point: obsession will now become my target, so I focus on that. I'm sure all of us are quite obsessed with our body. And we feel good about it, very good. But many people think, 'Oh, I'm terrible-looking, and I'm fat, I'm getting old, I'm this and I'm that.' And you do all kinds of things and then you look slightly different, 'Now I'm good.' So, we do have a lot of obsession about our body. It is hard to give up, to get rid of. It doesn't mean you don't like yourself. You should look good, you do look good, you are beautiful, wonderful and you should be happy about it. Nothing wrong with that. But being obsessed with yourself, with your body, is a big problem. That's why in the Buddhist monasteries in Thailand they keep dead bodies in the water, turn them around from time to time and try to get everyone to look at them: the same will happen to us, so, would you like to be obsessed with that dead body there in the water? That's what they're telling you: it's only a matter of time; death is the only difference.

So, if you have too much obsession, Buddha recommends you meditate on *horrible things*, in Tibetan *miduba*<sup>60</sup>—not so nice. In Buddhist paintings you will see a great many skulls and bones, bone trumpets and this and that—unpleasant things. Unpleasantness connected with our body cuts obsession. Really. It shows Buddha was not stu-

pid. When we've had enough of something, we won't want to revisit that particular thing.

I have experienced this in my life. When I was a kid, about eight or nine, we used to get orange sweets from China. They were really bad, but we used to enjoy them. They would squish oranges along with its skin, put it in sugar and dry it and ship it in boxes to Tibet. We all bought it and it was one of the biggest, nice treats, like great Swiss chocolate here. And I used to eat it. One time I got really sick on it. I don't know for how long, maybe a week or two. Since then, I can't touch or smell orange at all. Even later, in India I couldn't touch those beautiful Himalayan tangerines from Sikkim or Bhutan. I couldn't even stand the smell of it because I'd been so sick from that rotten orange. I'd had enough.

Exactly like that, when you meditate on those horrifying things and the obsessions you have begin to link up with that disgust, you won't want to go anywhere near it again. That is why people who have such obsessions, Buddha recommends to meditate on unpleasantness.

*b. Hatred.*<sup>61</sup> If my problem is hatred, then the recommended object of meditation is *compassion*. Compassion directly counters the perception and function of hatred. Hatred will say, 'How dares this person to do that to me—I have to get him! Even if I die, my dead body will turn around and get him!' Compassion will immediately focus on that person and say, 'Poor thing.' Even if it is condescending, it's better than 'How dare you!' So it is a direct antidote to

hatred. Then also the aim, 'I must catch you,' becomes 'I must help you.' So it really directly counters whatever our problem is.

Or, if you have too much hatred, Buddha recommends *love*. Don't forget, l-o-v-e. Love-compassion is exactly the opposite of hatred. Hatred says, 'I want to torture you, I want to make you suffer. I want you to feel the pain. I want to see, to know you're suffering.' Sometimes our hatred is so great that we torture ourselves mentally and even physically in the presence of that person, hoping that person will feel the pain that we are experiencing. That's what we do, don't we? How many times people say, 'I'll kill myself, then you'll be happy.' They think that way. Some unfortunately act that way. Their hatred is such that they want to cause pain, 'I want to teach you a lesson.' We're familiar with that, right? So we go and ask Buddha, 'Hey, I have this problem. What to do?' He says, 'Love, love, love.' That's it.

Compassion and love are exactly and completely the opposite of a mind fully tainted by hatred, wanting to cause suffering, and willing to sacrifice oneself if necessary just so as to cause the other person pain. Some go so far as to say, 'Even if I were to eat your flesh piece by piece, I still wouldn't be satisfied.' This is hatred, talking about individuals.

Nowadays there's also a bigger hatred. We go through all kinds of sufferings, difficulties, miseries and terrorist attacks. All of those are due to hatred. What happened in the Middle East, just killing the spiritual leader of Hamas and killing teenage boys—all of those are due to hatred. The antidote is love and compassion.

When hatred is too strong, and it's too hard to bring love and compassion . . . . Remember our experience of September 11th, 2001: when it was quite fresh, (it wasn't very far from our center here in New York) we couldn't talk about love and compassion, couldn't even think of it, there was no room for it. When affected like that, Buddha recommends that if you are meditating *zhi nay*, do it on love-compassion; that makes love-compassion strong. If you develop *zhi nay* on compassion, what more powerful compassion than that can one bring? If you develop *zhi nay* on love, what more powerful love than that can one bring? Hatred such as we experienced on September 12, 13, 14, 2001, completely overpowered everybody physically, mentally and emotionally. If, just like that, you can turn it the other way around—that's what Buddha recommended—you can overcome the hatred by that.

Right now I'm still talking about what we can focus on, what we can meditate on.

*c. Ignorance or delusion.* Then, of course, there is ignorance. If your problem is ignorance, then you need wisdom. I don't know whether we get anything out of the word wisdom. I don't know what people project individually. Some have an idea what wisdom is about, but to others it is just a soothing, beautiful word.

In essence, wisdom is the interdependentness of everything: interdependentness between individuals, interdependentness between east and west. I don't mean East Asia and West Europe and America, I mean just east and west. There's a tremendous dependentness. If there were no east side, how

could there be a west side? The existence of an east totally depends on a west. The existence of a west totally depends on an east being there. And the middle—if there were no middle, how could there be an east or a west, a right side or a left side? So *interdependentness*, the dependent nature of existence is what one should meditate on. I'm not going to say any more than that because I do have separate material on wisdom that you can read.<sup>62</sup> This much will do for you to understand what I'm talking about.

*d. Pride.* When talking about pride, I do not mean the good self-esteem but the pride of, 'Me, me, me, I am the one.' Remember in the Tara teachings we talked about the eight fears of the practitioner. One was the fear of pride, which was likened to a lion who is ready to destroy every animal, thinking, 'I am the king of the animals' until a rabbit comes and throws him into the river. If you have that pride, then you think you are king of all kinds of existence, of the different galaxies, of this and that Pure Land.

There is a story of one of a lineage master. Lalitavajra, the great founder of the Yamantaka tradition. Lalitavajra had the pride of thinking, 'This particular tantra, I know best. No one today knows it better than me.' Then in a dream, the dakinis came and showed one tantra after another which he had no idea about; forget about him having seen it, he'd never even heard about it. The next day he thought he knew nothing; he sank to that level. That had reduced his pride.

That's the sort of pride we are talking about, the ego-oriented 'I am the only one' pride. That pride is a tremendous

problem for us, for those who are trying to develop. In the long run we try to develop enlightenment, as a medium level we try to develop being free from samsara, and here we at least try to develop *zhi nay*. Pride is an obstacle for all three. It is an obstacle now, it will be an obstacle on the path and it's definitely an obstacle all the way down the road.

In America people don't consider pride to be much of a problem. Americans have a problem with lack of self-esteem, and we confuse self-esteem with pride. Self-esteem is good pride, which we need. A certain amount of self-esteem, is absolutely necessary, but 'I am the most learned one' type of pride will deprive us of the opportunity to learn.

Sometimes this pride comes up in a different way. When you hear something, you immediately analyze it and say, 'Ah, this is this, this is this.' That is the Western culture of sorting things, putting them in little boxes, labeling them and saying, 'Ha, that's that. Ah, the situation is under control.' That is also pride. That information or knowledge is not going to contribute spiritually to the individual at all.

Because of that reason traditional teachers say that pride is like a sharp mountain peak. A peak has no place to collect the water when the rain falls; it washes all down, so nothing grows up there. The example given is,

Where does the green first develop in spring? Right  
on those peaks or on the ground where there is a  
valley or plateau?  
Of course it is not on the high mountains;  
the lower plateaus will pick up the green grass first.

Another example is,

*Gelek Rimpoche*

When the crops are ripening and the ears are  
filled with grains,  
Which is taller, the ear with more grains or the  
ear with the fewer grains in it?

Of course, the stalk which carries the most wheat, does not stand upright, because it's heavy. When it's standing it's a clear indication it doesn't have much substance in it. Pride does that. (But then, you know families, or friends say, 'I am very proud of you.' That not this pride we're talking about. That is a different type of pride.)

So pride is really harmful. We don't know that. We all accept that hatred is not good. We have a question whether anger is good or not. We know obsession is not good, but we don't mind attachment. We say, 'I can deal with it.' But nobody thinks about pride. If a meditation is given to a proud person, the person will not take the meditation as a meditation and use it as such; the person will try to analyze it, 'Yeah, this is this path, that is that path.' He puts them into boxes and labels them. I always think that people do that all the time, 'These are the Buddhist views, those are Christian views, these are Jewish views, the Hindus say this, Muslims say that;' we have them boxed, put a label on them, leave them there and then we say the situation is under control. That doesn't help the individual at all. Does this make a difference in my life? Does it help me? If it doesn't help, put them in the box and put them away, fine.

But if it does help, pick it up. Often we don't want to pick it up because of our pride. I had tremendous pride at being a Mahayana practitioner. Then a great Indian guy—I

call him great, at least great for me—told me, ‘Oh, Mahayana is very great, wonderful, high, but you have to measure from the ground how high you are.’ That’s really true. You can’t be flying high up there, you have to be measured from the ground. And when you really look back at the traditional teachings, you’ll see they all are built on top of one another. If you try to get up onto the peak level immediately, you’re not going to get anywhere because it builds up from the ground. Very simple.

For the problem pride, Buddha has given a variety of *metaphysical teachings*, teachings on existence. [The antidote to pride is meditation on the differentiation of the constituents: earth or *solidity*, water or *fluidity*, fire or *heat*, air or *motility*, space and consciousness, recognizing that none of them are intrinsically ‘I’ or ‘mine.’]<sup>63</sup>

So far the negative emotions and their antidotes on which you have to meditate.

e. *The runaway mind*. Now last but not least, we have the problem of the runaway mind, the crazy monkey. What do we do with the crazy monkey? How do we deal with him? Make him busy. Let him count and make sure he counts. Count what? *Count the breath*, going out, coming in, going out, coming in.... Let him count and if he can count up to nine, he will have to sit on it for a second. That’s how we begin. We all have a crazy monkey, we all have countless thoughts. If we try to think of one thing, somehow we get a zillion thoughts.

In the traditional Tibetan teachings, there’s an old story which one after the other great master has repeated, for gen-

erations. Poor guy, whoever it was who said it first. There used to be a name and a face on it, but later somehow it was left out. This is the story. There was an official, a man from a noble family, who decided he wanted to meditate. He said, 'I'll meditate.' Now, every time he sat down to say prayers and meditate, he told his attendant, 'Make sure you leave a piece of paper with a pen and ink in front of me.' So he would sit and meditate, maybe for an hour or so. And by the time he was done, he would have a long list of things for his attendant to do, 'Go and collect this from that one and collect that from this one, and we have to give such and such to so-and-so and we have to . . . .' What he did was, while he meditated a lot of thoughts spontaneously came up in his head: whom he would have to collect what from and all these business transactions. And as they were coming up anyway he made them into a long list of things to do. He said his best ideas came up from his mind wandering during the meditation. That tells us exactly how our mind works.

So, if one has a mind constantly running around, a mind that cannot focus at all, a mind with countless thoughts popping up all the time, it is recommended to meditate on the breath. In this country, most of the meditations are taught by focusing on the breath. Whoever chose to introduce breath meditation, probably decided that the American problem is the mind running everywhere, the mind not sitting and so many thoughts popping up all the time.

*Strength of the addiction.* Why one person has too strong obsession, why another person has too strong hatred? It's

very simple. Buddhism 1.0.1 speaks about that. We call that addiction. Exactly, it is addiction. Since I am coming from the background of incarnation, I say addiction is coming from a previous life. And even if you don't accept or you are not convinced about incarnation, you cannot deny this is addiction. From drugs, cigarettes, alcohol, we get a physical addiction. We see it, we taste, we enjoy it and then we cannot live without, it has become an addiction. What we talk about here is a mental addiction. Buddha presents in this point how you can overcome these additional problems.

There is strong addiction, medium addiction and light addiction to hatred, obsession, pride or ego. How do I know whether I have a strong, a medium or a very light addiction? What determines that and where do you draw the line between strong or light addiction?

Buddha says here that when the individual comes in contact with the basis on which we develop those addictions, we'll know what makes them strong or weak. But a person who maintains that state of mind for a long time is thought to have a stronger or heavier addiction. Let's say you are very angry and upset, and that turns into hatred: if you keep that for a long time, then whenever that person comes up or you are dealing with that individual, directly or even indirectly such as remembering their face or name, or talking about them, the hatred rises strongly in us and further intensifies the hatred we have in us and we cannot let go of it. That is considered strong hatred.

Why do some people have it stronger, and others less? Buddha's reply here, is that those who have this problem, don't acknowledge it as a problem, never saw the effect of

those negative emotions, and never tried to apply an antidote or tried to work with it in a previous life, so they have it much stronger now. Then there are those who have those emotions, which they developed in a previous life and were unable to get rid of, but they acknowledged and recognized them as a problem. Even if they haven't done anything to get rid of them, they know and understand that these are problems. Those people, even though in this life they might develop those negative emotions again, they do not necessarily hold onto them very long. The ones who have a light addiction, are also categorized in three different levels. In general, the ones with light addictions have not only understood that negative emotions are a problem, they have worked on them, they have tried to get rid of them. Because of that, in this life it's hard for those people to grow or develop those negative emotions again; for them it takes a lot to give in to hatred, obsession, jealousy or any of those negative emotions. Then they are further subdivided. Some people only develop those emotions when there is really some huge provocation, but in case of a medium or small provocation, nothing happens. For persons on the medium light level, if some bad feeling does come up, when they come in contact with the subject who elicits hatred or obsession, they just have slightly stronger feelings but not that much hatred or obsession. And for the very lightly addicted person almost nothing happens.

Those are the distinctions Buddha made and that is how Buddha taught according to people's different experiences. Sometimes we think that even though we are trying our best, nothing is happening. But it makes a hell of a differ-

ence in a future life, if you have the mind of incarnation. It makes a hell of a difference. So I thought I'd like to share that with you. In short, what makes the addiction strong, light, or very light, has according to Buddha to do with a previous life.

Even in our own life, today, if we recognize that these negative emotions are not great, that they're a problem, and we decide to get rid of them. We pass a resolution saying, 'I shall not entertain Dr. Frankenstein till Monday,' as Allen Ginsberg used to say. We say, 'I shall not entertain my hatred till Monday.' If you stick to it, because of the effect that has in your mind, the next time or the time after that or a number of times after that, your hatred, your anger, your temper tantrum will be weaker. We all know that by our own personal experience. Even without thinking of previous lives, we can see for ourselves in our own life the difference between a couple of years ago and today, how strong, how effective those negative emotions used to be in an individual. We have seen it through our own personal experience, we have witnessed other people going through it and that tells us something. That something we have to remember. That may be a huge contribution to our life, to the well-being of our spiritual practice.

We Western minds have a lot of training. All your education, from the kindergarten level to a PhD, whether you became a teacher teaching or a professional person who executes the work, you all had a training of the mind. No doubt about it. We all have taught ourselves to think, to understand, to experiment and to work to make a difference in our life—I'm talking about everyday life—and all

that was done through our mind. The body alone can not do it. You know it, I know it. If it's only a body, it becomes some kind of a robot, not a person. That clearly indicates we work through our mind, even in the material world. The spiritual world definitely has to work through the mind. In order to work through the mind, it's first of all important to train our mind. Let the mind focus on the right thing. Don't let the mind play at being like a monkey in a museum. If you have a monkey in an art gallery you have a problem. Can you imagine the monkey running around, tearing, scratching, or maybe throwing up on the paintings? That's exactly what our mind is like. Our body would be the art gallery, and our mind would be the crazy monkey in it. So that's why it's important to have *zhi nay*, bringing peace and remaining in that peace.

(C) OBJECTS OF MEDITATION FOR EXPERTISE

This one Buddha called 'intelligence meditation.' We would all like to do that because we all like the idea of being associated with intelligence. This is actually meditation on:<sup>64</sup>

- The five skandhas, like form feeling, recognition, volition and consciousness.
- The eighteen constituents, like the eye *etc.*
- The twelve sources like the eye *etc*
- The interdependentness or the dependent nature of existence—the twelve links

- The right and the wrong

[These can be used as objects of meditation for developing shamatha. They have to be learned from other sources.]<sup>65</sup>

*We don't know.* There is a funny old Tibetan story I'd like to share with you. Like here we have a lot of jokes of the south of the United States versus the north, in Tibet we have jokes of one village versus another. Tibetans have lots of jokes about the people from Central Tibet. The Central Tibetan people are divided into the Tsang area, which is the Panchen Lama's area, and the central area which is the Dalai Lama's. So we always made jokes about those coming from Tsang. I'll tell you one.

One guy from the Tsang area came to Lhasa and asked somebody, 'How do people die? How do you know you are dead?' Somebody replied, 'When your foot is yellow.' So this guy understood when your foot is yellow, you're dead. He walked out on the pasture in the valley for a long time, and then suddenly he noticed his foot was yellow. So he thought he had died. He made himself lie down there and said, 'I'm dead.' Then another person came by, with a donkey carrying a heavy load. The donkey fell down, and the man had no idea how to lift it up. He was pulling the donkey's tail, trying to get the donkey to get up that way. Then the guy lying there said, 'This is not the way to make the donkey get up. If I were still alive, I would know how to lift it up. But since I'm dead, I can't do anything.' The other man was more clever and so he said, 'All right, you're

dead, that's fine. But since you can talk, why don't you tell me?' So the man lying down said, 'Well, take the load off first, then pull.' So the other man did that and that's how he got the donkey back to its feet.

Likewise we don't know what we don't have. In the spiritual path we think we are doing great, we are somewhere, but we don't know. On the other hand, also many people think, 'I have no development, nothing,' but they also don't know what they really have. This is a really big problem for all of us. You know why? Because this is first generation, that's why. In the second, third, fourth and fifth generation, you will know it. As this is the first generation, so you don't have a role model, you don't have a way of judging, that's why it is a big problem. We don't know what we have and we also don't know what we don't have. Mind you, I'm not saying you are stupid, okay? Don't take it that way, it's not.

*Role model.* Our problem is a lack of a role model. Companionship is a role model. It's a big role model. A traditional Tibetan master says,

If you are near a gold mine, everything nearby will have a lot of gold on it. If you are near a mine of poison, everything nearby is likely to have a lot of poison on it.

That is the conclusion on companionship. Some may think a companion is not so important, but it does become important, particularly when you are meditating a certain particular period.

*Example of a good companion.* There were a group of people who were doing some retreat. And you know, a number of times we do a retreat to get the required number the mantras faster, and when we have said the required number we conclude. One guy, doing a refuge retreat, was going extremely slow. And instead of reciting the refuge formula quickly, he was saying it very slowly. When all the others had finished already days before, he was not even halfway through. So one day they decided to say something, ‘When do you think you’re going to finish?’ He turned around, ‘You people are just counting?’ he said, ‘I’m thinking.’ So all of them had to keep their mouth shut and were a little embarrassed. That is the example of a good companion.

(D) OBJECTS OF MEDITATION FOR OVERCOMING  
OBSTACLES

At whatever level you may be, you’ll have difficulties. Now, this point is not going to make sense to you until I explain it. But if I explain it now, I won’t be able to do it right. So I’m just going to say this: whatever the problem is that you have to overcome, knowing what it is and focusing on it is a way to handle it. Each stage, each level of development, has its own obstacles. When you focus on them correctly, it will help you boost up to the next level. That’s why this point is called ‘overcoming obstacles.’

I will not make it very detailed because it takes time and may not be very relevant to us. These instructions are specifically meant for the highly developed individuals. Why do I mention it? Because it’s part of this teaching. An exam-

ple of this ‘overcoming obstacles’ meditation is meditation on the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths.

*Use of the four types of meditation.* Buddha was asked, ‘Why do we need to have the meditation on addictions?’ He said, ‘If you meditate on whatever it is you have an addiction to, it will make it easier for you to overcome that addiction and develop this meditative level. It is a special way.’ Buddha called it special.

‘So what about the intelligence meditation?’ Buddha said, ‘With that one, not only will you understand what you had not understood before, also with this meditation you can develop wisdom; it is very good for that.’

‘Then, what about overcoming obstacles?’ ‘Overcoming obstacles is a general antidote to our negativities, therefore very helpful.’

So, any type of meditation you do to develop *zhi nay* will have its very important, great or necessary purposes, it has its special importance.

There are many types of meditational focus, but basically there are these four. All those different meditations I told you about, all are based on a stable mind, on mental stability, on a mind that can focus. A mind that cannot focus, I call an unstable mind.

(2) IDENTIFYING THE OBJECT OF MEDITATION FOR THIS CONTEXT <sup>66</sup>

A stable mind is a result of training. It is not automatic. It is not necessarily virtuous or non-virtuous. It is something

you can learn and train. So on what do you focus to build mental stability?

You can build *zhi nay* on any focusing point. When the earlier Kadampa lama's were asked, 'On what I can meditate?', they replied, 'On anything, from a yak's horn to cow dung.' But, because of important reasons it is not recommend to meditate on any one of those type of things.

For the object meditation you should have a special object of focus. Tsongkhapa recommended in his big Lamrim, the *Lamrim Chenmo*, as physical object the *Buddha image*. What Tsongkhapa recommended in the *Lamrim Chungwa*, the small [or medium] Lamrim, is the *mind*.<sup>67</sup> Though traditional teachings will only talk one of them, I'd like to do talk here on both, first the object meditation and then the subject meditation. In my own defense, I will say this does not go against Tsongkhapa's rule or style or teaching.

#### (A) THE BUDDHA IMAGE AS FOCAL POINT

According to Buddhist teachings, it is specifically recommended to meditate on the physical body of the Buddha, not on a statue, not on a drawing, not on a poster, not on a photograph, but on the real physical body of the Buddha.

*Benefits.* By focusing our mind on the physical body of the Buddha, we accumulate a tremendous amount of good karma or what we call 'lucky merit', because of the karma called 'remembering the Buddha.' Buddha is one of the best supreme fields of merit we can find. Since it is a spe-

cial field of merit, we can gain a lot of positive karma. We have found a subject or object to whom we can make offerings, make prostrations by body, speech and mind. We have found a subject in whose presence we can purify all our negativities, our negative karma. We have found a subject in which we can rejoice. We have found an object to whom we can make a request, and pray. We don't simply have to pray to something extraordinary in the air above us, something somewhere in the middle of nowhere up in the sky. We do have a real subject we can think about on a person-to-person basis, Buddha is someone we can talk to and have a mental dialogue with. By doing that, and by our own spiritual progress, we can even receive teachings, information.

Especially if we were to die before we have any development, before there is any guarantee about how we'll manage in our future life, if we at least die thinking of Buddha, that not only protects us from falling into the lower realms—that is guaranteed by Buddha—but it also gives us a bridge to be able to gain either a pure land, a pure rebirth, or at least a good human rebirth to continue the work we are doing. So it is very important.

If the individual practitioner happens to be a Vajrayana practitioner, then it helps if we meditate on the yidam or the mandala. Remember, every yidam is guru, is buddha. Every buddha is guru, is yidam. Every guru is guru, buddha, yidam. These are the very important reasons why it's recommended to meditate on the physical form of the Buddha.

*How to find your point of focus.* When learning this meditation, our focal point will be the mental image of the physical form of the Buddha. The physical form of that Buddha can be a Buddha form that we have created, or something that was already there, though we recreate it in our mind. Every great Tibetan Buddhist master recommends the latter option, a Buddha form that's already there. Why? It helps us to develop intelligent faith.

For meditating on an image of the Buddha, the traditional teachings will tell you find a nice, good Buddha painting or statue. Look very carefully at it for as long as you need to. Look and try to build the image in your mind.

Do not meditate on Buddha's image by looking at the Buddha's picture or statue. People like to do that, but that's not recommended. Many people, I noticed, like to have a picture of the yidam they are practicing, in their sadhana. Well, if it is just to remind you of the yidam or you have it as an object of refuge, there is no problem. But if you want to look at it and use it to meditate upon, then it's a problem. If you're looking at the object and meditating, then you are training your eye consciousness, you are not training your mind. In order to work with the mind, you have to have a *mental* image of Buddha.

Whatever mental image you have, first keep on building it. And then whatever you get, maybe sort of a structure with a little head and two little hands, or someone sitting crossed-legged, or something not very clear—when you find just a general basic physical image of Buddha, it is sufficient.

Do not try to get the clarity of it. Focusing on the Buddha image, you are recommended not to try to have clarity; just generally have the head, hands, legs—the general structure. (I used to call it a ‘yellow lump’, but that’s a little too funny). A general structure is good enough.

The first and foremost difficulty is *not finding* the point of focus. Therefore, it is recommended to just find a general image of the Buddha that has a head and hands and legs and is sitting. Don’t try to zoom in and see what the eyes look like, what the nose looks like, how the hands are kept, and whether the legs are crossed or whatever. Just a general picture is fine for common, ordinary practitioners. As a matter of fact, trying to go into detail will become an obstacle at this moment. So do not go into detail, do not try to bring clarity. Just find the points, and then focus on that. Quite simple.

If you are a Vajrayana practitioner, saying sadhanas, then this is not the recommendation. The purpose of the sadhana is clarity. At the development stage level you have to build the clarity. Clarity of the face, how many faces, the legs, how many, the hands, how many, what implements, and so forth. All of them you try to see clearly.

If it’s just simply for *zhi nay*, it is recommended *not* to take time trying to make it clear. Just try to maintain the image. However clumsy or blurry it might be, it is the object recommended to focus on. You may not be able to get immediately the proper size or color you want to focus on. But when you settle down, and you try to focus again tonight, tomorrow day after day, you’ll gradually get it. If you have tried to focus for weeks and you’re still not finding

your object of meditation, then you may go here and there for a while, try out different ways, it doesn't matter. But once you settle down on whatever size you choose, make that definite.

Sometimes, if you find a specific point of the body, let's say an eye or the nose or something, you can focus on that. And if you are losing that, then hold the general picture again. And within the general picture, if you focus on an eye or something, that's okay.

But what is not okay, is as follows: if you are meditating on the Buddha as yellow but the mind is telling and showing you Buddha as red, or you want to have Buddha as an upright human form but your mind insists it being horizontal or something, or you want to focus on one form but you begin to see two, or you want to focus on a standard-sized form but your mind projects it as huge or as very small, or if you want to have a sitting Buddha but that Buddha starts to get up and walk—when any of those happen, it is very strongly recommended not to follow your thought but to try to focus and stick to the original object of meditation. Do not ever follow it, because then you're going to lose. When you're going to follow it, it's going to go here, go there and you'll go with it. That then defeats the purpose.

#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Audience:** At identifying the object of meditation, you mentioned as second step the analysis of your object, then to see the relative and absolute aspect. And lastly you said continue until it transforms. What did you mean by that?

**Rimpoche:** The mind we have when we are beginning to focus, neither has the joy nor the enthusiasm. By the end, even if you were forced to leave, you wouldn't leave. The mind has been transformed to that level. That's what I mean. The relative and absolute aspects are the focusing point. Whether you are analyzing or not analyzing is a way of doing it, but the relative and absolute path is what you focus on. And finally, transforming is the result I'm talking about. You get it? Thank you.

**Audience:** Staying with that same line of questioning. If we think of relative and absolute in terms of the transient phenomena, and their source being absolute, is the transformation that you're talking about transformation into a state where there is constant awareness, constant understanding of the absolute so that the relative is not seen? Can we think of it that way, of transformation bringing forth completely the absolute?

**Rimpoche:** I would like to stick to the subject itself. The subject here is shamatha or *zhi nay*. So I don't want to go that far, and talk about absolute truth and transformation and the complete enlightenment level and all that. As I stated just now, the transforming here, is not really transforming everything, just the mental state. Mental state means the mind that is the observer, the whoever is focusing, the whoever is meditating. That level changes from an ordinary level to a better level. Our usual example—'our' in the sense of the way I was taught in the old-time monastery—was of the dead-tired donkey with a heavy load

pushing up hill. This is the example for the level we are on now. And a change from that level, is if at least the donkey is not too tired and is a little bit alert, not absolutely hungry, but not climbing, maybe even going down. So that's the level of transformation. I'd like to leave it there so that it will become relevant and not out of context. Thank you.

**Audience:** Could you speak a little bit more about how vows work?

**Rimpoche:** Oh, yes, it's very simple. You and I are sitting here right now. We are not killing anybody, we are not lying, we are not stealing anything, we are certainly not engaging in sexual misconduct right here. So do we get the positive karma of not doing those things? The answer is: no. We do need to have an opportunity to do non-virtue that we are not taking in order to get the positive karma. When we do have the opportunity, and decide not to engage in something, then we get the karma of not doing that thing.

Now, if you have a vow of not doing something, then even if we are not doing anything, even if we did not have any opportunity, still because of the vow we continuously have the positive karma of not doing that thing. That is the advantage of the vow. The disadvantage of the vow is the exact opposite. The exact opposite. When you do something wrong, you are breaking the not to do it, which makes it worse than simply having killed or something. That's it. So, vows make a tremendous difference, in the positive and in the negative sense, both. The advantage of the vow, particularly the bodhisattva vow, is as Shantideva said,

*Gelek Rimpoche*

From now on, even if you go to sleep or play or do nothing or whatever you do, as long as it's not a negativity, you have the continuation of positive karmas building up.

## IV

# THE MIND AS FOCAL POINT

### (B) THE MIND AS FOCAL POINT<sup>68</sup>

Introduction. Today I would like to present the alternative focusing object to the Buddha image—the mind itself. You can meditate on the mind. Then that will be further split into the relative mind and the absolute mind. The absolute mind will probably cover the vipashyana or lhak tong level. First I'm going to introduce the relative mind as a focal point. This is an important point, and I'd like to spend time on it today.

How would you do that, meditate on the mind? Now I have to really talk deeply from the great Indian Buddhist teaching as well as from Tsongkhapa's teaching. The purpose of both, meditating on the Buddha image, or meditating on mind, is to achieve *zhi nay* or shamatha. And the choice is yours. Today I'd like to talk to you about the mind.

In particular Tsongkhapa's medium Lamrim, *Lam rim chung wa*, recommends to meditate on mind.<sup>69</sup> That has been further clarified and explained in detail by the first Panchen Lama.<sup>70</sup> So I am going to talk to you according to Tsongkhapa's text and the first Panchen Lama's text<sup>71</sup>—the great Ganden Kagyu tradition, which means the Gelugpa tradition.

*Prerequisites for meditation on the mind.* Before introducing you to your mind, we have to talk about the preliminaries or rather prerequisites. In Tibetan the term is *ngön dro*,<sup>72</sup> which means ‘the things you do before.’ There are many kinds of *ngön dro*. We talked about them many times. Even in the context of *zhi nay* alone we did so.<sup>73</sup>

If, as a preliminary, you meditate on Lamrim, that is fine; whatever you are meditating, it is fine. But finally, you have to generate joy. Let’s say you practice a guru yoga.<sup>74</sup> You take refuge, develop bodhicitta, do the seven-limbed practice... and at the end you dissolve the object of refuge or field of merit to you. That could be the Guru,<sup>75</sup> the Buddha,<sup>76</sup> or anybody else for that matter, as long as it is an enlightened being. Non-enlightened ones you don’t want to fool around with.

When you dissolve your object of refuge to yourself, you remember the qualities of those great beings, their great deeds and their great help to us and to the well-being of all living beings. You remember this with great joy and appreciation. And finally they dissolve their mind into your mind and it becomes oneness.

I am not going to clarify here what this ‘dissolving into oneness’ means; that explanation has to come somewhere else. But, the important point is the joyful state of mind that rises from it. The teachings even give the example of a reunion like that of a mother with her long-lost child. Such a joy there is at that moment.

This joy is so intense that it is able to bring tears to your eyes and make the hair of your pores stand up. From your heart you have a tremendous devotion, dedication and

appreciation. And you pray strongly and think that you have obtained the blessings of those enlightened beings.

*The NBB state.* At that point, your mental state will be quite different from the usual level, because if you have really done the prerequisites properly, it affects the individual very strongly. At that moment the joyful, happy nature of the mind is sort of very uplifted and it really comes out.

I don't know how to give an example here. Sometimes when you are about to fall asleep but you cannot yet fall asleep, your mind is a little sort of lifted up, a little higher. Yet, in our ordinary level even at that time we still have a little pain and suffering. But the experience of joy at the level we are talking about here, has no pain, no suffering. It is a beautiful, joyful level. For the time being we chose to call this state the 'NBB state', (in Tibetan *nangwa ben bun*)

*Leave the mind in its natural state.* In that moment of NBB, the mind should be free of hope and doubt. Such a mind should be left alone by itself. You should not try to force it. You should not try to remember what has been done, nor should you look for what's going to happen, nor should you try to change the present level. Then on such a state you should be able to focus.

That state should not be like when you fall asleep and you'll know nothing, because in the dream state and sleep state your mind has no clarity at all. It is also not like when you faint, because you don't know what has happened from the moment you fainted until you wake up. Your mind of fainting will follow the mind immediately before that incident. It looks like the previous story, whatever has hap-

pened, has been extended here for a few seconds. Many of you know, I don't have to explain. That should also not be the case here, because in the fainting state you don't have control, you don't have clarity.

II) HOW TO FOCUS THE MIND ON THE OBJECT  
OF MEDITATION

When you have found your object of focus, whether it is the physical form of Buddha or the mind, there are three points I'd like to clarify.

- What is a really perfect meditation
- What is a wrong meditation
- How long should one meditate

In short, what is the right thing to do, what is the wrong thing to do, and how long should one do it. The right thing to do here depends on the kind of meditative level. Here we're talking for laypeople like us, or beginners like us.

(I) WHAT IS A PERFECT MEDITATION<sup>77</sup>

What we are looking for is a meditative state called samadhi or meditative equipoise, in Tibetan ting dzin. We said earlier: keep on meditating till it transforms.<sup>78</sup> That's what we are talking about here. For that we need two qualities combined together.

The first quality is that the focusing mind should be very clear and sharp, [of vivid intensity]. The second quality is a completely single-pointed focus. The mind must be

absolutely clear and single-pointedly focusing—combining those two together is the right thing to do.

Some people say on top of that you have to add joy, which makes three. Then some say you should also add the clarity of the object and that makes four.

Tsongkhapa disagrees with this. Why does he disagree? He should especially agree with clarity and joy. Tsongkhapa says that when you talk about clarity, there are two types of clarity, which are two different things, like apples and oranges. The first clarity is the clarity of the mind that is focusing; and the other clarity is that of the object on which you are focusing.

The moment we say clarity, we are looking at the focusing point and seeing how clear it is. That is our normal reaction. However, we are talking about two types of clarity: the clarity of the object on which you are meditating and the clarity of the observer that is meditating, your mind. The clarity of the mind is what you need to work on, not the clarity of the object on which you are meditating.

For the clarity of the mind, the example given by the traditional teachings, is a faultless, clean, clear, crystal glass, in which pollution-free, pure, wonderful water has been put and which is exposed to the light of sunshine without any clouds. That level of the mind is what you have to work on.

For the clarity of the object you are focusing on, the following example is given. Let's say you are focusing on a pillar. You are not only looking at the pillar but you are looking deep, deep into the pillar, into its subtlest composition, so you can clearly see every atom or molecule in that

pillar. Each and every one of them you can separate and put it back in the right place—that much clarity is there. In the *Lamrim Chenmo* Tsongkhapa describes,

This is part of the quality which I defined as clear mind. So there is no reason why we have to add clarity of the object here. I already mentioned it as a quality of the mind. As for the joy, that is the result of this meditation, so there's no point in adding that here either.

That way you have Tsongkhapa's idea of the two qualities: clarity and complete focus.

In short, the clarity of mind—a faultless crystal clear glass with completely pure water, or a cloudless sky in full sunshine—*zhi nay* should be able to bring about and that is the clarity we are talking about. The object of meditation is clear too, you should be able to see deep, deep inside. You can get to the point where you think, 'I can practically count each and every molecule.' That is the meditation itself, [the stable focus]. Single-pointed meditation needs those two qualities. When you say clarity and focus, that's what is meant.

*Beginning of focus.* Then you meditate. That means you totally focus, never waver, never lose the focus. At the beginning we never have more than a second of that. That's the beginning of focus.

TWO MENTAL FACULTIES:  
MINDFULNESS AND META-ALERTNESS<sup>79</sup>

*Mindfulness or remembrance.* You need a clear mind, unshakable and not forgetting. When I use the word ‘remembering’, I don’t mean remembering like remember how to ride a bicycle. If you learn how to ride a bicycle, no matter if it has been a little while, you can ride it again. So, I don’t mean that type of remembering, but rather constantly, continuously being in touch with the thing. If you are not in touch, it means you have lost your focus, you have forgotten your focal point.

*The example of an elephant.* You have to tie your mind like you tie an elephant, with a thin thread, not with a strong, big rope. If use a strong, big rope, the elephant will break everything. Look at those Indians who train the elephants. They will use a very thin thread and the elephant will look at it and watch it, no matter what happens. So that’s why this example is given. The focal point is like a pillar, you yourself are like an elephant, and the remembrance or the mind is like a thread that is always tied.

So the most important thing is focusing. We may use the word remembrance or mindfulness. In Tibetan it is called *dren pa*, which means: just thinking, remembering. No matter how long you are meditating, you are not thinking anything else, just focusing. That really is what is meant here.

*Three qualities.* Mindfulness/remembrance has to have three qualities:

- The observed object should be familiar.
- What to do is, one should not forget the object.
- It's function is to keep you from wandering.

Alan Wallace uses the word 'mindfulness' and calls it 'the ability to sustain voluntary attention continuously upon a familiar object without forgetfulness or distraction.' I think it is a very nice way of using that term. Of course mindfulness is used in other contexts as well, like the mindfulness meditation. Therefore I usually used the word remembrance.

Meditation has to be on a *familiar object*, because if the object is not familiar, you can't meditate on it. That's why, when we recommend a Buddha image, we recommend you first to look but then build a mental image and get used to that. That makes it familiar to the person. Focusing on a new object is difficult; a familiar one is easier.

Remembrance or has to have *continuation*. There should not be any forgetfulness or distraction at all. That is a big thing; it is a black and white cut here in the meditation. If you forget your object of meditation you are not meditating. You may be sitting very nicely in the meditation posture, but you are not meditating, because you have lost the focal point. Even if you sit only for five minutes, within those five minutes you may have three hundred sessions of meditation. Nothing wrong. For us, that is usual, very

normal. If you try to follow the thoughts, how long you can do it?

For me personally, when waking up in the morning, when the clock goes and you don't want to wake up, that's a nice time to see where the thoughts are going. The thoughts are going towards going to sleep and you trace them. And then alertness comes up: you have to get up! That's an situation where you can easily follow your thoughts, because there are only two little things going on, so easy to keep track of. On the other hand, when you are sitting in the plane or driving, your thoughts can go for a long run and you don't even know where your mind has gone.

So the quality of remembrance or mindfulness is a continuous voluntary attention. It should be voluntary, because otherwise you have to force something and that wouldn't work. It should be continuous, without forgetfulness, without distraction. If there's distraction, then the clarity is lost. If you forget your object of meditation, you are gone. And if you have to force it, it becomes faulty meditation. Then it's not like a big bird soaring, but like a hummingbird trying to stay in one spot in the air with a huge effort.

*Meta-alertness.* This is another technical term. If you have that stable focus, as a result you will get some interesting little extra mental faculty, which will be able to watch whether you are focusing or not. You are looking at the mind. And when you look at the mind at that time, you see that different thoughts are coming up. So you have to stop all the thoughts, and I'll tell you how.

Somebody once told me it is like peeling an onion: you keep on peeling and peeling the layers.. Likewise when you have stopped all other thoughts you are left with the raw mind. The raw mind itself is what you are trying to remember, to recognize and focus on all the time.

So, when you keep on focusing with this mindfulness for a longer period, as the result you will develop another mental faculty which is sort of watching, like a spy. Alan used the term meta-alertness. That is academic language, I believe. It describes ‘the ability to monitor the quality of attention, swiftly recognizing whether it has succumbed to either excitation or laxity.’ The job of this particular mental faculty is to watch whether you are gone in the direction of one of the two problems: wandering-excitation or sinking-laxity.

These two mental faculties are the key for meditation.

(2) WHAT IS A WRONG MEDITATION  
[AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT]<sup>80</sup>

TWO OBSTACLES

*Wandering or excitation and sinking or laxity.* These are the two obstacles you’re going to face. There are only these two directions you can lose your meditation in: you can think too much and you are gone, or you can fall asleep.

Our normal untrained mind is completely imbalanced and dysfunctional due to our vulnerability to excitation [*gö ba*]<sup>81</sup> on the one hand and laxity [*ying ba*],<sup>82</sup> being too much relaxed, on the other hand. I borrow again the terminology from Alan Wallace: ‘attention disorder.’ Nice. Very

unusual from the traditional teaching point of view, but he's right. It's brilliant. He says, 'These attention disorders are to be remedied through the cultivation of stability and vividness.'

Each of these two obstacles has to be divided into two categories, gross and subtle. This division is not important in the beginning. In the beginning the problem will challenge us automatically, but it will be gross level only. The subtle level will not challenge us until we have overcome the gross wandering or sinking, *i.e.* the gross excitation or laxity.

In connection with dealing with these two problems, we have five faults of meditation. These five faults have to be overcome by eight antidotes, eight awarenesses. When these five faults are dealt with by these eight awarenesses, we reach certain different levels: there are nine stages in this process. These nine stages are connected with our meditation through four mindfulness points, the four types of attention.<sup>83</sup>

*How to focus.* Do you hold tight or do you relax? If you hold too tight, problems will arise. I briefly told you about the two problems: the wandering and the sinking mind<sup>84</sup> In order to balance them, deeply, at the bottom of your heart, you should be holding a little tight, but on the surface you should be very relaxed. It's like two layers.

If you are holding too tight, the mind will begin to wander. Then you make it a little loose. When you make it too loose, your mind will begin to sink, and in that case you

try to make it a little tighter. So you have to adjust it. It's like tuning a musical instrument, you know, you have to keep on adjusting. Likewise you have to tune your mind. If it's too tight, you cannot focus, you're going to wander, so you have to make it a little loose; and if it's too loose, you're going to sink; so make it a little tighter. The great Chandragomin has said,

If I force it, my mind will wander.  
If I let it go, my mind will sink. So what should  
I do?

You have to balance how much you make it tight, how much you make it loose.

When you are able to bring yourself to that balanced level, you [can use different methods for improving the meditation].

*Stopping discursive thoughts.* There are a number of ways to do that, but one is particularly interesting. You can just cut them off. The example given by the Buddha is an interesting funny little story. (This is what I call 'Buddhist Biblical Stories.' That doesn't mean it's not true.)

*The story of a competition.* In earlier times there were two Indian artists. One used to use arrows and shoot, and the other one two swords. When the swords were moving it looked like a wheel. With that he could avert and stop anything that would come towards him. One day these two had a competition between them. The arrow man started. He had six arrows and started shooting them at the other

guy. The other guy threw his swords around and whenever an arrow came through, he raised the swords and they cut the arrow off and pushed it out. The arrow man was focused and so was the sword fighter. Both were strongly focused, so no matter how many arrows the arrow man shot, the other guy deflected them all. Finally he only had one arrow left. Now, this arrow man had a wife. The wife said, 'Don't shoot. Let me dance first. When I look back to you, I will lie down on the ground and at that time you shoot.' She went out and started dancing. The other guy was ready to move the swords. She could not draw his attention immediately. It took a little time. But when she got total attention, she suddenly lied down, looked at her husband and he shot his last arrow. The other guy couldn't use his swords fast enough, because he had lost focus. Though he raised them, he couldn't stop the arrow and he got hit. As he was dying he himself said, 'The arrow man did not kill me, his wife killed me.'

This was given as an example for how to do the meditation. Any thought that comes in, you focus on and throw it out. What does that do? The thought cannot continue. You cut the continuation of those thoughts and so at the end, the stable mind without those thoughts will come. That level is what you should be able to focus on.

*Tracing the thought.* There is also another choice. You can look carefully at any thought that comes up. Follow it: where it goes, what happens. Keep on looking at it. And if you are tracing the thought, at the end of that tracing you will find that the thought disappears and it becomes a

void. When you have traced the thoughts and suddenly it becomes empty, and if that void is continuing while your mind is focusing, there is that sort of clarity of nothing. When the clarity on that empty or nothing is continuing, then whether you are at the beginning of receiving that void or whether you focus for a little while longer, there is no difference of either being strong or weak. The same level continues.

When you have that continuity, your mind level has been changed and there is a new state. This state is called *ne gyu* 'the steady and moving becoming one.'<sup>85</sup> There's no difference between remaining with and tracing the thoughts; they have become oneness. If you can do that it will probably be quite good.

Or you can keep on tracing the thoughts, see where they go, what happens, the way it happens, when it happens. Just keep following them and you will see that in the end they will come back. The traditional teachers will give you the following example. They say it is like having a bird in a cage and taking with you on a ship on the ocean. If you let the bird fly it will go 'caw, caw, caw,' it goes around everywhere but cannot land anywhere; it's all water. So finally, because there is no other place to land, the bird will come back and land on the same boat. Likewise, if you follow the thoughts around, they cannot get anywhere and after a little while you begin to realize that you've been running around in your thoughts and it comes back. This way is to let the thought go and change, change and change; let's see how far it can go. It can't go far; after a little while, it has to come back.

That is, I believe, how you can play with the mind. That is what the Bengali *dobas*<sup>86</sup> already tell you. You trace your thoughts and finally you find the mind itself because there's nothing else. Gyelwa Yanggönpa<sup>87</sup> says,

Don't consider all these thoughts as faults at all,  
nor try not to have any thoughts. Leave the mind  
alone and your meditation will land on shamatha.

*Six techniques of how to meditate on the mind—in similes.* There are six different ways of looking at the mind when you are meditating. Each one of those six points is given to us in the form of a metaphor, because we can't talk about the mind directly. There's nothing to see, nothing to catch, it's not tangible, there's no shape, no color.

1. You leave your mind just *like sunshine free of clouds*. What does that mean? When you are looking at the sunrays in an absolutely clear, cloudless sky, the sun rays are very strong. Just like that is our mind. The nature of the mind is luminous. When you talk about leaving the mind just like sunshine without clouds, it means that the nature of the mind is luminous like the sun and should not be covered with thoughts and sinking or wandering.

2. Should one make strong efforts of recognizing that state, or should one go slow? Your mind should be *like a hawk*. When big birds like hawks and vultures fly they don't have to make much effort; they can soar. They just glide and don't have to move their wings much. Just like a hawk, you should not have to make much effort at focusing. You should really focus, but without having to do it forcefully. In the example, if a big bird does not put any effort into

staying in the air, it is going to fall down, right? Likewise the mind should not be forced completely, yet it should not be completely relaxed either. That's why I said earlier you should hold tight from the depth of the mind. When you have the tight focus from the depth, you really have clarity. But on the surface you should be relaxed. That does not mean you've gone completely out of control either. You are relaxed, but there is mindfulness [*dren pa*] and there is meta-alertness [*she shin*].

*Meta-alertness.* I can't explain this easily. When you learn how to focus, as the result of that you will pick up one little part of your mind that begins to see whether you are focusing or not. You immediately become alert. As the result of that alertness you will find a little mind that is watching whether you are really focusing or you are losing your focus. Beginners like us should have an alarm clock or something to make a sound every two or three minutes; that makes us remember. But when you are holding the mind at that higher level, that mental faculty has developed and that does the job.

3. Your mind should be left very stable, stable *like a big ocean*. On the ocean sometimes a lot of wind comes. The surface of the water may have a little movement but the water itself remains stable; nothing moves deeply. Just like that you have to keep your mind. What does that mean? When you are focusing on the mind and thoughts come up, maybe your attention is drawn so those subtle thoughts a little bit, but gross thoughts will not move your mind. Another example given is that when you have a clean, clear,

big nice water tank with a fish in it, the fish can move but it doesn't shake the water too much.

4. The metaphor here is a *little kid in a museum*. How do small children observe the objects in the museum? They will see all the bright, colorful and big things, the rough designs, but they will not be able to see the details. Just seeing the bright things, they look without becoming involved in details. Just like that, when we are focusing on the mind, we may see the gross-level mental thoughts, like attachment or hatred or obsession and we acknowledge these but they should not be able to disturb our mind. You just keep on focusing. You do not get into the details of what is appearing, and you're not allowing those strong negative or positive emotions to interfere with or influence you mind.

5. Your mind should be *like a flying sparrow, leaving no trace*. When a bird flies in the air, it will leave no footprint. Just like that, the meditator should not be moved by joy, suffering or even neutral feelings. In other words, you will experience joy, yes, you will see the suffering, yes, but don't let the mind be influenced by that. Don't let the mind go under their control.

6. Your mind should be *like a nice, smooth, comfortable cloth*. A pure cotton shirt is rough in the beginning; when you keep on washing it, it will become soft and gentle. Likewise in the beginning the mind is rough, but when you keep on meditating it becomes soft, really soft, and you don't have the roughness of hatred or obsession, nor even of the wandering or sinking mind.

These are the six different ways of looking at the mind, six different meditation techniques. It roughly shows *how* to look into the mind.

*Relative, or conventional mind.* After looking at the mind that way, what are you going to find? According to the first Panchen Lama, while you are looking at this, the mind is not blocked by any other thoughts and there is no sinking or wandering. It's pure, raw clarity. There is no physical point. It is just clarity. Therefore, it should be empty like space. You will be able to see all good and bad, suffering and joy, *etc.* But you will see them *like a reflection in a mirror*. The reflection is there, you can see it, but it doesn't affect you. It is possible to gain such a level of concentrated equipoise at our ordinary layperson's level. And that is quite a strong and good focusing.

On top of that, you can develop physical and mental joy [Tib. *shin jangs*]. I talked about that before.<sup>88</sup> When you gain this physical and mental joy, the level will be called *zhi nay* or shamatha. Without the physical and mental joy, it's not shamatha. The basis is this clear focusing.

That is what is called 'mind.' We can clearly understand and imagine, yet we cannot catch and introduce the mind, neither can we really explain it. Many people will say that when you recognize your mind, you become enlightened. The first Panchen Lama says,

Many people will tell you this is a teaching that will deliver the total enlightenment in your hand. It is a very good point where you can develop the

meditative point of shamatha, but it is just the introduction of the relative mind.<sup>89</sup>

So he calls it the introduction of relative mind, nothing big, just an introduction. What we have just told you is what you have, how it is, how you look it, and that is just the relative mind. This is nothing big, just simple mind. This is the reality, the nature of the mind. You can almost see it when you follow it. You follow the thoughts and you almost see it, yet you cannot catch it and you cannot say 'this is it.' It is the mind.

It is simply mind, yet it is capable, tremendously capable. You can make that mind into wisdom nature, or into compassion nature, you can make that mind into hatred nature, or into obsession nature, because by its nature it is a very neutral, lucid state. There is no color, no shape, nothing. So any color you put in will change it. So what it is? It is the mind. When you are really focusing, when you really get into it, there's really nothing to be explained.

Now, many people may think at this point, 'Oh, yeah, this is the wisdom of emptiness.' But not yet. On top of that you'll have to look at emptiness and all that. However, does it have the quality and the capability of delivering total enlightenment? Yes, it has.

Does everybody have it or do we have it and others don't? Every single sentient being has it. It is not a special human quality only, every living being has it. And ever since we exist we never had a single moment without this one.

When do I see it? I see it when I die or I see it if I meditate on it. When I meditate on it, while I've collected all my airs in my central channel, then I'll see it. When I'm alive I usu-

ally cannot see it. Whether your life is a good one or a bad one, whether you are a human being or a tiger or a snake or something, that doesn't change anything in this quality of mind's reality. It is pure like sunshine. It is like gold. Gold normally doesn't tarnish much. If it does it is because of other materials mixing with it. But even then, the nature of the pure, clean shining gold still remains. Likewise, we all get these negative emotions, but that doesn't tarnish the nature of this primordial mind itself. That's why mind's nature is luminous and all its faults are temporary. Because of that we have a chance, an opportunity to be able to make ourselves pure. In the *Hevajra Tantra* it says,

There is nothing to be explained in words, nothing really to talk, but some kind of introduction has been given by the masters. And by my good fortune, may I be able to find it.

I guess that's it. This is a brief introduction of mind as a focusing point to develop shamatha. The other day I introduced you to the Buddha image as the object of shamatha, and today it was the mind, so now you have both.

*Conclusion.* If you look back at where we have reached, we've come to the point where we are beginning to focus. I gave you two different focusing points for this *zhi nay*: you can focus on an object like an image of the Buddha. I gave you detailed reasons why it should be the image of Buddha rather than anything else. Then I gave you the mind as a focusing point. Maybe it was a little too much for you

people, but I was counting not only on what I said and what you heard, but also on you reading the transcripts.<sup>90</sup>

*Summary.* I talked to you about what clarity means and I gave you the example of the spotless crystal glass with the pollution-less pure water with the cloudless sunshine.<sup>91</sup> Clarity here is not the clarity of the object you are looking at, but the clarity of yourself, the observer, the watcher, the meditator, the mind itself. In terms of knowledge, the definition of mind is *clear knowledge*. I mentioned to you the example of looking at a pillar. You are not only looking at the pillar, but with your mind you are able to understand every molecule in there. So, with regard to clarity and knowledge, I am talking about a certain level of clarity and knowledge. It is not just clarity in the sense that there is nothing blocking. The mind itself is clear and lucid, yet drunk with joy, the joy of reunion. At that level, this is the object to be found.

That object is supposed to be observed. How?

- Leave it in its natural state, don't try to make anything, let it be, observe it.
- Look at the clarity. It is not only just that NBB-state but the clarity of the mind itself that is like clean crystal glass. Look: is it with fingerprint, or without fingerprint? Is it like pure water with little mud in it, or without mud in it? Is it sunshine with a little cloud cover, or without cloud cover? That's how you look at the clarity.

- Any thought that pops up, you try to recognize and then meditate. There we mentioned a couple of different things. I told you about the duel between the arrow man and the sword fighter.<sup>92</sup> I did not tell you that story for no reason. People remember better from stories. It gives you a very good example of losing focus.
- When dealing with the thoughts, either you cut the thought or you follow it and see where it leads to. I gave you the example of the bird on a ship.<sup>93</sup>

For laypeople like us, the recommendation is to act like the arrow man and the sword guy, meaning: cut the thoughts. And when you get used to it, you can try the way of following the thoughts. Although they give you the choice, the recommendation is in the beginning to cut them.

When you are watching it, the nature of that mind should not be like you have fallen asleep or you have fainted. If you fall asleep or you faint there is no memory. When there's no memory, then it is not right.

Then I also mentioned to you six different ways of looking at the mind when you are meditating.<sup>94</sup> I gave the example of the sunshine that is free of clouds. Another example is that big bird soaring in the air, without having to put in too much effort. These little beautiful humming birds, you know, flap their wings so much, but the bigger ones go by their own power. They don't have to do so much flapping; they just keep soaring and they manage. In the example it means: don't work too tight, but still try to hold it. If you try to hold it too tight, you have the problem of

excitation, the wandering mind will come. And if you are too loose, the laxity, or sinking mind, comes in. You have to think, 'If I hold too tight, then there's a danger of losing my focus.'

### (3) THE LENGTH OF THE SESSIONS<sup>95</sup>

#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Now I'd like to give you an opportunity to ask questions on that, particularly if you have any on focusing on the mind.

**Audience:** Rimpoche, you said that this was the introduction to the relative mind?

**Rimpoche:** Yes, this is absolutely the introduction into the relative mind, not the absolute.

**Audience:** My question is basically if you're doing that method of watching the thoughts to get back to the original source, what's the difference between that and just ordinarily having discursive thoughts, following the chain of daydreaming that goes on and on. How do you ever get back to the original mind from watching your thoughts?

**Rimpoche:** If I remember correctly, I did talk to you about the six different ways of looking at the mind itself. I'm glad you asked that question because I thought I may have to repeat that. There might also be some confusion between the six different ways of having a mind<sup>96</sup> and six different ways of observing the mind. I talked about leaving the mind as it is.

These points are not simply talking about mind, they are linked up with a practice. In particular, among all other practices, these are very importantly linked with the guru-yoga practice. Every tradition has different ways of practicing guru-yoga. In our case, we have an excellent guru-yoga. The elaborate one is the *Lama Chöpa*, for the medium level we have *Ganden Lha Gyema, the hundred deities of the land of joy*, and the *Six-session yoga* also is a guru-yoga. At the end of the guru-yoga you dissolve the guru, who is the nature of all enlightened beings, to yourself. Don't let me talk about details. I just have to link it up here, that's why.

There are a lot of different ways of dissolving. In the case of the *Ganden Lha Gyema* or *Lama Chöpa*, everything and everybody dissolves into the principal guru, who could be in the Lama Tsongkhapa form or in the form of Lama Lozang Tubwang Dorjechang.<sup>97</sup> In the *Lama Chöpa*, the whole tree dissolves to the lama and finally the lama dissolves to yourself from the crown. In the *Ganden Lha Gyema*, the two disciples dissolve from the sides and then the guru Tsongkhapa himself dissolves to you. And in the *Six-session yoga*, guru Vajradhara dissolves to you. In certain sadhanas the lama melts in the form of light, like red or blue light the size of a bird's egg, and dissolves to you, right? You all know that.

At that level, that very object, whether it is light or whatever it is, is dissolving to you. And that dissolving is not simply just dissolving. If you look into the dissolving system, it is union. It is sort of a reunion of pure mind. I would like to use the word *primordial mind* or *the nature of*

*the enlightened mind*—the primordial mind and the present life’s mind combining together. This is a big union—after having been separated for at least one whole life, it is a big reunion.

Because of that union, because of—very important—faith, understanding, devotion, all combined together, the mind is brought to the level of the NBB state. That is a state of tremendous joy. The mind is almost drunk of joy, but not crazy; it is almost like crazy but not gone mad; it is lucid, absolutely clear. That level is called NBB state. I gave a further description of the NBB state during one of those Lama Chöpa teachings that I did in Ann Arbor a few years ago in a winter retreat.<sup>98</sup>

**Audience:** I have two questions actually. One was in the analogy you were using about the bird flying off the boat in the ocean and landing back down. What is the boat?

**Rimpoche:** The example says that a bird cannot land anywhere because there’s all water, so it has to land on the same boat. Just like that the mind runs but it cannot run and reach anywhere, it has to come back to our own mind itself. If you let it go, it cannot get anywhere very far, it has to come back to the same point. Unless of course we have total knowledge, total enlightenment. Then mind will know everything and nothing returns. Until then, when we are focusing single-pointedly, thoughts go on changing, changing, changing, and finally come back to the thought itself. So I should say the boat is the mind and the bird is the thoughts.

**Audience:** When you're meditating and your eyes are open, should your eyes be focused clearly or soft, like out of focus?

**Rimpoche:** The question is whether we are training our eye consciousness or our mental consciousness. As it's not training of the eyes, therefore, whatever you are doing with your eyes, closing them or looking ahead, is fine. But let us recollect how we should sit. We said we should sit with the seven-fold posture of Vairochana Buddha, who is the perfection of form. I don't believe Vairochana has open eyes like staring ahead. It is a soft way of looking. The eyes are not shut. There are certain traditions that will teach you to look, because certain meditation texts literally translated focusing as visual focusing. Tsongkhapa objects to that and says,

You're not training your eyes, you are training  
your mind.

Why you are making your eyes painful and cry  
for nothing?

So it is sort of softly looking, with eyes half closed, looking straight from the nostril level to an imaginary spot about five feet or six feet away, depending on how tall you are; it is sort of your body length. That's what is recommended. Further, it is said that meditating on pebbles and trees and things like that does not serve much purpose. Meditating on Buddha as the physical form of the object of refuge has a spiritual value over the training of the mind to focus.

Then, as for meditating on the mind, there's nothing to look at. It is empty. Empty, lucid and clear, those are

the three characteristics of the mind.<sup>99</sup> Free of any physical form is the *empty*. Free of any obstacles that block is the *clarity*. Everything can be seen and understood, like a mirror picks up reflections, is the *lucidity* or *awareness*. We are used to picking up everything as personal. If a mirror picks up things, there is nothing personal. Likewise, So pick up things, but don't take it personal.

**Audience:** You were talking about looking at those moments when you're waking up. I was wondering, is that part of gaining the familiarity of the object of your mind? It's sort of like studying your mind, but it's not the same as sitting and working in meditation.

**Rimpoche:** Well, it can be the same as sitting and working meditation, though you are lying down. It gives you the idea of the mind that follows the thoughts. There is the thought, the addiction, and its effect; that is like gravity that pulls you down. And then comes the alertness that you've got to catch the plane and you're going to miss it. So your mind can watch back and forth where it's going.

**Audience:** Those moments when I am actually watching my mind during the day, sometimes when all of a sudden it becomes much clearer to me in the course of the day what my mind is doing, rather than when I'm actually sitting, is that its own form of meditation?

**Rimpoche:** I don't say it is meditation, but it's watching and seeing what happens. Sometimes, the thoughts are running, and you watch, 'Where are you going?' Then it

means you are challenging that running thought face to face and it disappears. It looks like the thoughts shy away from you. That's a way of cutting the thoughts.

**Audience:** What is that mind that is watching you meditate? Is it like a supermind that's watching that mind that's having the normal discursive thoughts?

**Rimpoche:** It is a little mental faculty that pops up. I believe we called it meta-alertness. It is not the major mind that is focusing, and it's not the remembrance or mindfulness either. Rather it is a mental faculty that pops up to be able to see whether you are focusing on the subject itself or whether you are gone to excitation or laxity. Right now we do not know what that mental faculty is. Why? That will develop as the result of mindfulness. When you have a lot of mindfulness, as a result of that, this particular mental faculty pops up. It's like you develop an extra sense. Somehow your mind is clever enough to produce an extra sense that has no other responsibility except seeing whether you are overtaken by the wandering or sinking mind. That's the one who is watching.

**Audience:** When you talk about meditation on the mind and you call it empty, lucid and clear, and yet you call it relative mind, not absolute mind, I was just confused about that. If you actually saw that mind, wouldn't you be enlightened already in a sense?

**Rimpoche:** No.

**Audience:** Because it's relative mind?

**Rimpoche:** Absolutely. It is just mind! Because it is just mind. Seeing mind alone is not enlightenment. Seeing mind alone comes way before shamatha develops with us. Seeing mind and its reality, that is wisdom and that's comes way after. Seeing the base mind and the quality of emptiness combined together, that becomes absolute mind nature. That is a big difference. You can read that in the mahamudra root text, where it says,

You will see the mind clearly, yet you cannot point it out and say this is it, nor can you perceive it, nor you can catch it.<sup>100</sup>

and:

A lot of Tibetan meditators will say this is the ultimate, that this will deliver the total enlightenment in your hand. However, I, Lozang Chökyi, the First Panchen Lama, say this is a great way to learn shamatha and I say this is simply an introduction to the relative mind.<sup>101</sup>

Meditating on the mind is a great way to develop *zhi nay*, shamatha, and this is a simple introduction of the relative mind. The wisdom of emptiness, the freedom from either the existentialist view or the nihilistic view—until you establish that on top of seeing the relative mind, you get nowhere. That is the difference between wait and watch until the cows come home, or do something instead.

**Audience:** This meditation that we're doing and bringing the joy, that seeing the mind clearly and that clarity, is that what we have to develop first and then use that mind to meditate on emptiness to reach enlightenment?

**Rimpoche:** That's right. That's absolutely so. Without the stability developed through shamatha you can never gain the wisdom part. This is always the case. I think that came at the beginning of our talk, remember?

**Audience:** Thank you, holy teacher.

**Rimpoche:** Huh?

**Audience:** Thank you very much. I've been looking to hear some of these answers, thank you.

**Rimpoche:** Thank you.

**Audience:** If you are able to achieve the single-pointedness of mind on the mind and you have that clarity and your body is starting to experience the joy that you spoke of, and you go to start doing your analysis of the nature of the mind, can you speak a little bit more about when you start bringing the conceptual thought or discursive thought, how you don't lose the single-pointedness on the mind?

**Rimpoche:** That is what the Zen people will tell you exactly. When you have the fish in the water, the fish moves and the water doesn't shake. Exactly like that, a single thought will come and analyze and it moves within that mind. That 'fish' will not go out of the water and it doesn't shake the water, and you will be able to see it.

Another way of looking according to this teaching is that even though you have certain thoughts, nothing is happening at the deeper level. So at the deeper level you have a strongly focusing, yet you have a single mind that moves like the fish in the water and begins to analyze.

**Audience 1:** I've heard of a type of meditation which has been described as panoramic. And my understanding of that is, that you don't just focus on let's say your breath or an image of the Buddha, but whatever is in your field of all your senses, you let that all come in or be there and you're expanding your focus. I suppose if you're not careful you could completely lose your focus. Does this fit into the framework that you've been talking about, or is this a completely different subject? I saw it in the context of *dzog chen*.

**Rimpoche:** I cannot comment because my knowledge in *dzog chen* is zero. But when you reach to a certain level you can have panoramic views and you can have the *ta me gi she ba*.<sup>102</sup> If you practice *dzog chen* you're probably familiar with that term. (And then you call it *cig-car-ba*, it's not constantly following but coming all together). These states may be visible for highly developed people. But on our level, as far as I know, I don't know how it works.

**Audience 1:** So forget about it for now?

**Rimpoche:** Well, you can try. If you can keep the focus, it's fine. If you are losing the thread of your thoughts, then it's not suitable for you. Make your own judgment.



# V

## DEALING WITH LAXITY AND EXCITATION

### REVIEW

What did we do so far? We introduced you to two types of meditation: concentrated and analytical meditation. A lot of people say that concentrated meditation is meditation and analytical meditation might not be meditation. But if your purpose is to liberate yourself and others, you cannot do without analytical meditation. Here is why: you cannot gain wisdom just with concentrated meditation. Wisdom requires tremendous analyzing. On the other hand, you cannot develop wisdom without stabilizing and concentrating either. You won't be able to focus or else, you will lose your focus. Without focus, no matter how wise and clever you may be, you cannot achieve anything.

So, first and foremost, we have to pick up the shamatha or *zhi nay* meditation. We gave you the reasons why it is called *zhi* and *nay*.

*Finding the object of focus* A very important thing is: what to focus on. We covered that quite well. If not, we could simply say 'Meditate' and you'd sit down, make your body gesture, sit straight and do it. But do what? You cannot just sit there and maybe, or maybe not, close your eyes. That part is the biggest problem. In the west, we do have medita-

tion and that is great. 20-30 years ago, no one knew about meditation and even if you knew you would probably let no one see you do it, as though it was some kind of criminal activity and you had to do it behind people's back. Nowadays people do it openly. But still, what are you doing? You are meditating, you are sitting there. If I came in and asked, 'Hello, what are you doing?' Really, what would you be thinking at that time? Probably nothing. That is the question we never bother asking ourselves. We think we know something about meditation. The people who teach you meditation may burn incense, beat gongs, and then say, 'Stretch and sit straight.' And yes, you sit beautifully, with crossed legs, in lotus style, hands together, but I cannot see what you are thinking. If you are not thinking anything, you are not meditating, honestly speaking.

I have my usual example for that: when I was very young one of my teachers told me one day, 'Come over here. I show you somebody who is meditating.' It was near my cave in Tibet. There was a lizard sitting on a rock, sitting there with mouth open, taking in air. That kind of sitting is what I now call 'lizard meditation.' And that is not meditation!

When you meditate, you must engage something in your mind. So when I am talking about concentrated meditation, it means that the mind must concentrate on something. If the mind stays blank it is not concentration.

*Focusing on an image.* You need an object or subject of meditation. The recommended object is the image of Shakyamuni Buddha. Why not my girl friend's face, my boy

friend's face? There are zillions of reasons. If only focusing itself is your purpose, the old Tibetan masters used to say that you can focus on anything from the yak's horns to the cow dung. If that is so you can meditate on your girl friend's face. Maybe that makes your concentration even easier than anything else. But it is not going to accumulate any virtue. That is why it is recommended to concentrate on the image of Buddha's body.

*Focusing on the mind.* A lot of people would like to meditate on the mind. That is very important. It is more difficult than meditating on Buddha's image. There we at least have an image that we can draw in our imagination and that is something to think of and to hold. Right or wrong, good shape or bad shape, at least you have something. If when you try to meditate on Buddha all you get is a yellow lump, even that will do in the beginning. You can gradually make it better and more clear. It is much more difficult to meditate on the mind. With the Buddha image you can imagine the image. If you can't imagine that, you can look at a Buddha statue or thangka, then close your eyes and try to bring something up in the mind; so that is quite easy. But if you are looking at the mind you don't get that. It is almost like looking at a blank. That's why I am warning people about just sitting blank. There is a lot of talk about space-like emptiness and so on. That is a different story. Don't bring that together with our subject right now. If you do you will be the loser.

If you meditate on the mind, it is very difficult to find your object. I told you in the first course about the six dif-

ferent ways of looking at the mind, given in the form of metaphors.<sup>103</sup> One of them was like an eagle soaring. You try to draw a conclusion from all that, and sit and try to concentrate on that thing called mind.

The instructions say, ‘Don’t close your eyes when you meditate’, but if it is easier, you can close your eyes, think over the six metaphors of the mind and try to imagine that you are observing the mind. For example, the one of the eagle suggests not pushing too much, but lingering around, overlooking. But then, what do you see? You’ll probably see an eagle flying! [laughs]. If that is so, you are not finding your object of focus.

Another example is cutting off the thoughts. The metaphor is the fight between the arrow man and the sword fighter. The sword fighter is cutting off the arrows that the arrow man is shooting at him. Then he gets attracted by something else and his concentration fails and the next arrow kills him. When you reflect on that as an example for meditating on the mind, you might see in your mind two or three people, playing out a drama. But that is not focusing on the mind! Therefore, when you get down to meditating on the mind, it is very difficult to actually find the mind as the object. There is no image of the mind.

*Relying on visualizing or feeling.* Some people have difficulty anyway with visualizing. Visualization is considered meditation in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, one of the best ways of meditating. We have been doing that for over a thousand years. If people find it hard to visualize they have to focus more on the feeling. When you cannot draw up a

mental image, you have to rely on feeling. You know yourself best.

In my case I have become used to drawing mental images, because I have been trained to visualize. So for me that is not difficult. I may not be as great though as some other people. There is somebody in New York who can visualize a mandala so precisely that when the prescribed measurements from the texts are two millimeters out they will notice and say 'Rimpoche, it doesn't work here. It is becoming crooked.' So I had to go out and get some experts in mandala drawing and figure out why it doesn't fit. I can't visualize as precisely as that, but I can visualize.

If you have no mental image in your visualization you have to focus on feelings. Then look, what do you feel? Good or bad? And who is feeling? There is just an acknowledgment of something being there, there is somebody who felt something, there was an understanding. Something acknowledged pain or joy. That, *just that*, is mind. There is no image, no drawing, nothing tangible, no shape, no color. When you get that, you have to recognize it and acknowledge it as the *relative mind*. Not the absolute mind. The mind itself. You have to be satisfied at that point. If you are not satisfied but search for more, you won't get anything. Just the satisfying point of that is the mind. Once you get used to it and pick that up, you will begin to deal with it and not lose it. Then, whether this mind is permanent or impermanent, you can bring that in later, without losing the focus.

This is the beginning of finding the object on which you can concentrate.

Then you try to develop *zhi nay* on that basis. That has problems. The two major ones are: too much focusing, called excitation or wandering mind, and too little focusing, called laxity or sinking mind. These also have to be dealt with on the gross and on the subtle level. How do we handle those? That is what we are going to be talking about for the next series of evenings.

The reason why you have to meditate and why, in Buddhism, you need to develop specifically shamatha, or *zhi nay*, is that you need it in order to gain wisdom. The purpose is not shamatha itself. That is the difference between Buddha and the early Indian teachers.

For those early Indian teachers shamatha was considered the most important meditation. Then that was further intensified, so there are up to seventy different stages. That means, there are the four form and the four formless realms<sup>104</sup> and each of these has preliminary, actual and conclusion stages, which again have subdivisions and that way it can go up to seventy. In those systems these stages are used as measurements for spiritual development.

Buddha does not recommend meditation for the purpose of just attaining concentration. At the stage of shamatha he shifts the object of focus on to wisdom in order to attack the root of samsara and becoming liberated. That is the difference between Buddha and the earlier Indian teachers.

C) WHAT TO DO AFTER YOU FOCUS ON AN OBJECT  
OF MEDITATION

What problems can you expect and how do you take care of them? It are problems everybody will have. The moment

you try to meditate and focus, you're not going to be able to focus much at all, not even for a couple of seconds. Then, from the moment that you do focus, why can't you stay focused? The reason is, you're going to have the two problems: excitation and sinking, or laxity]. (When you begin to look carefully, there is a question of whether laxity is the right word or not. We will look into that.) I'm outlining the major power points here:

- When laxity and excitation arise, what shall we do?
- When laxity and excitation do not arise, what shall we do?

I) WHAT TO DO WHEN SINKING AND  
EXCITATION ARISE <sup>105</sup>

FIRST, THE BIGGEST PROBLEM WE WILL HAVE IS, WE WILL NOT RECOGNIZE EITHER OF THEM WHEN THEY ARISE. THE SECOND PROBLEM IS NOT A BIG ISSUE RIGHT NOW, BUT IT WILL BE LATER. THAT IS, EVEN WHEN YOU RECOGNIZE ONE OF THESE TWO, YOU DON'T DEAL WITH IT. SO, WE HAVE TWO OUTLINES HERE:

- Applying the antidote for failing to notice sinking and excitation
- Applying the antidote for failing to try to eliminate them even though they are noticed

(I) APPLYING THE ANTIDOTE FOR FAILING TO  
NOTICE SINKING AND EXCITATION

Let's deal with the first problem, which is not recognizing

a problem. We are dealing with two mental faculties, one called excitation, and the other called laxity. There are two outlines:

- The defining characteristics of sinking and excitation
- The way to develop introspection [meta-alertness] that recognizes them while meditating.

(A) THE DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS OF SINKING  
AND EXCITATION

*Excitation or wandering mind*<sup>106</sup>

What is excitation? In English, we use these words easily, but when you listen carefully, you may ask, what are we really talking about? Here, excitation is part of obsession or attachment<sup>107</sup> and mind. Mind somehow loses its attention because you've become attracted to something. Someone over in India, about two thousand years ago, asked one of those great masters, one of the six ornaments and two excellences,<sup>108</sup> Asanga, 'What is the definition of this 'excitation' you talk about?' Asanga replied,

Excitation has a mind with strong attachment,  
which takes your mind away from the peaceful,  
thus obstructing *zhi nay*.

We have to look at three main aspects.

- a. This mind of excitation, what does it *focus* on? It focuses on something you really like. It doesn't focus on something that you don't like. You like it, love it, and are attracted to it.

- b. What are the *aspects* of this particular mind? It is a rough mind that is part of attachment, slightly influenced by obsession. It takes you away from what you are really focusing on; it diverts your attention.
- c. What is the *activity* of this particular mind? It obstructs your focus.

In other words, this mind thinks of something that you are attracted to. How does it feel? Maybe you don't recognize it, but you will feel, 'I am not focused.' It will take you away from what you are trying to focus on. When you are trying to focus on the image of the Buddha, or on your mind, or whatever you are trying to focus on, this mind of excitation will remind you of some beautiful form, or a beautiful sound, or a beautiful feeling; something you would like to revisit. Buddha himself said,

The more you focus, the more excitation will take you. It is part of your delusion. It catches you, as though someone were throwing an old-fashioned lasso on you and tying you up completely.

Thus excitation will drag your mind away from the focusing point. Now you may begin to understand that meditation is focusing, really focusing. As Chandragomin said in his *Praise of Confession*:

Whatever, however I envisage for the calm state,  
focusing, refocusing the mind there upon it,  
from this the noose of defilement drags me helpless  
toward objects with the rope of attachment

This is exactly what addictions do to us. If you are addicted to drugs or alcohol or anything, that addiction will pull you away from whatever you are trying to focus on, without your realizing it. You will feel a happiness, joyfulness and excitement as it comes and takes you away. That is the number one obstacle you should expect to encounter when you begin to meditate. It's there. When you sit down and try to meditate, you won't stay long on your focusing point. After a while you will realize your mind is thinking totally something else. Let us be clear about that. If you're not clear about this, you will have more problems.

**Audience:** You said excitation is caused by attachment-oriented mind. Isn't it sometimes caused by fear? I noticed that when my mind is wandering, it's not only towards things I want, but also towards things I don't want. A second question is, if you learn to manage wandering, so that you do have a better focus, does that cut down attachment in your life as well?

**Rimpoche:** Attachment does cause excitation, because attachment draws your mind. I'll give you an example that I think will speak very well to you. If you were with a nice, new girlfriend last night, today your mind will be very often on that excitation. That's because the part of attachment pulls you. Reducing the wandering can reduce attachment. But that doesn't mean it is the antidote to attachment, or the power over attachment. It's good, but you can do better than that. Actually, the direct antidote of attachment is . . .

**Audience:** Impermanence, right?

**Rimpoche:** Yes, but . . . I'll leave it at that, because people won't like it if I say more. That's good enough. Some other time we'll talk about it.

**Audience:** Rimpoche, what is the direct antidote of attachment?

**Rimpoche:** Next time. (Rimpoche laughs).

#### SINKING MIND OR LAXITY [YING BA]

This one is going to be more difficult. Within laxity, we have to talk about more than just the gross and subtle levels, we commonly talk about. At the [most] gross level, we are talking about falling asleep. Though overall we call it laxity, [apart from sleep] you have to think of two separate categories: one is quite gross or coarse, the other one is a little more subtle. In Tibetan, we do have different names for them. The first one is called *mug pa*, foggy-mindedness or lethargy, which I will describe so it will be clear to you. [The other one is laxity, *ying ba*, which in turn can be divided into coarse and subtle.]<sup>109</sup>

*Foggy-mindedness [mug pa].*<sup>110</sup> This is, not only are we not focusing, but there is a negative, non-virtuous nature, which is 'not-knowing.' It is like some very heavy stuff, hangs over our mind, a huge darkness has landed on our mind, the sun is gone, the light is gone, it is as though night has taken hold of the mind itself. It is part of laxity. In Tibetan it is called *mug pa*, which is in the category of

ignorance. However, it is not the ignorance that is at the root of samsara.<sup>111</sup>

Here the individual is in a state of not knowing what to do, not knowing what to think. It is not only a heavy, but a blind state of mind too. The person can't see, can't think straight, and is becoming so heavy that he just doesn't want to move. You know, when you get physically tired, or when you eat the wrong food, you feel so heavy that you just won't or can't move. A similar thing can happen in the mind. You are not really sinking, but feeling heavy and dark. Even if you try to think, you can't focus. And you can't push it. You just can't do anything.

I think, we also sometimes call this depression. However, I think that this level is in between, before it even becomes a light depression. (I'm not talking about heavy depression at all). This *mug pa* makes the individual so dark, so heavy and so unclear. Even if you make your mind really alert, and do something physical like throwing a bottle of refrigerated water on your face, even then, that heaviness will only go away for a short period. This is way before the state of falling asleep, losing the focus completely, not knowing what's going on and beginning to dream; that is clearly becoming [very] gross laxity.

Foggy-mindedness is [part of] ignorance. You know there are basically three poisons; ignorance, obsession and hatred. It is a part of ignorance, or we even call it evil sometimes. It definitely belongs to not knowing, nothing is clear. And it makes both our body and mind quite heavy. You don't want to move, don't want to think, don't want to do anything. We may call it laziness or tiredness.

A lot of people say, 'I just can't get moving.' Though we may blame a lot of it on certain physical conditions that we actually have, here we are talking more about mind and mental aspects. We feel heavy, unable to move, unable to function.

People may think, 'It is natural, so it is neither positive nor negative,' but according to the Buddha's teaching, foggy-mindedness is considered a negativity.<sup>112</sup> It is negative karma, it creates negative karma, it's a result of negative karma.

*Gross laxity, or sinking.* The foggy-mindedness, the inbetween state of heaviness, combined with falling asleep causes the sinking mind, laxity. When actual laxity comes, the focus on the actual subject becomes lax and loose. Even though you don't lose the focus, even though your mind is quite clear, the connection between your mind and the subject on which you are meditating becomes unclear and loose. Your mind is completely lax. It doesn't hold the focal point tight. There is no clarity of the focal point. The mind itself may have a little clarity, but you're not really seeing the object clearly.

This is considered difficult to understand, and it is always taught through examples. One is like a blind person that knows there is something, but doesn't really see it. (These examples are quite difficult. I wish there were better ones.) Another example given is darkness. There's no light; it is all dark, you know there is something, but you really can't figure out what is there. The third example is having the eyes closed. You know there is something or a person.

You may even talk to her or him, but you really don't have the clarity—you don't see the person. These are the three examples that introduce laxity.

There are two categories here. When it becomes a little subtle, then it can be virtue or it can be non-virtue. When it is at the level of foggy-mindedness, *mug pa*, that negativity of ignorance, it is always non-virtuous [or neutral].<sup>113</sup>

*How to overcome it.* Asanga says, you have to make yourself happy by remembering Buddha. As a Buddhist, the best thing is Buddha. So, think about Buddha, be happy. Don't think about a dark environment. Think sunshine, bright light, beautiful sunshine. This particular mental faculty is like having darkness on the individual mind. It makes you unclear, and because you are unable to focus as much as you used to, when you are focusing you become weaker, so you're getting those problems. Make it clear, bring light in. Think of sunshine. Think of a bright snow mountain radiating a lot of wonderful bright white light.

When people mistake the not focusing very well with the true meditation, then it is harmful to the individual. This is quite important. That is why Tsongkhapa tells you, the focal point you choose has to be based on your personal experience, something that you recognize that you are familiar with.<sup>114</sup>

You will find that different people will have different kinds of laxity. You really, truly, have to hold the object tightly. How? The example given to me by one of my teachers is the following. You are asked to cross a big road on foot, holding a big bowl in your hands, filled with burning

hot oil. You really have to completely focus, otherwise, the oil will drip and burn your hands. You have to judge how much the oil will shake, so you move accordingly. That level of focusing in meditation is required. Otherwise, you become lax.

*Meditation and Alzheimer.* At the gross level, laxity will lead to Alzheimer's. It is true. It is a nice way of contributing to the aging process. The reality is that you start forgetting, losing your intellectual knowledge. When the sharpness is missing, you will create pressure and darkness and you will drag yourself through the session. Those things will cause forgetfulness. This is called *mug pa*, [lethargy or foggy-mindedness]. It might become Alzheimer's. You forget, don't recognize people, and after a while you forget your own name. Your mental capacity has gradually deteriorated. That problem rises because we don't keep the mind alert. We allow the mind extra relaxation. We presume 'I am tired.' We think we're giving ourselves a break, but what we are really doing is reducing the alertness of the focusing mind.

*Subtle laxity, or sinking.* The difference between true meditation and *subtle laxity* is a line thinner than a single hair of a horse's tail. This is not a funny thing to talk; it becomes important. According to Tsongkhapa, it is decided by the experience of the individual how much tightness you need to avoid laxity, and how relaxed you need to be in order to avoid excitation. Balancing these is what you need to make sure that the meditation is right and correct.

When subtle laxity occurs, the meditator does not lose the focus, but the sharpness from the point of view of the mind is missing. It is not the sharpness of the object on which you are focusing. From the point of view of *who* is focusing, there is no sharpness, no alertness of that mind. Yes, you are focusing, yet there is dullness. If you have this dullness, yet you think you are meditating, there is a big problem. Your memory will begin to be eaten up, [which at a gross level may lead to Alzheimer's].

With subtle laxity you'll be able to think about things like the pink cover, the clock inside, you see the time is getting to be a quarter to eight and behind that your memory tells even you this is p.m. The mind, however, is not alert. You don't have the crispness.

With subtle laxity, the concentrated meditation even delivers quite good results. You hear very often in the west of the 'absent-minded professor.' The professor knows the subject he's focused on very well, but he's completely absent in normal mundane matters. That is the subtle laxity I've been talking about. It fully delivers the goods, don't forget. The totally focusing mind is there, but there is no sharpness or alertness.

In perfect meditation, we have this 'crispness' and freshness. In that case the mind is not holding [too] tight. It is observing with alertness and crispness. These qualities will be present not only when we are meditating, but even while thinking about our problems.

*Gross and subtle excitation and sinking.* Meditation is focusing. When you begin to meditate, why do you lose the

focus? There are two possible reasons. Either your mind is taken away by the forces of attraction and wanders, what we call excitation, or your mind is too lax and sinks.

Each consists of different layers. Layer one is the gross level of laxity, or sinking, and the gross level of excitation. The [very, very] gross level of it is falling asleep. You are thinking of meditating, and suddenly you realize you are dreaming, snoring. The person next to you is kicking you, giving you the eye, and waking you up. Or if there is no one next to you, you will be throwing your neck down, causing you pain or you will be falling backwards. Sleeping and fainting are not meditation; we made that very clear from the beginning.

In between this very gross laxity and [the more] subtle forms of it, there is this ignorance-oriented, dark, heavy condition of foggy-mindedness, *mug pa*.<sup>115</sup> We also talked about types of depression, which are part of this problem. We gave the points where these really originate.

A little more subtle, but still at the gross level, is not really focusing, and going somewhere else. Also, you may be thinking nothing, but you are just sitting there. This happens to people. You may think you are meditating, but you are just sitting, thinking nothing. That also is a form of *gross* laxity. At the *subtle* level of laxity, you may be focusing, yet there is no force. And that makes a big difference.

These are really practical problems for those of you who are meditating. You know them and you will face them. There is nothing theoretical here. Knowing what the problems are, e.g. subtle laxity, and dealing with them, is

important. Thus we have introduced the problems we will encounter in meditation.

(B) THE WAY TO DEVELOP META-ALERTNESS THAT  
RECOGNIZES THEM WHILE MEDITATING

*Recognizing excitation and sinking.* Understanding these problems, is that enough? No, it's not. When you are meditating, you have to know whether or not any of these problems appears or has appeared. You don't know, because once you realize you know you're not [on your focal point], that is a clear sign that you didn't know. Even though you may be able to talk about what laxity is, and what excitation is, and what each one does, when they actually come, you won't recognize them coming up. We lose our focus, and the mind has gone miles away. These are the problems of meditation.

When you come into these problems, then it's nothing exciting; these are really problems. When you don't introduce them, when you just say, 'Sit down, think...' it's very easy, everybody can do it. The reason why meditation has not developed correctly in this country, is that the problems have not been introduced properly. We don't even know that these are the problems of meditation.

*Meta-alertness.* So, simply knowing these two is not enough. Whenever they pop up, there has to be immediate information. The meditator has to receive this information during the meditation. Remember, we talked earlier about *she shin*, meta-alertness.<sup>116</sup> It will only develop in the individual if

you keep focusing, keep the mindfulness [*dren pa*] all the time. We talked about what mindfulness means here. We talked about what forgetting means here. It means, while you are meditating, you are constantly, continuously thinking of that object or subject.

When you are completely, continuously focusing, and all of a sudden your object of focus is not there, this particular mental faculty of meta-alertness will know. Sometimes when you are carrying something in your hand and you drop it, you get some awareness that something is missing, but you don't know what it is. Like that, when you are meditating, you get that aching feeling that something's missing. Information will come in. That mental faculty is called *she shin*. That has to be very sharp, and has to be completely functioning all the time.

It is something that we cannot choose to put in. If you want to get up early in the morning tomorrow, say 4:30, tonight you will keep thinking, 'I have to get up at 4:30, 4:30, 4:30,' it doesn't matter whether you go to bed at 12:00 or 1:00, at 4:30 you will wake up. It's not like that. You cannot put this in your mind that way. This has to be learned. The way you learn, is that when you are focusing, and suddenly you stop focusing, there is suddenly a huge gap and a shock and something will jerk you. That will immediately inform you that you are not focusing. This will only come when you are getting used to focusing continuously. It is *a result of mindfulness*.

We're making a big demand. Not only do you realize when you are not focusing, even when you are about to lose

your focus, you have to recognize it. You have to be awakened, you have to be informed, so that the continuation of your focus will not be disrupted.

Until such a mental faculty develops in us, none of us can say, 'I will meditate for five minutes.' The reason is, your five minutes will be interrupted, continuous focus won't happen. Even for 2 minutes it will not.

Tsongkhapa says here, that until such a mind, which will absolutely make sure you know when any one of those problems appears to you, develops, your meditations will have excitation or sinking. If they do not bring that awareness into being and functioning, a lot of people will waste their whole lives.

How do you know you are wasting your life? Your intellectual capacity, intelligence, wisdom mind begin to decrease, rather than increase. It does go very fast sometimes. When your intellectual capacity, the wisdom aspect decreases, yet you have a relaxed, half-lazy type of focusing, not so tight, then that is the sign of subtle laxity. Shantideva says,

When mindfulness is set with the purpose  
of guarding the doorway of the mind,  
then alertness will come about  
and even that which had gone will return.

Shantideva, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of*

*Life*, Ch. 5, vs 33<sup>117</sup>

When you are thinking tight, when you are really focusing, and you meet with one of those obstacles, *i.e.*, excitation or laxity, or when you are not thinking, which mind recognizes it faster and better, the focusing mind or

the non-focusing mind? He says it is absolutely clear to us that when you are focused, and suddenly realize you are not focusing, you get that message much faster than when you are basically being lazy, just sitting there, and your mind is gone you have no idea where.

Did I speak right to you, people? When you are focusing, when you are thinking about something, and you lose your focal point, you will know that happening much faster than when you're not trying to push. It is obvious from our experience. Shantideva gave this as a reason why this meta-alertness comes in as a result of mindfulness.

To conclude this, this particular mental faculty, meta-alertness, is the result of mindfulness. Whether you are focusing on the image of the Buddha or on mind it works the same. Just simple experience, simple knowledge, simple focusing we all have. Such an experience, just knowing, is the basis of information-receiving. Though there is no physical form or anything, just an information receiver ready to acknowledge the focal point and to continue to focus on that, without going anywhere else or relaxing—that is what Tsongkhapa says is *she's shin*, the immediately knowing meta-mind, capable of automatically knowing you're not focusing. This indicates that this particular mental faculty is the key for anyone to meditate. It will make sure you are not overtaken by the problems of excitation or laxity.

## (2) APPLYING THE ANTIDOTE FOR FAILING TO TRY TO

### ELIMINATE THEM EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE NOTICED

By doing this, what are you going to achieve? Continuation of mindfulness and meta-alertness. By that your mindful-

ness will become more and more powerful and you will not have even a subtle problem of excitation or sinking. If you see a subtle problem, you will not have the problem of not recognizing it. When you see it, you immediately work to stop it. This has two outlines:

- Intention and the way it stops sinking and excitation
- The underlying causes of sinking and excitation

(A) INTENTION AND THE WAY IT STOPS

SINKING AND EXCITATION

Say right now you are moving, you are focusing a little. Now you focus more. Now you are aware of the obstacles and know how to handle them. And now you have focused even more, so you've probably progressed up through four or five stages. At that level, laziness can enter in. How? Even when you sense that the problems are coming, you decide, 'That's not going to bother me that much. I can manage alright.' So you don't put forth the effort to block these obstacles. That becomes a big problem for the meditator. For this you need mind awareness, intention, will. [Asanga says;

Intention is the mental activity of applying your mind, having the function of drawing your mind to virtue, non-virtue or ethically neutral.]

What Tsongkhapa tells us here is fantastic.<sup>118</sup> Each obstacle will introduce itself, and will reveal where it comes from. When we look into this carefully, we find there are besides the main mind fifty-one different mental facul-

ties,<sup>119</sup> each one with its own job to do. One particular faculty is called ‘mind’, *sem pa*,<sup>120</sup> whose job is to guide the main mind. It is like a magnet, that pulls in other pieces of metal. This mental faculty has the capacity to pull the individual mind in the direction of virtue, non-virtue or in between, the neutral level. This must be very boring for many of you. But, you know, the essence of spiritual practice is positive or virtue, negative or non-virtue, and the neutral level. It is vital to see the mind, and to see in which direction it’s going. This particular mental faculty has that power to pull. That’s why sometimes we say, ‘I don’t want to do that, I’d rather go this way.’ We do that, don’t we? We say, ‘I don’t like violence. I don’t want to watch this. I don’t want to hear this.’ Something is twisting internally. This mental faculty, *sem pa*, is working. It has been informed, educated and trained by our information, knowledge and qualities. When we are not knowing anything, not focusing and not really alert, suddenly this mental faculty clicks in, and says, ‘I don’t want to watch that. It’s too much violence. I can’t bear it.’ It automatically kicks in.

Some people, when they are addicted to killing or something, love to watch violent movies. This mental faculty, *sem pa*, is twisting inside the individual and giving guidance, and it has the power to drag the mind, just like a magnet to an object of perception or action.

During meditation, we have to bring that mental faculty in. Its job is to make sure the meditation is going in a virtuous direction, and to make sure you stop the laxity, or sinking mind, and the excitation, or wandering mind.

HOW TO OVERCOME LAXITY, THE SINKING MIND

Why does laxity occur, where does it come from? (This is where I begin to wonder whether laxity is the right language. Sinking may be better.) It comes from collecting our mind too tight inside. We are losing focus because we are holding too tight.

To overcome that, you have to take the mind out, let loose and relax, think of something you like a lot. Tsongkhapa adds, 'focus on something like a beautiful Buddha image, not on something that develops delusion.' We have this challenge all the time, right? More or less every entertainment we have, grows delusion. Violence is one example, another one is sex, also money, lying and that type of things. That is why, for how to take your mind out [of a delusion-producing situation], Tsongkhapa brought in Buddha's image.

That, however, is difficult for us. First we have to learn to be happy when you see Buddha. This goes without saying for life-long Buddhist practitioners, even going back generations. For us, we're not sure whether if we see Buddha we'll be happy or not. Hopefully we are.

Tsongkhapa also says that sunshine, brightness, makes the mind awaken and become exciting. In this moment of a sinking mind, never think something sad, because sadness collects internally. Anything sad, such as worry, draws the mind inside. Therefore, the mind needs something to draw it out, like wisdom or meditation on emptiness. What is recommended here is applying the power of discriminating wisdom, which can pull the mind out of too much sinking inside.

Too much sinking brings not only laxity, it also brings depression. Tsongkhapa mentions that some translators from the Indian language chose to call it depression rather than sinking. The majority of them, however like to call laxity 'sinking.' So we follow that. Gross sinking mind, or gross laxity, however, brings depression. Depression is the result of holding too tightly, or of too much sadness constantly. It is the result of continuously too much thinking internally, or too much worry, naturally. These are the categories that pull you in.

The recommendation here is to try to be light, to cultivate happiness. Really recommended for that, is to recall the benefits of bodhimind, the value of human life, and the Buddha and his qualities.

Another method is forcefully cutting the sinking mind. That is, when you are sitting and meditating, think or visualize that your consciousness, your mind, yourself, or your soul is something very light, like cotton wool. (I have to be careful how much I should tell you here.) The air energy from the lower part of our body is pushed up and by that our consciousness, light like cotton wool, is jumping up. With the air, it pushes through, way high up, into the clouds, and mixes with the clouds. That's why the analogy of cotton wool is used. This is not a *phowa* practice. It has nothing to do with that. It is simply taking the consciousness up and bringing it back.

There is another helpful thing you can use if you have these sorts of difficulties. In the evening when the sun is setting, you stand up on your toes and while watching the sun go down, you send out the sadness, difficulty and sor-

rows that you have, and bid them goodbye a number of times.

Yet another method of getting rid of the sinking mind is watching the stars and looking at the rising of the full moon. (Like people who watch the stars with a telescope.) When you have the difficulty of a sinking mind, you are not advised to continue to meditate. We have to stop meditation and apply these methods.

In Tibet, I had one teacher who used to take to take a group of us up on the mountaintop and we'd have a picnic way up there, with the beautiful cold breeze, with very nice food, overlooking a huge valley. We wouldn't stay very long because we had to get down before dark. We wouldn't go early either; we'd leave maybe after lunch, and climb for hours to the top. He did that very often. As a kid, I loved to go, but I hated to climb the mountain. Sometimes I would play the trick of going partway the day before. I did manage to do that a couple of times. We'd carry a tent and have a picnic. That was not enough, though. We still had to go to the top of the mountain. We'd get up there, settle a little bit, and then had to get up again. But it was a good way of doing it. He never said why we were doing it. Why do you have to go to have a picnic way up on the mountaintop with great difficulty of climbing the mountain? Teachers do literally take you to the high mountaintops. It probably helps cut down different types of laxity. I think, it was really for this purpose.

*Depression.*<sup>121</sup> Depression might not be laxity. It goes much deeper and is stronger than that. All of these depressions

are due to too much worry, forcing too much, thinking too much. It could even be from focusing too forcefully, like when you get overworked. Naturally, overworking will bring these problems. Also, people have a natural habit of making themselves completely busy, so they don't have to think about problems. This indirectly, or directly contributes toward bringing the problems of a sinking mind. Trying to avoid depression contributes to depression.

In short, to overcome laxity, or sinking mind, you think of light, sunshine, a great view, the light of the sun over a glacier or snow mountain and visualize being at a very high level and watching. Nowadays we can utilize the beautiful photos taken from the space shuttle. In early India, a traditional, non-Buddhist system would teach you to visualize being above the clouds, traveling through and visiting different universes.

*Journey to the Pure Lands.* In Buddhism, there are some meditations where you visit one pure land after another, see enlightened beings and make offerings. Not many people talk about it. It will be just a mental exercise, not serving any virtuous purpose. When you develop *zhi nay*, you may be able to use that to accumulate a tremendous amount of merit.

In Vajrayana practice, we visualize light going out of our heart and reaching countless universes and pure lands and making offerings to the enlightened beings. In that context we don't do those things for overcoming depression. Here it would be a wonderful meditation for that purpose.

So go and visit Tushita Pure Land, meet Buddha Maitreya and make great offerings. Go to the Western Paradise

[Skt. Sukhavati, Tib. *Devachen*],<sup>122</sup> meet Amitabha Buddha and meet Avalokiteshvara at the next site. Then go all together to the mountain called *Potala*. With Avalokiteshvara, go over to the other side, to this little turquoise mountain, called *Yulo köpa*, ‘Paradise Arrayed in Turquoise Petals’, where Tara lives. Visit Tara.

Some of you could put them together and make a nice, compact meditation journey. That will be very, very helpful to people who have a lot of depression. I don’t think there would be any objections. It will be helpful. It will be a nice thing to do. The discussion about laxity and depression we’re having now is not part of the teachings. These pure lands exist, however, and there is a variety of different teachings, so we can [choose from] them. We can create a meditation—not in a New Age way—with elements taken from here and there in a nice little organized way.

Closest to our universe is the Ganden galaxy. Once there you can visit the Ganden towns and cities. You can visit the Pure Land of Tushita, or *Ganden*, which is part of it. There you’ll find Maitreya, Tsongkhapa and Atisha. From there, you can make a horizontal journey across the Western Paradise. There is a togetherness; you can that bring in. There is also the Pure Land of the Medicine Buddha and others.

You can combine them and make them into one meditation. We do have a tremendous number of psychologists in Jewel Heart. It will be good if they create a special meditation, which you can call ‘Journey to the Pure Lands.’ We can do this with a purpose, with a little practice. At each place you get to, there should be a little purification, a little offering, a little joy, and a little collection of bless-

ings. Within this little system, we can make a journey that will not only help relieve depression, but will also help to do purification and accumulate merit. Therefore it will be spiritual contemplation.

If you don't do anything, but go somewhere like a tourist, looking at this and that site, that's fine, but it won't have any spiritual value at all. It might, however, relieve some of the heaviness and darkness.

(B) UNDERLYING CAUSES OF EXCITATION AND SINKING

*Causes of sinking and excitation both*

I did mention to you that excitation is part of obsession or attachment, and that foggy-mindedness is part of ignorance. It is one of the major tricks ego plays to overpower the individual person.

Now, where do they come from and when do they occur? Both excitation and laxity come during your practice of meditation, especially when you are taking a retreat. In a retreat you have to set limitations, so you won't expose yourself to the vastness of worldly affairs, everything that's happening.

1. *Not guarding the sense doors.* If you want entertainment, movies are very nice. There is a difference, however, between movies and news. News, at least, has some informational value. (I'm just defending my own inclinations). We are bombarded with all sorts of entertainment, including the news, whether valid or not. When you are retreating, it is great and helpful to retreat from all of those. Keeping silence; mental silence will help to prevent the two problems: laxity, and especially excitation. Excitations are the

thoughts that follow unnecessary chit chat, and are viewing something that is unneeded. In Tibetan language, there is one word that means ‘protecting the doorways.’ It means: don’t look at, or listen to, or speak about what you don’t need to involve yourself with. We are especially conditioned to think, ‘I have to entertain,’ so you keep on talking. The person to whom you are talking may not even hear what you’re saying, still, you keep on talking. That means, the doorways are not protected and that is the primary cause of bringing excitation and laxity.

2. *Not placing limitations on food.* That’s exactly what I do. You don’t need it, but you keep on eating. Spiritual practitioners say a couple of verses of food blessing. I’ve said them since childhood. Even now I say it within myself before I eat, all the time, but I don’t think about what it really means. The meaning of the last verse is:

Use the food as medicine.

Have no obsession or hatred.

The food is neither to make you fat, nor to make you look good. Its purpose is to sustain you, to maintain your life. It is for your survival.<sup>123</sup>

‘Use the food like medicine.’ Understand that. The timing of eating is important, too.

3. *Not doing without sleep at the proper times.* It is recommended that you get up early and go to bed early. Sleeping late occasionally is okay. Going to bed at 7:00 p.m., however, and sleeping past 5:00 in the morning is counted as one of the causes of bringing laxity. If you are a meditator, if

you really want to practice *zhi nay*, or if you want to make a retreat, then it is recommended—not compulsory—to get up early, at 4:00, or 5:00 at the latest.

There are four periods out of the 24 hours that you don't sit in session. They are midday, midnight, sunrise and sunset. If you get up at 4:00 or 5:00 and have a session until 6:00 or 6:30, it will be great. Kyabje Ling Rimpoche and Kyabje Trijang Rimpoche always got up at 4:00 or 4:30 am. By 8:00 or 8:30 in the evening, however, they'd go to bed. I think His Holiness, the Dalai Lama is following the same schedule.

When I was a kid, and I didn't get up in the early morning, I would get beaten up. I used to sleep with my knees up, then someone would hit my knees with a stick, and I would be awakened by knee pain. Now I don't get up at all. This is laziness taking over. At the same time, I go to bed very late. When His Holiness was here for teachings, there was a big deal over whether or not His Holiness would attend a concert at 7:30 p.m. or not. He appeared for a very short time and left. I think it was announced that His Holiness agreed to break his routine. That must mean that he goes to bed by 7 or 7:30. He gets up at 4 or 4:30, wherever he is.

It will be difficult to do this every night, but if you are doing a retreat, it will be nice to keep this schedule. If you're going to get up that early, make sure you go to bed early. You have to get the sleep you need. Excessive sleep, however, causes laxity.

4. *Lack of meta-alertness is also a cause of both those problems arising.*

*Causes of a sinking mind*

Excessive sleep or drowsiness comes first as a cause of sinking, or laxity. Being too lax in focusing, and too much focusing both are causes of it. Laxity arises when shamatha or *zhi nay*, and vipashyana, or *lhak tong*, are not balanced. Using only shamatha, too strongly, also causes sinking. When you feel dark in your mind, you have to lift that immediately. If you let the mind lapse into that dark, suffering nature, it will cause laxity. Meditating on something you don't like, is another cause of sinking.

*Causes of excitation*

Excitation occurs when your mind is not balanced between sadness and happiness. When you have a lot of 'haha hoo hoo' business, you become a member of Hahayana (according to R. Thurman). Without thinking of sufferings, you will have excitation. Another cause is focusing too strongly, instead of in a balanced way. Yet another cause is not applying enthusiasm. Also being distracted by overly worrying about your family and family members is a cause.

We introduce these causes, so that during your meditation, whether you are doing a retreat or just doing meditation, you can avoid those. Also, place limitations in your everyday life. Some of us are so habit-bound that after we have a long session, we run out and turn on the television. I do this myself. You don't care whether you get tea or coffee, but you do care what's going on. That is probably a great cause of excitation. Then, when you are due to start

the session, just because the time is going so fast, you turn off the TV, run in, sit down and start doing your recitations; this is another great cause of excitation.

You may decide to do a retreat all of a sudden, with no preparation. Recently I heard a group of people wanted to do a retreat, and make sure they finish by summer retreat, so that at summer retreat they'd be able to do a fire puja. So I said, 'Whoa, hold on, hold on. You have to prepare for a few months, and do something positive toward that.' A hurry retreat will cause a lot of excitations. And, the moment the excitations are released, laxity will take over, because everything has been done hurriedly.

All these causes, such as the mind losing focus, have an effect because we are based on the five skandhas [form, feeling, perception, volition and consciousness]. All five of them are the causes of trouble.

## II) WHAT TO DO WHEN SINKING AND EXCITATION ARE ABSENT <sup>124</sup>

[Kamalashila's middle *Stages of Meditation*<sup>125</sup> says,

When sinking and excitation have gone and you see that your attention is calmly remaining on the object of meditation, relax your effort and abide in equanimity;  
then remain this way for as long as you please.

When by practicing cutting off even subtle sinking and excitation, the mind will enter a state of equanimity, free of excitation or sinking. When that happens, if you still exert effort, this will be a problem.]<sup>126</sup>

As it is said in Maitreya's teachings,

Staying with the joyous perseverance  
Your mind becomes serviceable, and you attain all  
goals.

This occurs as a result of eliminating the five faults  
And relying on the eight antidotes.

The five faults are laziness, forgetting the  
instructions, excitation and sinking, non-  
application, and application.

The eight antidotes are the basis [desire], that based  
on it [enthusiastic effort], the cause [faith], the effect  
[pliancy], not forgetting the object of meditation  
[mindfulness], recognizing excitation and sinking  
[meta-alertness], application to eliminate them, and  
calmly stabilizing your mind [equanimity] when  
they have been quelled.

#### THE FIVE FAULTS<sup>127</sup>

There are five faults [or obstacles] in meditation:

- laziness
- not remembering, forgetfulness
- excitation or sinking
- when sinking or excitation are there, not taking the  
antidote action—non-application

- taking antidote action when laxity or excitation are not there—(over)-application.

1. *Laziness.* The actual antidote to laziness is an initial experience of the pleasure and harmony of body and mind that arise from meditation [*shin jangs*]. Once we experience this joy, meditation automatically becomes one of our favorite activities. However, until we get to this point we must settle for a lesser antidote. This lesser antidote is thinking of the benefits<sup>128</sup> of having such a power of samadhi, by that getting a desire for it, followed enthusiastic effort.

2. *Forgetfulness.* That's simply losing awareness of the object of meditation. When this happens, concentration is no longer present. Nagarjuna gave an illustration of the samadhi process in which the mind is likened to an elephant to be tied by the rope of memory to the pillar of the object of meditation.

*Be consistent.* Consistency in practice is also important. Once you begin you should continue each day until the goal is reached. If all conditions are perfect, this can be done in three months or so. But to practice an hour a day for a month and then miss a day or two will produce minimal progress. Constant steady effort is necessary. You have to fix a daily schedule of meditation and then follow it.

3. *Excitation or sinking.* Though you must hold the object firmly, forceful holding of the object gives rise to this third problem. When we try to hold the object in the mind, the tension of the effort produces either excitation or sinking.

*Sinking.* The forced concentration produces a heaviness of mind, and this in turn leads to sleep, the most coarse form of sinking. The subtle form of sinking is experienced when one is able to hold the object in mind for a prolonged period of time, yet without any real clarity. Without this clarity the meditation lacks strength. I'll give you an example: when a man in love thinks of his beloved, her face immediately appears radiantly in his mind and effortlessly remains with clarity. A few months later, however, when they are in the middle of a fight, he has to put in a lot of effort to think of her in the same way. When he had the tightness of desire the image was easy to retain clearly. This tightness is called *nye jok* in Tibetan, or 'close placement.'<sup>129</sup> When this close placement is lost, the image eventually disappears and subtle sinking sets in. It is very difficult to distinguish between proper meditation and meditation characterized by subtle sinking. Remaining absorbed in subtle sinking can create many problems.

*Excitation,* mentally wandering away from the object of meditation, must also be guarded against. When you sit down to concentrate on an object, your mind quickly drifts away to thoughts of the activities of the day, or to a movie or television program. The mind wanders off on some memory or plan and we don't even realize that it is happening; we think we are still meditating, but suddenly realize that for half an hour our mind has been elsewhere. This is the coarse level of the wandering mind.

When it is overcome we still have to deal with *subtle* excitation: one factor of the mind holds the object clearly but another factor drifts away. We have to develop the abil-

ity to use the main part of our mind to concentrate on the object and another part to watch that the meditation is progressing correctly.

This side part of the mind, meta-alertness, is like a secret agent. Without this secret agent we can become absorbed in incorrect meditation for hours without knowing what we are doing. The thief of excitement or sinking comes into the house and steals away our meditation.

We have to watch, yet not overwatch. Overwatching can create another problem. It is like when we hold a glass of water: we have to hold it, hold it tightly, and also watch to see that we are holding it correctly and steadily, without allowing any water to spill out. Holding, holding tightly and watching: these are three keys in this meditation.

4. *Not correcting the above problems when they arise.* When sinking arises and you don't counteract it with tightness, the fourth obstacle is produced. On the other hand, too much tightness on the object created by a lack of natural desire to meditate is also to be avoided. We must balance tightness with relaxation.

Sometimes when we try to counteract sinking with tightness, the mind gets too tight. When this happens, just relax within the meditation. If that does not work, forget the object for a while and concentrate on happy thoughts, such as the beneficial effects of bodhicitta, until the mind regains its composure. Then return to the object. This has an effect similar to washing the face in cold water. If even contemplating a happy subject does not pick you up, visualize that your mind takes the form of a tiny seed at your

heart. Then visualize shooting the seed out of the crown of your head into the clouds above; leave it there for a few moments and then bring it back. Should even this not help, just take a break from the meditation for a while.

Similarly, when excitation arises you can think of an unpleasant subject, such as the suffering nature of samsara.

In short, how do we correct these two fundamental problems of excitation and sinking? The antidote to sinking is tightening the concentration and the antidote to excitation is loosening the concentration. When the mind is low we change to a happy subject which brings it up again; when the mind is high, excited, we change to an unpleasant subject in order to bring the mind down out of the sky and back to earth.

5. *Applying meditative opponents to problems when in fact the problems are not there, that is they are purely imaginary.* This obstacle arises by applying antidotes to sinking or excitation which in fact are not present, or by overly watching for problems. It obstructs the development of meditation.

#### THE EIGHT ANTIDOTES<sup>130</sup>

The five faults have to be overcome by eight different minds, eight awarenesses. You have heard a number of times that the biggest problem is laziness. The antidote is the *shin jang*, the joy of mind and body that you experience when your meditation becomes perfect. Now, when we don't have that, but we do have plenty of laziness, we apply *faith, desire and enthusiastic efforts* and that way we

push ourselves. These three plus *shin jang* [the physical and mental pliancy] are the four antidotes to laziness.<sup>131</sup>

The other four are: *mindfulness* [to counteract forgetfulness], *meta-alertness* [to counteract excitation and sinking both] effort [or *application* of the right antidotes counteracts the not correcting problems when they arise] and *relaxation* [or equanimity], counteracts applying meditative opponents to problems that in fact are not there.

Those eight different mental faculties should be utilized against the five faults.<sup>132</sup>

*What is perfect shamatha meditation.* Perfect concentration, following from mindfulness, meta-alertness, freedom from laxity and excitation and continuously focusing on the point make a good, nice meditation. That applies not only to the Hinayana level, also to the Mahayana. It applies not only to the Mahayana Sutra level, but even to Vajrayana level. Briefly, that is perfect meditation.



## VI ATTAINING *ZHI NAY*

### 2) THE STAGES IN WHICH THE MENTAL STATES DEVELOP<sup>133</sup>

Now we have come to the level of learning the stages in which this meditation develops. How do I get to the perfect level of concentrated meditation? The great masters tell you you get there by climbing the nine different steps. They are known as the ‘Nine Points of Mind-Focusing.’ This may sound a little funny when you first hear it. If so, it will be due to my lack of knowledge of English, and not the fault of the teaching. The nine stages of meditation will be brought about by the six powers, each of which bring a certain stage or stages.

### A) THE ACTUAL STAGES IN WHICH THE MENTAL STATES DEVELOP—NINE STAGES<sup>134</sup>

Through the process of learning the teachings, reading about them, and understanding them, we have collected information about the nine stages. We have then refined this information. I’d like to briefly talk about each one of these nine.

### FINDING THE OBJECT OF FOCUS

The first thing to do, and the first one of the six powers, is

learning. You know that. If you have the wrong information, you're going to go wrong. Not only must you have the right information, but you must refine it and bring it to the point where you can use it and concentrate. Any subject or object on which we meditate must be created by ourselves, through the power of learning.

When the image is *mind*, you have to search the mind, analyze, apply all six ways of looking at it, and find it; that is your point of focus.<sup>135</sup>

If it is the image of the *Buddha*, it is very simple and easy. The image will be a mental, not a physical image. If it were a physical image, it would be a matter of training the eye, not the mind.

If you're to meditate on *Guru-devotional practice*, then you have to find the refined, free point of Guru devotion and use that as your major focal point. It is quite simple. If you are at the Hinayana level, you will look at the guru as being like Buddha. If you are a Mahayana practitioner, you will see the guru as Buddha. As a Vajrayana practitioner, you will see the guru as inseparable from the fully enlightened ones.

These are the points you will gain from your normal learning. Then you refine them, and find your focal point. You have to think about it and analyze all the information you've received. You have to sort it out and decide what is right and what is wrong. That is what I mean by refining.

You can choose any one of the 64 steps of the *Odyssey to Freedom* or any *Lamrim* stage as a focal point for meditation. Refining the main point has to be part of your process. I've given you the example of the Guru. Some people like

to do a month-long retreat on Guru devotional practice. To do this you must find your main point. The power of learning is what leads you to this conclusion of finding your focal point. Then you will focus on it.

1. *Focus*<sup>136</sup>

That is what the first stage is called. Focusing is the first step. It means over and over again taking your mind away from all that you are thinking. That includes following your past thoughts, inviting future thoughts and looking outside. Focus, focus, focus, focus. You are taking your mind away from external distractions and away from internally submitting to sinking mind, including sleep. Freeing yourself from the wandering mind and sinking mind and simply focusing on the point is the first step.

2. *Continual focus*<sup>137</sup>

You are focusing well, but at a certain point you'll lose your focal point. Your mind goes out or you fall asleep or you think of something else. Whenever you notice that, being able of bringing the mind forcefully back to the point where we are meditating, is the stage of continual focus.

Yes, you can focus, but you can't stay there. And old classmate and friend of mine, known as Gen Lamrimpa, wrote a book on focusing the mind. In a note he wrote me, he said, 'The teachings recommend meditating on the image, but I still think it is best to meditate on the mind. We try to bring the mental focus inside. When you are really focusing on the mind, you will be looking inside. When you are looking at the image, you will be looking out

there. That is what I think. You may have other thoughts. What do you think?’ He wrote that note. Maybe it is an important point. So Gen Lamrimpa recommends putting thoughts on the mind, rather than on the image. His reason is a valid reason.

When you are losing the focus, you put in a lot of continuous effort to make sure the mind is not running away. Remember, the word ‘remembrance’, often used here, doesn’t mean you’re not forgetting. It means you are constantly thinking. Making sure that you are constantly keeping your mind on your focusing point is the second step, called ‘continual focus.’

### 3. *Patch-like focus*<sup>138</sup>

This level is a little bit better than the previous one. When you can focus a little bit, the moment the mind goes out, try to realize it. Put this recognition on top of the focusing point. That is called ‘patch-like focus.’ In other words, if your mind has gone out, bring it back and focus. By this process: while focusing, losing the point and bringing the mind back again, the mind is becoming more and more subtle. This subtle mind focusing on the point will be the third stage.

### 4. *Close focus*<sup>139</sup>

Not only do you bring your mind back and patch it up, but you do it well and you focus well. Nagarjuna says that the moment your mind is going up, you collect it back, and make it focus. That is what you are doing at that level. You are bringing the focusing level higher and higher and better

and better. At level four, you are able to focus for a longer period. You don't lose focus as much as at level three. You can hold it a little longer, but you are still not really well focused. At this stage, you are recognizing the qualities of concentrated meditation, the quality of your meditation, and particularly the results you are going to get.

#### 5. *Controlled focus*<sup>140</sup>

Looking at the previously mentioned qualities of meditation, you make yourself happy to be meditating, happy to be able to focus. What makes you happy, is that you see the quality of samadhi, or the meditative equipoise level. You see their quality and their capacity and that makes you happy. You see that you will develop such capacities as clairvoyance, read others' minds and read the future, that you will know what's going to happen for me, for him or her, both in the short term and the long term. At the *zhi nay* level, you will have those developments, and seeing those will make you happy.

#### 6. *Pacified focus*<sup>141</sup>

At this stage, you see the problems of excitation and losing the focus. So, when you are losing focus through either external attractions, or through internally submitting to laxity, you are seeing those as faults. Knowing these are not the right things to do, because they don't give you the result you are looking for, knowing that at the moment they occur you are not concentrating, you develop a strong dislike for them. [Any tendency to ignore laxity or excitation]<sup>142</sup> will be pacified at this sixth level.

7. *Completely pacified focus*<sup>143</sup>

When you reach the seventh stage, you will know that you are not going to lose your focus to attachment-oriented thoughts, nor will you lose your mind to laxity, or sinking, particularly not the variety that is of the nature of ignorance.<sup>144</sup> Nor will you be subject to depressions. Actually, at this level, you are completely able to overcome all the gross levels of sinking mind, including the gross depressions. So, at this level, there are no obsessions, no unhappiness, no darkness or falling asleep during the meditation. At this level, meditation will give you the same benefits that sleep gives you. You pacified not only the wandering mind, but also unhappiness, obsession and attachment. All such problems are well pacified.

8. *Single-pointed focus*<sup>145</sup>

Being free of those obstacles, you will be able to continuously focus with much, much less interruption. At this time you are trying to focus without any effort. Up until now, you have put in a lot of effort. You still have to put in effort, but you're trying to focus without effort. This is the eighth stage, single-pointed focus.

9. *Equanimity*<sup>146</sup>

That is effortless meditating and focusing. The ninth stage is true meditation. When you reach the ninth stage, the meditative stage, the example given from the teachings is this: when you have memorized a tiny little book, or some verses of a song, the moment you say the first word, you will reach the end effortlessly, without having to remember.

Just as many of you here, when you say OM MANI you don't have to think—you will automatically say PADME HUNG. If you say some words from the long Avalokiteshvara mantra, 'DHARA DHARA, then you will automatically say 'DHIRI DHIRI DHURU DHURU ITTE VATTE TSALE TSALE PRATSALE PRATSALE.' It is going through your mind without effort. You can see that yourself, right? Just like that, when you reach that meditative stage, then you are meditating effortlessly.

That's why at that level you can plan and set a time period when you want to meditate. Normally it's finished, when the timer goes off, right? At the ninth meditation level the mind itself will function in that way. It comes automatically, effortlessly. That's why it's called an effortless state.

*Side effects.* At this level, you will also have side effects. You will have clairvoyance. You will probably read people's minds. You'll probably read your and others' future. Medicines have side effects; allopathic and even homeopathic and ayurvedic medicines have them sometimes. It's good for something but then it harms you in another way. Just like this, but in a positive way, when your mind reaches that level, your focus of mind will be sharpened to the point where you will read the future. To what degree is a different question. How long or far into the future you will see is a different issue, but you'll be able to see. If you want to, you can give limited predictions, though you can be wrong. (I kept seeing that Gephart will be Kerry's running mate, but I was wrong.) So, how far you see and what you see is a different question.

*The nine stages in reverse*

Before reaching, the ninth stage, equanimity, we have to have a habitual development of mindfulness and meta-alertness, so that they are constantly, continuously being applied. If you have that, what does it do? It cuts the two problems of excitation and laxity. It cuts them short; they can't stay long.

In order to develop that, you need the eighth stage, *single-pointed focus*. Neither at the eighth nor the ninth stage are you subject to interruption or disturbance by sinking or excitation, but at the eighth stage, joyous effort is needed, while at the ninth level, the meditation is effortless.

In order to develop that, the moment that either laxity or excitation comes, you must have established the habitual pattern of forcefully preventing them from occupying a single second within you. That is the seventh stage, *completely pacified focus*.

To reach the seventh stage, you have to achieve the sixth, *pacified focus*, and the fifth, *controlled focus*, levels first. Why? You have to know and recognize that sinking and excitation are problems. Not only must you know, but you have to have powerful meta-alertness. The fifth and sixth stages are purely developed by meta-alertness.

To develop meta-alertness, you have to reach the stage where you are constantly, mindfully focusing. You must also be able to block excitations before they even develop. This mindfulness produces the fourth, *close focus*, and before that, the third, *patch-like focus*.

The focus you must have is continuous; therefore you need the second, *continual focus* and in order to get that,

you need the first stage, *focus*. Tracing back, that is how you develop.

B) THE PROCESS OF ACHIEVING THEM WITH  
THE SIX POWERS

These nine stages are developed by the six powers These push you through the nine stages.

1. THE *power of learning* [THÖ PA]<sup>147</sup>

That leads you to *focus*. By learning meditation, your mind will follow. So you just try to meditate.

2. THE *power of contemplating* [SAM PA]<sup>148</sup>

The power of thinking will lead you to continual focus. Through that power of refining, you will be able to focus more and more and more. Even though you will lose your focus, by bringing your mind back again and again, you may be able to build a little better length of time during which you can focus without interruption. Even in a couple of seconds we lose a lot of focusing. We know this by experience. Whenever you lose the focus, don't let it go completely loose. Bring it back and try to maintain it a little bit longer. By continually refining what you've learned to its essence, you will gradually be able to hold your focus a little longer.

3. THE *power of mindfulness* [DREN PA]<sup>149</sup>

Even if you forget the subject, mindfulness will bring you back. At that point you have *patch-like focus*. Poor Tibetan people have the practice of stitching a piece of cloth on

a torn part [of a garment], in other words, patching it. Likewise here, it means, even if you are lost—which you are going to be—you have to patch up and add up again, and focus. That creates two stages, not only the patch-like stage, but also the next one—*close focus*. Why? Because at this level, whenever the mind is not focused, the mind will be brought back inside by the power of mindfulness and by that process mindfulness will be rebuilt and re-strengthened. Mindfulness brings the mind inside. This power will bring two stages.

4. THE POWER OF META-ALERTNESS [*shes zhin*]<sup>150</sup>

Likewise the power of meta-alertness will bring the next two stages, the *controlled focused* and the *pacified focus*. It is so-called because at that level, thoughts and disturbances and obstacles are strongly considered. The mind has learned that, and will see these as a problem. The mind doesn't go out of focus. Meta-alertness is really a result of mindfulness. You see in the pictures that the meditator has a lasso in one hand, and a sort of hook chopper knife in the other hand. The knife is used to strike the elephant's ear to control the elephant. That sharp knife is the metaphor for the mental faculty called meta-alertness. If we search in our minds right now, we will see we don't have that at all. It is mindfulness that will give birth to this mental alertness.

If you are used to taking a handbag with you, and one day you don't have it, you'll suddenly feel empty. The moment you feel empty, you start looking back and asking

yourself why you feel that way. Then you realize you've forgotten something and you trace back. For us, this is much, much too late. When you are practicing and your mindfulness has given birth to this alertness, the meta-alertness is there, touching all the time.

In a very expensive restaurant, each customer has a person standing behind her/him. Whatever a customer may want, the person standing behind will bring that. It is as though that attendant is clairvoyant and knows exactly what to bring. That sort of alertness is attending all the time. The moment you lose your focus, this mental faculty will recognize it immediately. Until that meta-alertness, *shes zhin* is born, you may begin the Lama Chöpa with *Namo Gurubhyah, Namō Buddhaya*, and then suddenly find yourself saying the auspicious verses. You have gone all the way through with no mindfulness.

Once meta-alertness is born, if you lose the focus in between the words *Namo* and *Guru*, that meta-alertness will inform you and wake you up. You may find that an alarm clock that rings every minute is very useful to remind you whether you are focusing or not. Mindfulness and meta-alertness born from it, are your two major tools to maintain your focus. In the drawings you will see the meditator holds two hand implements, the lasso and hook. These are metaphors for mindfulness and meta-alertness.

##### 5. THE POWER OF JOYOUS EFFORT<sup>151</sup>

That will bring the next two, the seventh and eighth stages, the stages of *completely pacified* and the *single-pointed focus*.

If this meta-alertness is attending all the time it becomes an obstacle. We talked about five obstacles that arise. When they do arise, and you are not attending, it becomes an obstacle. If they do not arise, and you are attending to them it also becomes an obstacle.

I spoke to you about the five faults, and the eight antidotes, *i.e.* the eight minds that tell you how to handle them, about the nine stages and the six powers and how to bring them all together.

If you don't have the power of *joyous effort*, none of it will work. Joyous effort is not a matter of forcing. You may remember my funny example of a dead-tired donkey with a heavy load, struggling uphill in the Himalayas. That is not enthusiasm. The enthusiasm that is needed is of a joy nature, and makes one enjoy engaging in any positive, virtuous activities.

Let's say you are dumped by your boyfriend or girlfriend. You try and try to make contact. Finally, you do and he/she tells you, 'meet me tomorrow in the middle of nowhere at three o'clock.' You keep on waiting there until six in the evening and no one shows up. You may think you are exercising patience. That is not patience, it is stupidity. Just like that, enthusiasm or joyous effort has to be of the nature of joy, not of force. This is an important point to remember.

You have to refine all the information you have; the teachings, readings, *etc.* and bring them together. The western style of organizing them into different boxes, labeling them and saying 'situation under control' will not do. It all has to be available to you at all times, in all places.

6. THE *power of habituation*<sup>52</sup>

That then brings the meditative state of *equanimity*, the ninth stage. Finally, joyous effort will prompt you to put still a little effort into real meditation.

Things will change when meditation becomes effortless. The total mind is like one little lump, everything joined together. It's all rolled into one point, which will be focusing on the subject of your meditation. That is the ninth stage. You don't need effort. The last of the six powers will push you. By a natural process you built natural habits; you formed your own personal habits. It is as though you got 'addicted' in a positive sense.

In short, again, whatever your subject or object may be, the first is the power of *learning*. Then try to make your meditation a little longer *refining* or *contemplation*. If you recognize that you are losing the focus, bring your mind back as quickly as possible, with *mindfulness*. You make this mindfulness stronger and stronger, until you don't lose your focus at all. Once you have such mindfulness, you will develop *meta-alertness*. You will begin to see it immediately when the problems of laxity and excitation come. Meta-alertness will become strong and powerful. Through it you will notice whether you are losing any attention, and cut it immediately. Your meditation will become stronger and longer. You will develop strong *joyous effort*, you will be able to continuously meditate. Then you will reach the state of *effortless* meditation, which is the ninth stage. At the ninth stage, without any effort, your mind stays totally on whatever point you have chosen. I'm not just talking

about meditation. When you want to put your mind to solving a certain mundane problem, this total mind will do the job. Meditation has become a tool. You may use it for a positive or negative purpose.

C) HOW THE FOUR TYPES OF ATTENTION ARE INVOLVED IN IT<sup>153</sup>

These nine mind stages are developed not only by the six powers, but also by four steps called in Tibetan *yi la che pa* which means truly, rightly focusing, rightly thinking. I don't have the exact English for this, so we may be able to develop this.

1. *Forcefully focusing*<sup>154</sup>

At the first two of the nine stages, you really have to put in a lot of effort. These stages are called the 'absolute efforts' stage or forcefully focusing. You are losing your focus all the time, bringing your mind back and trying to maintain a little length of focusing. So this first right way of thinking is with effort. Why is it called with effort? Of the nine stages, the first two require the most effort. Actually, this involves bringing about the right mind forcefully. That brings the first two of the nine stages.

2. *Interruptedly focusing*.<sup>155</sup>

During the third, fourth and fifth stages, the two obstacles we have, wandering and sinking, or excitation and laxity, are interrupting us all the time. You are rightfully thinking, you are focusing but your thinking is constantly interrupted. The duration of the periods when you are focusing

are very short, short, short, up to the seventh level. This is known as ‘interruptedly focusing’, *che jing jug pa*. You follow, but with a lot of distractions and interruptions.

3. FOCUSING *without interruption*.<sup>156</sup>

On the eighth stage, there’s not so much interruption. Laxity and excitation are quite well controlled. You have a lengthy time for meditation. This stage is called ‘without interruption. At that time, the powers of obstruction are quite reduced.

4. *Effortless focusing*.<sup>157</sup>

At the ninth stage there is effortless meditation or effortless mindfulness.<sup>158</sup>

3 THE MEASURE OF HAVING ATTAINED ZHI NAY

At the ninth stage, I said it is true meditation, but I did not say that it is *zhi nay* or true shamatha. The word *zhi* stands for peace and *ne* stands for remain. For this state, you must have some mental and physical happiness and joy. When you have this, it is called perfection of mind and perfection of body. These are both of a pleasure nature.

The perfection of body gives a tremendous amount of physical pleasure. Because the mind is so thoroughly trained and focused, it produces a special air-oriented energy, which moves throughout our physical body. Normally when our brain releases serotonin, we feel enjoyment in certain parts of our body. What I’ve learned is that the effect of this particular perfection energy is a thousand times greater than the serotonin effect. Still, this is nothing great. It does not

approach Vajrayana bliss at all. We are simply talking about a physical effect that will remain with the individual. It is unlike a chemical effect which comes and suddenly disappears. It appears to go down because we have it constantly, so we may not notice it.

That sort of physical perfection is followed by a similar mental effect. It brings us not only calmness and quietness, but also relaxation and happiness. In Tibetan, it is called *shin jangs*, short for *shin tu jang pa*.<sup>159</sup> Without that, the meditation is not considered *zhi nay* or shamatha.

I'd like to bring up two questions now. Tsongkhapa, in his *Lamrim Chenmo*, raises three questions, but I'd like to ask two.

- When do we consider *zhi nay*, or shamatha, to be attained?
- How do we move from there?

A. WHEN IS ZHI NAY ATTAINED—THE DIVIDING LINE

BETWEEN HAVING AND NOT HAVING ATTAINED ZHI NAY<sup>160</sup>

The first question is, has one reached *zhi nay* with the development of *shin jangs*, the perfection of body and mind concentrated training, or without it? In other words, does one reach *zhi nay* only after achieving the perfection, of body and mind, called *shin jangs*; or can we say one has arrived at the level of *zhi nay* prior to that development? We have already explained that at the ninth stage, there is not the slightest problem with either laxity or excitation. Therefore

you can continuously and effortlessly focus and meditate for a long time. Is that meditative level considered *zhi nay* or not? That question was actually addressed by Maitreya Buddha to Buddha himself. The way he put it was,

When the Bodhisattva is focusing internally, having developed perfect focus, but not yet the perfection of the physical and mental states, what kind of meditative state is that?

Buddha replied,

Maitreya, that is not *zhi nay*. It is semi-*zhi nay*. It looks like *zhi nay*, but it is not yet *zhi nay*.

I don't know whether you use this language in America or not, but in India they use the phrase, 'quasi-permanent.' When you have a professorship, you don't get tenure, but you are on the tenure track. They call that 'quasi-permanent.' We can call this meditation level 'quasi-*zhi nay*.' It's not *zhi nay* yet. That was Buddha's reply to Maitreya Buddha. After that, Maitreya wrote,

As a consequence of habituation, there is non-application. Then, upon achieving great pliancy of the body and mind, you are said to have mental engagement.<sup>161</sup>

In short, as Maitreya reinterpreted, once you have perfected meditating and focusing effortlessly, continuously, then you develop this perfection [or pliancy] of body and mind. At that point, you have obtained *zhi nay*. Without it, you have not.

When you are learning, and have understood only theoretically the principle of how it functions, you can't achieve that level. You have to get used to it. It is like my English reading. Somehow I recognize the letters, but I am not used to putting them together into words and sentences, so I don't get it perfectly. It's also like riding a bicycle. You learn a little bit, then get used to it reach that level of perfection, and then you can effortlessly ride the bicycle.

Buddha is saying it, Maitreya Buddha is saying it, and Kamalashila in his *middle Stages of Meditation* is continually saying it too. Kamalashila is the clearest on this point,

When you have physical and mental perfection,  
which means you can use your body and mind as  
you like, you have obtained *zhi nay*.

What does that mean? Is there a perfection of meditation level that is not *zhi nay*? And 'Is that beyond the desire realm or within it? these earlier teachers asked. When you are looking for the perfection of meditation level, these are the questions. Is my activity part of the desire realm, or am I beyond that, if I have not yet developed the perfection of body and mind? The teachers tell us, we are still in the desire realm. This is perfect meditation, and your mind is totally focused, but we have not gone completely beyond regrets, nor have we obtained joy. We are still within the desire realm and not in the form or formless realm.

Even though this meditation is so powerful, so focused and so complete that throughout every physical moment, our every activity, such as walking, sitting and sleeping are

done almost at a meditative level, we are still in the desire realm and have not attained *zhi nay* yet. Why? Because we don't have that physical and mental perfection, or pliancy [*shin jangs*] yet.

#### ATTAINMENT OF THE PLIANCY

*Pre-sign.* So what is this development called *shin jangs*? What comes first, prior to it? Now, Asanga is the one we go to for the answer.

If you keep on focusing [having reached the ninth level], not very long after that you will develop this perfection, or pliancy. The pre-signal is that the individual meditator will feel some kind of heaviness within his/her brain. Immediately, he says this heaviness is not unpleasant. Nor does it hurt him/her at all.

The meditator feels a warmness, along with a kind of moisture feeling. Pabongka gives the example of the Chinese hot towel. You shave your head completely, and have a very hot, wet towel put on your head. Perhaps until Pabongka's time, they hadn't seen this Chinese restaurant hot towel treatment. Pabongka had a lot of warlords from the Szechwan province as disciples and they might have given him this hot towel. Since he kept his head shaved all the time; probably they put a hot, wet towel on his head, and he recognized that feeling and said, 'Aaahh, the experience of the warmth and moisture feels like that.' Then, of course, you feel good too.

That is not the joy itself. It is a signal that this joy is going to come. The moment that pre-signal comes, your personal attitude will change. Laziness, tiredness, all desire and hatred, somehow, you are not willing to entertain them at all. You'll be happy to be without them. Your mind is leaning towards being free of those disturbing emotions and of the physical feelings such as laziness, tiredness and heaviness. It is as though you have switched them off, and your whole attitude has completely changed.

*Mental pliancy.*<sup>162</sup> As a result of that, you develop a lot of joy and happiness, not only for meditation, but just for living, just for being there, for being alive. You feel a lot of happiness and joy with no reason. The reasons are there no doubt; for example, all of the efforts you made and all the mind stages you had to achieve. It appears, however, that without any reason, tremendous joy and happiness have suddenly developed.

Then, because of that, this mental happiness, which means mental perfection, enables you to use your mind wherever and for whatever you want. Of course, by the nature of how this perfection, or pliancy, works, you will completely withdraw from the negative side, and put all your focus completely on the perfect side. That is called mental perfection.

If having developed that, you misuse it, if you use it for any wrong thing you want to do, it may, by the nature of its activity work but after a while, however, it will stop. Through working perfectly toward the positive side, this perfection won't stop thereafter. It will continue.

*Physical pliancy.*<sup>163</sup> The mental perfection will transform the energy within your body. The perfect type of energy will be developed, and will travel throughout your physical body, from head to toe. Your physical body will function completely differently. It will be light, perfectly light. You will be able to use the body any way, whatever way you want. That's what happens. Tsongkhapa tries to prove this, and quotes Asanga.

Because of the energy produced at that perfect mind level, you will feel your body is full of air and completely light. You will gain complete control over every part of your physical body. This is what perfection of the body is all about.

Now, Tsongkhapa asks, 'Is that a mental faculty or is it a property of] the body?' Tsongkhapa says it is a *feeling within the body*. It is not a mental faculty. In other words, you will perfectly fully feel that way.

*Song Rinpoche and lus shin jangs.* There is a funny story I can tell you. I really saw it. It is about one of my students, a fully ordained monk, who had been studying with me for a long time. He worked for Drepung Loseling [Monastery]. He's a German-oriented guy. Everything had to be done right. He had that sort of pushiness. He went into Loseling, and continually did things his way. He organized Loseling quite a different way. He set up the library, set up a printing press, and did many things, but always the way he wanted.

A lot of the senior monks didn't like him very much. They realized he was helping a lot, but this Gelong-la

would argue with everyone every time. A number of junior monks got together and beat him up one day—well, actually quite badly. Still he wouldn't stop! Then they couldn't help it, one day the abbot had to make an announcement and request that he leave. Even then, he wouldn't go.

Finally, he went to Kyabje Ling Rimpoche, who was of course the senior most lama in Loseling to ask him to intervene. I happened to be there, and Kyabje Rimpoche told me, 'You take him with you.' (Rimpoche cracks up more.) That's how Gelong-la came with me. Our Gelong-la.

Kyabje Song Rimpoche, another very, very senior monk, made many visits to the west in the '70s. On one of his very last visits, he was with us. Song Rimpoche had a beard and always traveled in a wheelchair. Gelong-la, who spoke half-broken Tibetan, kept bugging Song Rimpoche all the time, 'You have to do exercise.' Song Rimpoche would never move.

We kept on hearing that Gelong-la was bugging him. Song Rimpoche called me and told me, 'Take this guy away from me.' But one more time he let him come and see him. He said, 'Let me talk to him.' Song Rimpoche was sitting on one of those folding beds. Normally, when Song Rimpoche got up, he had to be pulled forward by two people, with someone pushing from behind. Song Rimpoche said to Gelong-la, 'What is it with this exercise? What are you talking about?' So Gelong-la started showing the exercises. Song Rimpoche said, excitedly, 'Is it like that?' He jumped out of bed just like that; boom, up and started making the same movements. Gelong-la got a little surprised and said,

‘What is this? You really don’t need a wheelchair.’ Song Rimpoche said, ‘Get out.’

Probably, when you have the *lus shin jangs*, the perfect pliancy of the body, the body must be of a light nature. Probably, if you really want to jump, you can jump. Maybe, just maybe. If you look into the Chinese tradition, you’ll find they have these physical phenomena a lot, in their martial arts. For instance, there are the great masters of the Shaoling tradition. While some of the new ones are learning and jumping round everywhere, these old people don’t even move. Sometimes, during the chanting, like ‘Form is emptiness, emptiness is form,’ there is all this gossiping going on. Sometimes when this is happening, some of the older monks just open their eyes alone and the younger ones fall over. Probably this is a result of the perfection of body and mind.

With this perfection, you may obtain *zhi nay*. It says,

Until you use your body and mind perfectly toward the positive meditative level, as much as you want, in the way you want, you have not obtained this perfection of *shin jangs*. The body and mind *shin jangs* free you of wrong functioning of mind and wrong functioning of body.

This is an old text. Wrong functioning means negative functioning. This perfection takes you away completely from functioning negatively. It says,

Whenever you try to get rid of negativities, you feel tired or heavy. You have to push yourself, and even then are unable to do what you are trying to do, properly. Body perfection will take you completely away from that and give you the opposite; lightness, and the ability to use your body as much as you want and as long as you want.

Likewise, with the mind, while you are trying to get away from the negativities, [you encounter] a lot of obstacles, you find a zillion different reasons why you shouldn't [try to get rid of negativities] and you just stop. Then [after training] the mind will automatically take you toward perfection. This is called 'useful mind, useful body.'

There are a lot of quotations on this. I'm going to jump now.

From the very beginning of our meditation, from stage one onward, in tiny, tiny subtle increments we begin to obtain this perfection. However, we will never notice. We will never know. By these increments this perfection will increase more and more until we reach real perfection. With that joy, with that lightness in body, that perfection is now called *zhi nay*.

That is where *zhi nay* is first obtained. The Buddha says so in the sutra itself. Buddha's nice word(s) here are,

If your mind is happy, your body will be perfect.

That's it. If your mind is happy, your body will become perfect. What does that mean? 'Mind happy' means mental perfection developed, and that will bring the development of physical perfection.

By this time, both mind and body have a tremendous feeling of joy and lightness; however, that feeling will gradually diminish. When it seems to be diminishing, it is not actually going down. It has a great impact when it first comes. As it remains with you, you will notice it less. It's not that the joy is diminishing, nor that the perfection of the body is diminishing. You will just notice it less. The mind has somehow adapted to it. This is called 'unshakeable samadhi.'

Such joy in the mind and the body will be continuously focused. Then you will be freed from all that is wrongful, and it becomes perfect *zhi nay*.

That is yet another quote from Asanga.

When you have that perfection, that is called *zhi nay*, what is it exactly and where do you get it? Actually, *zhi nay* is the first stage of meditation. It is very interesting. By meditating on *zhi nay*, body-mind perfection will naturally occur. You can focus completely and reduce all negativities. You can properly concentrate. Desire, sleep, etc. will gradually decrease. When you 'wake up' from the meditative level, you will feel completely rested

and relaxed in your body, and there is happiness in your mind.

These are the signs of the development of the *shin jangs*. In other words, once you develop body and mind *shin jangs*, you can probably substitute meditation for sleep.

The more meditation you do, the more the perfections will grow. The more the perfections grow, the more *zhi nay* you will develop. It's as though the mental and physical perfections and the perfect meditation are competing with each other. Tsongkhapa confirms this.

What happens is that when the mind is perfect, it produces perfect energy. That energy brings perfection of the body, which brings another perfect meditative level, which produces perfect energy. In this natural cycle they will produce each other constantly and continuously within the individual.

That is shamatha or *zhi nay*, which we've been talking so much about. There is still a lot to talk about here.

Sometimes, our habits and our addictions will cause our mind to lose its positive focus and we will entertain negative thoughts and negative emotions. The moment that begins to happen, the strong habit we've developed (through the nine stages) of reminding ourselves and looking at these negative emotions as a source of trouble; that habit will draw our attention back again to the positive. Occasionally these problems will pop up, but your mind will be able to correct itself.

The state of the mind appears to be: nothing remembering, nothing concentrating. The focusing mind and the mind on which you are focusing are almost in a state of oneness, of open space.

Ultimately, when you are focusing on anything; forms, sound, smell, touch, etc., there will be such a clarity, extreme clarity. Yet there will be no mental provocation. The mind will play no tricks whatsoever. Any thoughts that pop up here and there will be like a bubble in the water. It will pop up and disappear by itself. Within that total but effortless focus you will experience openness and spaciousness, yet with clarity and knowledge. One still experiences joy. At that moment, you will feel nothing about yourself, not even your own physical body. Your mind is space-like, as though you are part of space. When you 'wake up' from that meditative level, you will feel as though your physical body has suddenly developed. It is all there.

After that, hatred, etc., may occasionally develop arise but that will not be able to continue.

That is called perfect peace. It is almost like space, but it is not without clarity. It is still absolutely clear. If you look at a house, you can clearly see every particle of the walls, pillars, etc. You'll be able to see each and every small atom. You can still focus very strongly. Sometimes you do not need to sleep. Meditation and sleep (almost) merge into

oneness. You do have dreams, but they are pure visions.

That is really what *zhi nay* is all about. Why have I been reading? Because I don't have it. Someone who has it will tell you about it.

In short, you focus until a great pleasure begins to arise within the head and spreads down, feeling like the gentle invigorating warmth of a hot towel held against the face. As a result of that you develop joy and happiness making your mind serviceable. Perfect energy spreads throughout the body until you feel as light as cotton. Then when you meditate you have a sense of inseparability with the object. Your body seems to disappear in meditation and you sort of become one with the object. You almost want to fly away in your meditation. After this you can fix the mind on any object of virtue for as long as desired. This is the preparatory stage or the first level of samadhi. Meditation is light and free, like a humming bird in mid-air drinking honey from a red flower.

B. HOW DO WE MOVE ALONG THE PATH ON THE  
BASIS OF HAVING ATTAINED ZHI NAY<sup>164</sup>

Now the question arises: if you have such a meditative level, where is it, in relation to the five paths? Is it the path of accumulation, the path of action, the path of seeing, the path of meditation or the path of no more learning? Tsongkhapa replies,

If you have an understanding of emptiness, it is considered the path of liberation for ordinary persons, which means, the second path. It may be either the first or second path.

If there is no influence of emptiness, then it is just meditation. It is the samsaric meditative level.

This is nothing to be surprised about. It is a samsaric, not a non-samsaric level. It is however, free of attraction, free of attachment, free of hatred, so it is possible that you may be able to reach a higher level. This is a common state that everybody, Buddhist and non-Buddhist can have. It is very, very common. It is the beginning.

If you have an understanding of emptiness, or if you are seeking liberation from samsara, or if you have a desire to free yourself at the beginning level, then of course, it is the path to liberate yourself. If this is influenced by bodhimind, love and compassion, then of course this is part of Mahayana; it will give you total enlightenment. For example, if a bodhisattva with a bodhimind gives just a single piece of food to an animal, it will be considered perfect generosity. It is just like that.

We are not talking about whether it will be a cause of enlightenment, we are talking about which level this state of concentrated meditation occupies. It is, just as I stated earlier, very common; it is a beginning. It is a fundamental basis of liberation. No matter what path you may be following, Buddhist or otherwise, this basis is required.

In the Hindu tradition, the higher, upper stages are con-

sidered to be at the subtle level, and the lower stages are at the gross level. You move from the gross level to the subtle level, as far as you can. There are *four stages with form, four that are formless*, making eight stages.<sup>165</sup> Starting from the first, second, third and fourth form stage, you may reach the formless stages: infinite space, conscious, nothingness and the peak of samsara.<sup>166</sup>

Buddhists differ from Hindus on this matter. Based on his experience, Buddha recommends against looking for gross and subtle differences. According to Buddha's teaching, it is important to gain the power to use your mind and body as much as you want to, by you attaining *zhi nay*. Then do not go toward the subtle path. Move to wisdom. That is how Buddha works.

*The story of Matricheta.* Matricheta was a great non-buddhist teacher and scholar, who was really a hero as an anti-Buddhist. He came to Nalanda, one of the most outstanding buddhist learning centres during that period. And he demanded to have a debate.

In India, at that time, debates were not like the debates here nowadays. At those debates, the king and all the people came together. Whoever lost the debate had to follow the tradition of his opponent. You had to give up your tradition completely. That is how the debates in the old, ancient Indian and Tibetan tradition were done.

He was a fantastic great scholar and a great person of his own. The Nalanda people looked carefully and they found that no one could challenge him. So they agreed to have

a debate, but somehow they were postponing the debate, because they knew they couldn't do anything. They were hoping that Nagarjuna or his disciple Aryadeva, who were outside the monastery somewhere in south-India, would come back. They had no alternative but to pray; they kept on praying to Mahakala all the time. So they wrote a message to be delivered to Nagarjuna and put it on the torma of Mahakala. The whole monastery door was locked. They kept on beating the drums and praying to Mahakala, 'Help, help, help, help, help, help!'

What happened? One day Mahakala's manifested as a raven and picked the message that was on the torma and then flew off. Now they knew the message was going to reach. They kept on praying. Nagarjuna said, 'Well, this non-buddhist scholar is threatening Nalanda, I have to go back.' Nagarjuna at that time had long hair and was almost like a yogi. So he said, 'I have to shave my hair and put on a robe and go back to the monastery to debate.' His disciple Aryadeva said, 'No, no, no, you don't have to go, I'll go.' Nagarjuna said, 'Okay, but then you have to prepare. You keep on debating me and I will reply as the non-buddhist scholar is going to do.' So Aryadeva kept on debating Nagarjuna and Nagarjuna was answering just like the non-buddhists would answer. It was so much in that manner that in between the debate Aryadeva thought, 'What has happened to my teacher? Why is he holding such a funny view? I have some funny thought a little bit there.' At that moment Nagarjuna said, 'Now stop, you are okay, you will defeat him, you go. However you have one big obstacle

because of the thought you just developed. It is a big obstacle, but you will be alright. Go.'

So Aryadeva went. On the way he lost one eye,<sup>167</sup> but finally he reached Nalanda. Now every morning this non-buddhist scholar was waiting for the debate, was controlling the monastery. As they couldn't debate him for a long time, he was controlling the monastery, but nobody was following him yet. In the traditional Indian system you have to debate and if you lose you have to follow that system, you have to give up your old system. So in the morning when they went out, he counted everybody, 'One bold head, two bold heads, three bold heads', hitting them on the head with a little stick. And they everyone went out and when coming back he counted them again, 'One bold-headed, two bold-headed' hitting them with the little stick on the head. So Aryadeva came and also went through along with the others. He happened to be the last one and so he got one extra number. So he said, 'Where does this bold head that was not here before, come from?' and hit. Aryadeva immediately replied, 'Came from the neck!.' So he knew, 'Oh, you are the one who wants to debate me. Now I know.' So then Aryadeva and Matricheta, the two of them, had a debate. It was not easy for Aryadeva to defeat him. No, not at all easy. These non-buddhist scholars are not easy. Even Naropa had a big, big problem to defeat one of them; Tilopa had to appear.

When the debate was set up, Aryadeva had a bottle of oil, a shameless guy, a chat and some dirty shirts, old shoes and things like that. What had happened? Matricheta had a certain siddhihood on debate, which he had got from

Indra. He had a slate with this power: when wherever in whatever debate he would be about to lose, the slate would show him whatever the other person's arguments and thoughts were going to be. If that would fail—Indra's powers are limited—then a parrot would come in and talk to him. If that would fail, then Indra's wife would appear and talk to him. And if that would fail Indra himself would enter into the body of this scholar and debate. That was the siddhi Matricheta had. So Tara told Aryadeva, 'You have to take those things. Nagarjuna sent you, so from your scholarly knowledge and your experience there is no doubt that you will defeat him, but you also need help. My suggestion is you take those.' Aryadeva said, 'Why?' And Tara insisted he should take that.

What happened? When Matricheta started seeing things on his slate, somehow Tara did something and the bottle of oil fell on the slate and nothing could be seen on it any more. Then when the parrot came, the cat went, 'Grrrrr' and the parrot had to watch the cat all the time and could not help. So now Indra's wife was supposed to appear personally but that shameless guy was sitting there naked. Now these samsaric gods have this funny little feeling of embarrassment, so she didn't want to appear there. Now Indra himself wanted to enter. The samsaric gods have so much attachment to this cleanness, that Indra could not enter under these shirts of different people, dirty shoes and things like that, which were put on top of the big umbrella. They used a big umbrella for each debater.

Then finally this scholar was defeated and he flew away in the air. Aryadeva chased him up and after some time got

him down and put him in the prison. They had no prison, but they had a little old mud house where old incomplete texts were put. He was a learned scholar, right? So he was sitting there, taking loose pages and reading and reading pieces of texts. By doing that he gained a lot of understanding of the Buddha's teachings. Not only he lost a debate here which was impossible to lose but nevertheless he lost, but he was also gaining much more understanding. The debate was on emptiness actually, whether there is a self or there is no self, so between Shankaracharya's acceptance of self<sup>168</sup> and Nagarjuna's point of selflessness. That has not been settled between Hindus and Buddhists even today; that is what they say today. The buddhist say it has been settled by Aryadeva with Matricheta and needs no longer be talked about.

Anyway, Matricheta was reading and picked up one little piece of paper, which was a prophecy of Buddha, saying that in that sort of year there will be that be that sort of outstanding scholar, named so and so, and there will be a debate and the buddhist follower so and so will defeat him and this fellow will not only become a buddhist, but a great saint and sage and one of the outstanding buddhist leaders and will be a great help for the future and blah blah blah.

He was very surprised, and began to think, 'Why did I lose? Where did I go wrong?' He then went back over it and reviewed everything. Finally he realized, 'This is where I went wrong.' So he gained a lot of understanding there in his prison. Then he wrote a famous praise to Buddha. And

in that praise he said,

The beauty of the Buddha's way is not going through these concentration levels. You don't even go for the first actual stage of *samadhi*. Instead of that you have a technique to take samsara's eyeball out, which was lacking in the system that I had learned. I like that.

So, he said, 'In the path that I followed, we had gone so subtle, subtle, subtle and we reached the ultimate peak level. Since, however, we could never get rid of negative emotions completely, we had a fallback. We went up to the peak, to the subtlest pinnacle; however, the power of this meditative level would reduce. Negative emotions and sufferings would somehow grow again. In the path you are showing, even though one doesn't reach even the first level of meditative stabilization you use wisdom. You thus remove the eyeballs of suffering completely making us free, and I praise you.' This is a quality of Buddhism. Instead of wasting time going through all these stages of *samadhi*, from the power of concentration you switch over to analytical investigation.

These two verses really tell you the difference here between the two systems. Even Buddha himself never says 'what I did is great.' It is one of his qualities, that even though he might know something without a doubt, instead of saying it is, he says 'it may be.' You always find this Buddhist quality of humility. Buddha even told people to follow

that way of saying ‘it may be.’ I learned that way.

If you have any questions, and if I know the answers, I’ll be happy to say a few things.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

**Audience:** What is the difference between enthusiasm as a paramita and joyous effort as one of the six powers of mind?

**Rimpoche:** I believe it is the same enthusiasm, but the paramitas are going beyond. There we are looking almost at the level of perfection. Here, we are talking about ordinary enthusiasm. The six paramitas are really ‘gone beyond.’ There we are looking at the ultimately good stages. Here, however, we are only talking about the usual efforts that we apply.

**Audience:** Are we able to deal with subtle sinking and subtle wandering before we get to that ‘patching the gaps’ level three of the nine stages where we have relatively continuous focus, or is it impossible to deal with that before we have consistent meditation?

**Rimpoche:** I don’t think we will even recognize the subtle sinking at all. Subtle sinking will not become obvious to us as long as we have gross laxity, or sinking. When you peel off the rough skin of the laxity, then you begin to see subtle laxity. The teachings will tell you that this is a problem, but we really won’t see it until this gross level is removed.

We refer easily to subtle and gross laxity, but I think there are a great many layers in there; layer after layer.

Sometimes the subtle sinking mind has been called meditation. The earlier teachers like Tsongkhapa are very critical of this. We ourselves even think a lot of forms of gross sinking mind are meditation. When the gross levels of sinking mind have been removed, the levels of subtly sinking mind will be revealed.

#### SHAMATHA MEDITATION IN VAJRAYANA

**Audience:** (...)

**Rimpoche:** This is a meditation course. We just give you the meditation in general. Vajrayana practitioners have a slightly different development of shamatha. I spent a lot of time on that during the last Winter Retreat.<sup>169</sup> There is a difference between non-Vajrayana shamatha and Vajrayana shamatha, though no text or nobody will ever say there is. They will all say it's the same. But the way one develops it and how one gains it, are different. Vajrayana has a lot more points which at the normal meditation level we don't talk about.

When Vajrayana practitioners want to develop this shamatha, there is a point in the Vajrayana daily sadhana practice where they develop it. The focusing point will be completely different. The moment is built in into the sadhana. In Vajrayana they don't give you instructions on shamatha. In Vajrayana, they will say, 'Now do shamatha here on this point.' That's it. It means all the instructions to be applied there, are given here on this level.

**Audience:** I know you've been saying that right now we're only going to be able to meditate for a second or two at a

time. I have a lot of times when my mind has been away somewhere else before I recognize that it's off the point and I bring it back. There are ways in which I'm working with this within doing a sadhana, and then there's also just doing sitting meditation. Do you feel that it's advantageous for us to do a particular amount of sitting meditation in addition to the sadhanas, and how much should we do?

**Rimpoche:** The beauty of the Vajrayana is, you don't have to allocate a separate time for sitting meditation. In the west, Dharma centers have a system of scheduling a time for meditations. People come in, keep quiet, sit down, and that's a great thing. I think it comes from Southeast Asia, from the Theravadin tradition of meditation, if you are talking from the Buddhist point of view.

The beauty of the Vajrayana is they don't give this meditation course separately because it is covered in the Mahayana, where all Vajrayana practitioners have had at least a little bit of Lamrim training as prerequisite. The beauty of the Vajrayana is that throughout the sadhana, from the beginning to the end, the aspects of meditation are completely covered.

From the Guru praise to the instantaneous rise, through the blessings, generating a supreme field, through the seven limbs, the accumulation of merit, through the Dharmakaya death and dying stage, through generating the universe, the mandala environment and inhabitants, through the subtle deities in/on the body, through the purities of the body, and the mantra recitation . . . *All* is focused on this.

You do not need a separate time to do sitting meditation. If you have plenty of time, and you want to do it,

it is good, but it is not necessary, because it is completely covered in the sadhana.

If you haven't developed shamatha before, before going into the completion stage however, at the development stage, you have to develop this *zhi nay*. Although the instructions may not be as detailed as what we've heard here, each sadhana provides the point of the purities, where you can do so. They are not contained in the short sadhana, but all the long sadhanas have them. E.g. if you are doing a Yamantaka sadhana, it says, that the nine faces are the nine scriptural categories, the two horns are the two truths, the thirty-four arms together with the body, speech and mind are the thirty-seven elements directed at enlightenment *etc.* If you have developed shamatha earlier, you don't have a job to do. If you haven't, however, you have to develop it there.

At the Vajrayana level, you can achieve all nine stages within the Vajrayana practice. Without even thinking in terms of the nine stages, since you have the knowledge, you can clearly see how much you are thinking, how many interruptions you experience, and how much effort you have or don't have to apply. You can see whether it is effortless. You are able to judge for yourself.

Even if you are just doing a White Tara practice, as you are focusing on Tara, you see what stage you've reached. Is it an interrupted level, or just focusing, or a little bit more than focusing, or a level with effort, or without effort? This is true within all practices.

We give this course on meditation separately, in order to specifically emphasize it. When you attend a Vajrayana teaching, any of them, I'm not going to tell you there are

nine stages and six powers *etc.*, because they are not part of that teaching.

That is the reason why *zhi nay* and *lhak tong* are sometimes called the backbones of practice. They are called backbone because they tell you where you are. It's just very clear to you. Which of the six powers are you using? At which of the four types of attention are you?

Some weeks ago we covered the five faults that have to be overcome by the eight antidotes. These are relevant even before you get to stage one or two of the nine stages. Even single focusing on White Tara or the White Tara sadhana have all these levels, powers, etc. And then, [in a Vajrayana practice] the vividness is going to add up.

There is a slight difference here between the Vajrayana and the non-Vajrayana levels. The Vajrayana level demands clarity. For instance, if you are meditating on Tara, you are meditating on Tara's face, seven eyes, two hands, implements, sitting crossed-leg, lotus cushion, jewel ornaments and her garments. Vajrayana demands complete clarity and vividness of all of it. Non-Vajrayana does not. A yellow lump will do.

If you are a Yamantaka practitioner, you have the demand of the clarity of thirty-four heads, sixteen legs and nine faces. If you are a Heruka practitioner, you must have the clarity of four faces and twelve hands. For Vajrayogini, the clarity of one face and two hands is easy to do, but also all the body mandala deities are demanded.

The Vajrayana techniques, systems, and applications all demand vividness and clarity, not only of the mind, but also of the subject. At the non-Vajrayana level, we talk about

this 'crispy' mind level, but nothing beyond that. Vajrayana is much more intense, the demand is much more.

**Audience:** I understood, probably wrongly, that in doing a sadhana, when you're building up the visualization that it's an analytic meditation. If you don't have a long time to concentrate on each of the points that you build up, what should you spend your concentration time focusing on?

**Rimpoche:** At least you have to think it's there: the deity with the mandala and with everything. Think that they are there. That will be the object of concentration. This is *maha anu yoga* tantra and that is also another funny thing. You are looking at everything from inside. You are the one who is the yidam. You can also generate Tara in front of you, but also you yourself are Tara. For us here it is a little easier, but in *maha anu yoga* tantra, except at the end, at the time of the offering to the front generation, you don't have the additional Tara there. It is only you, and everything is you, you, you. You are making offerings to yourself. You are the yidam, you are the one. You are focusing, perhaps, on oneness.

That's why in the Vajrayogini teaching, when you have ten or twelve days of teaching, sometimes in the evening you will be given one thing to focus on, like the third eye, or the hand implements. You are given a focusing point each day. It is not that they tell you directly, but indirectly, they inform you completely about the need of focusing.

In the west, there is a lot of demand to teach exactly what to do and where to sit. If any of you have been listen-

ing to the Ann Arbor broadcasted teachings on Tuesday, I've been telling this is 'cow teaching.' If you are talking to a cow, then you have to spell it out. If e.g. you teach a chimpanzee how to say, 'Ah, ah,' the chimpanzee will be able to say 'ah.' Then you tell the chimpanzee, 'put down, sit down.' *etc.* As an educated human being, you really don't need that. The most important thing is you have to get the information, and then apply it.

*Cow teaching.* I have a story, which actually happened, probably 200 years ago. A great learned teacher was teaching a nomad guy how to read. He was teaching the alphabet. He was very polite. He didn't say, 'ka!' (harshly). You know the Tibetan alphabet goes, ka kha ga nga . . . it doesn't go a, b, c, d. The teacher could have taught the nomad to say 'ka' but he didn't. What he said is, 'Nice guy, gentleman, the first thing you say is 'ka'.' So the guy repeated, 'Nice gentleman, the first thing you say is 'ka'.' The second time, the teacher said, 'Don't say such a thing, just say 'ka'.' So the guy repeated, 'Don't say such a thing, just say 'ka'.' Then the third time, the teacher said, 'You stupid mother . . . F-word . . . say 'ka'.' The nomad repeated 'You stupid mother . . . F-word . . . say 'ka'.' This is what we call 'cow teaching.' Educated human beings differ from chimpanzees. I'm not scolding either one of you for your questions. The knowledge is there and you have to apply it. That's exactly how it works. It is important to put them together. The other example I shared with you the other day was if you don't have much to teach, you say, 'This is the book, this is gold,

this is silver.’ These examples deal with the level of understanding that people have.

*Bring the teachings together.* The important thing is to bring all the teachings, everything you pick up, together in a single practice. When you are giving teachings and meditation courses, you do present all the aspects of meditation. When you are practicing, there is no separation between your meditation and your sadhana. Bring them together.

That, I believe, is the difference between the professors and practitioners. Professors, or academicians have to separate all these aspects into different boxes and label them. Practitioners bring them together. It may be a little bit chaotic. It doesn’t matter. Out of the chaos and mystery you will pop up with vividness and enlightenment.

#### CONCLUSION ON SHAMATHA

We have been trying to develop this shamatha, *zhi nay* level. We have talked in fine detail. This is not just part of Lamrim. It applies to every level of practice. Even in the completion stage of great *maha anu yoga* tantra one needs this.

We’ve been talking about concentrated meditation as a structure, and in terms of obstacles and how to overcome them, the stages, the powers which establish each stage, and the awareness obtained at each stage. Everything has been covered in detail, and has been completed, actually.

At the same time, on Tuesday nights, I’m presenting the eighth chapter, on meditation, from the Bodhisattvacarya-

vatara. As you may have noticed, that does not give you any structure of meditation at all. It does give you the subject on which to meditate very strongly: compassion, love and bodhimind. It presents much more material to think about than *how* to think about it. The material to think about is endless, actually. With the combination of these two, the Tuesday and Thursday talks, we have one of the best complete sets of meditation instructions.<sup>170</sup>

This shamatha is the meditation that is common to Hindu, Buddhist and all traditions. It is shared by] Mahayana, Theravadin, Vajrayana. As I told you, it is the lowest category of meditation in the Hindu tradition.<sup>171</sup> There are nine stages of which eight are beyond zhi nay: in the Hindu tradition: four form levels and four formless levels, and of which the highest is] the ultimate level, called ‘the peak of samsara.’<sup>172</sup> Buddha says there is no point in going through all of these. The question is, what do you want out of meditation? If your goal is only to sit strongly in meditation, then fine, you can go on through the form and formless stages. If your purpose is to liberate yourself, then zhi nay or shamatha is good enough.

A very interesting thing happened today. When I came in, as usual someone picked me up at the airport. Then he drove me down, and asked me a question. I was saying something about learning. He asked, ‘Is this the learning of knowledge, or is this spiritual development?’ A number of people may have asked me that before, but it didn’t strike me. It did strike me today, that in the Buddhist tradition, particularly the Tibetan Buddhist tradition of Tsongkhapa, whenever we say ‘learning’ we’re not talking about getting

information, but about digesting it. It's not a matter of doing research, understanding and learning in the usual way. Here, on the spiritual path, what is learned rightly becomes part of you. It becomes part of your character, part of your personality. It influences your functioning.

I have been talking about *zhi nay*, and the importance of what your goal is. *Zhi nay* is a [meditative] tool. If you use it to become enlightened, Buddha said, *zhi nay* is enough in terms of concentration ability. You don't have to go beyond it. It will give you a stable mind, with which you accomplish the real purpose here, which is to gain good wisdom. Wisdom is the antidote of ignorance, confusion and fear. What is usually called ignorance I like to call 'ego.'

*Zhi nay* without wisdom doesn't cut ignorance at all. No matter how stable you become, that alone will never deliver the goods of liberation.

So, *zhi nay* is the lowest meditative level. Yet it has to be done right. You cannot hope to gain wisdom without even this lowest level. The tradition will tell you, 'Don't build an ice castle.' That is what is happening when you try to build wisdom without the basis of *zhi nay*. It's not going to stay there. You may put in a lot of effort, but it's not going to stay. It's going to melt down. Buddha shared this *zhi nay*, or shamatha, or concentration as the fifth paramita, and wisdom as the sixth paramita. They add up on top; the sixth is built on the fifth.

*Elephant chart.*<sup>173</sup> We have finished and now present you with the elephant chart, which shows the training of sha-

matha. It is based on a thangka from late Tomo Geshe Rimpoche's collection, which those at Gang Nam<sup>174</sup> have very kindly made available to us. You see this picture, or rather story, in a lot of books, and many of them give you the wrong explanation. Our purpose was to make it clear. We have actually blown up parts of the painting that explain each level. There are nine stages and six powers that are made clear page by page.

Thus, the whole meditation course is actually completed.

If you are motivated by a mind seeking liberation, desiring freedom, every meditation will be anti-samsara. Every meditation influenced by bodhimind will be on the Mahayana path, the path that delivers buddhahood. If you are lacking those, it will be just meditation. These are the differences you will find. If you are a Vajrayana practitioner, this will give you a tremendous boost in your development stage. That is shamatha. Next will be wisdom.<sup>175</sup>

## VII MAHAMUDRA

Welcome for tonight. As we have six more Thursdays, I thought maybe I can present mahamudra.<sup>176</sup> It may be suitable. There is an advantage to doing mahamudra now. Next year I want to concentrate on wisdom, and the relative Mahamudra and the absolute Mahamudra is emptiness.<sup>177</sup>

In Tsongkhapa's tradition, the tradition that I come from, Lamrim is known as father-like and mahamudra is known as childlike. They are also called mother-like and daughter-like. The former is a little more detailed and more elaborate. The latter is a little shorter and more specifically focused. I'm going to be brief, because I don't want to draw it out so much that I don't finish it. Then I wouldn't be able to start the Wisdom part after January.

In this tradition, the mahamudra is taught according to the First Panchen Lama's Root Text on the mahamudra.

PRAISE

*Namo (Guru) Mahamudraya*

Homage to mahamudra, the great seal of reality.<sup>178</sup>

*Namo* is paying respect, bowing down. *Guru* is Master. Guru and Lama are the same thing. Lama is Tibetan, Guru

is Sanskrit. The message of Guru or Lama is actually 'heavy.' Not fat heavy, but heavy with quality; in normal American language, 'loaded with quality.' If you wear monk's robes a lot of people will call you 'lama,,' they call all monks 'lama.' The Tibetologists who cannot identify the lama easily just say 'monk.' Among Tibetans, lama doesn't mean monk at all. Lama means: loaded with good qualities.

*Maha*, as you know, is 'big', Mahayana means 'Big Vehicle.' In Namö (Guru) Mahamudraya, Maha has the same implication.

*Mudra* is a Sanskrit word meaning 'seal' or 'commitment.' In the old tradition, when the authorities, such as the emperors, put a seal on something, it became an unchangeable, unshakable, finalized order. Nowadays once a document is signed, sealed and notarized, it is an unchangeable confirmation. When a judge hits the gavel on the table is it the same thing. That is the meaning of 'mudra.'<sup>179</sup> Mudra also means 'hand gesture.' A hand gesture is giving a message; a message of commitment. The word mudra itself is really a commitment. The direct translation of mudra in Sanskrit is samaya, which really boils down to commitment.

*Mahamudra*. Actually the word is mahamudraya. Nobody says it, but the 'ya' is also there. What Panchen Losang Chögyen is doing here, is praising his great big Guru with commitment. In other words, in mahamudra, the sense of commitment here is absolute. So. I bow to and I respect the great, absolute Lama.

*The absolute Guru*. What is that, the absolute Guru, or absolute Lama? The absolute Guru is the guru within you. It is your own mind. It is not this contaminated mind, it is

your uncontaminated pure mind, which is free of grasping, and is of the nature of emptiness.

That means, it is free of self-grasping, free of grasping a self; or, lacking true existence, lacking true nature. Lack of solid existence is mudra. Mudra is such a commitment, it is the true nature. In English, when you say commitment is nature, it doesn't make sense, I don't think it does. From the Buddhist background, however, the really unshakeable, unchangeable, signed, sealed and stamped commitment is absolute reality. The absolute reality is the true indestructible mind, the vajra mind. Such an indestructible mind is actually what we call *primordial mind*. That primordial mind, which is inseparable from the true nature of the mind, is the true Guru of our own self, of each and every one of us.

When you say 'Namo Gurubhye,' you have all of this behind. When, however, you just say, 'Namo Gurubhye,' and think, that's guru, that's the guy with the red robe, then it becomes 'silly guru.' When you think about it, think that the absolute true guru of individuals is the true primordial mind, the wisdom nature, the pure aspects of yourself.

This is why Buddhism, and other eastern traditions say, 'Pure nature is within you. Development is within you. There is nothing you can grasp from outside. It is all within you, it is all internal.' That's what you hear all the time, right? That is Mahamudra, that is Guru. That is Maha Guru, Mahamudra.

With these first words, Namo Mahamudraya, the first Panchen Lama himself makes his prostrations, paying his respects to his one Guru.

*The lost book.* I have to tell you a funny story. Today I picked up this particular book, written by a friend of mine who is also a great teacher known as Gen Lamrimpa in Tibet. His collected works were published after the Chinese invasion. There are four or five volumes. They are very good ones. He sent me this copy of his commentary on the Mahamudra text. I had this teaching from my great master, Kyabje Trijang Rimpoche in the summer of 1954. Gen Lamrimpa and I were together. He sent this copy to me, and though he passed away one or two years ago, I got it only very recently. In it, he wrote a note in his own hand,

They give you the choice between meditating on an image or on mind—mind is better, because we are thinking inside.

I had this book in my hand when I went to Garrison for the Mind-Life Institute. I thought I would talk on it to the scientists in the evening. On the train, I was looking through it. Somehow I got on the wrong train, and at the end of a long story, I lost the book. I found the book, posted back to my New York address. I had had the book in my New York apartment and had used the envelope from a piece of junk mail to mark my place. Then, when I dropped the book, somebody very kindly picked it up and mailed it. I picked it up today, and was thinking, maybe I should do this Mahamudra rather than reviewing the Meditation course, so I grabbed it and came here. It's interesting and fun.

Let me explain in a very simple way what mahamudra is. Mahamudra is another way of saying wisdom is empti-

ness. In other words, mahamudra is emptiness and wisdom itself. Why is it so important? Because emptiness is the nature of all existence. My nature is emptiness, your nature is emptiness, everybody else's nature is emptiness. The nature of a house is emptiness, a pillar is emptiness, being is emptiness, the country is emptiness, the city is emptiness; everything is in the nature of emptiness. There is nothing that exists that is not of emptiness in nature. If you think I'm saying empty, you're making a big mistake. The country is not empty, a house is not empty, you're not empty, I'm not empty. It is not empty, but emptiness. The teaching is that wisdom is emptiness [meaning: empty from inherent existence].

Emptiness is also our biggest problem. A lot of people talk about this in terms of 'dualistic' and 'non-dualistic.' If you really look deeply into it, you may say 'in nature it is one, which is empty', but you *see* something that is not emptiness. Appearance, the seeing, the perceiving, is not that much of a problem. Accepting it<sup>180</sup> becomes a problem. That's why 'dualistic' becomes a problem. That is why people talk about 'non-dual.' All these are the idea behind this.

What this first verse is saying, bottom line, is that mahamudra, wisdom itself, is the nature of every existence, and therefore it is pervasive. Everybody and everything has that nature within itself, or within themselves. Therefore, mahamudra, the wisdom that is pervasive pervades all.

The first Panchen Lama makes his praise to his own Guru in four lines. It's interesting. He makes his praise by saying,

*kün kyab kün gyi rang zhin chak gya che*  
*yer me jö drel sem kyī dor jei ying*  
*jen par tön dze kyap dak drup pei je,*  
*da me la mei zhap la bü pe dü*

I respectfully bow at the feet of my peerless guru,  
lord of that which pervades everywhere,  
master of those with actual attainment,  
who expounds the all-pervasive nature of  
everything, the great seal of reality, mahamudra,  
inseparable from the diamond-strong<sup>181</sup> sphere of  
mind that is divested of speech.

Mahamudra is pervasive; it is everywhere. Mahamudra is the nature of all existence, of every existence. Pervasive means there is no place where the mahamudra—which is wisdom, which is emptiness—is not. There is no place, no thing, not anything, no human beings, no any beings, no material articles, no houses, pillars, monuments, whatever, no cows, clothes, watches, anything; in short, there is no environment, nor any inhabitants that are anything else but wisdom alone, emptiness in nature.

In praising his Guru, the first word the Panchen Lama uses is *kün kyab*.<sup>182</sup> That means ‘pervasive,’ everywhere. Then follows *kün gyi rang zhin*, the nature of all, which is *chak gya che*, mahamudra.

*Yer me jö drésem kyī dor jei ying*. Again, that is inseparable from the nature of mind. Actually, what he is writing here is exactly what I explained at the words Namó (Guru) Mahamudraya. With that, Panchen Losang Chögyen praises his

guru. He is clearly introducing the real nature of the mind, the mind itself—which cannot be explained—as ‘my great Guru. I pay my respect to you.’ In talking about his guru, he is talking about both, the absolute guru and the relative guru, the guru who is personally teaching him. He also calls this ‘Creator of All’—*kün gyi*.

In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, when we hear the word creator, we think of God. Right? And God is wisdom. That’s what I like to say. God is wisdom; wisdom is God. Therefore, it is creator. From the Judaeo-Christian point of view, God created us. From the Buddha’s point of view, the Nature of Reality has created us. Everything is born out of wisdom. Everything has come out of emptiness. When there is no emptiness, nothing can exist. That is wisdom.

Some people think wisdom is like a third eye, that suddenly just ‘boom’ opens up and sees everything. That is incorrect. If you had a regular third eye its vision would still be limited, because the walls and everything would block it. But wisdom is unlimited. No walls, no distance, no mountains will block it; it can clearly see. The third eye is a metaphor for wisdom. You do see a third eye in some pictures of enlightened beings. In a representation of the Buddha, we don’t show a third eye, but there is a little extra thing there. In the Hindu, Kalsad and Sikh religions, you are taught to focus on that. These are indications to look for wisdom, wisdom that is unlimited. Why are you if you have that wisdom seeing everything? The reason is everything is your own production. It all comes out of you, you produced it. That’s why wisdom is often called the ‘Great

Mother.’ Wisdom gives birth to all; to both the inhabitants and the environment; that means, to everything. Sometimes that wisdom is even called ‘creator.’ or ‘free of solid existence.’

What does ‘free of solid existence’ mean? It means you exist dependently. What does wisdom or emptiness mean? The interdependent nature of existence is free of solid existence.

The essence of emptiness is interdependence. The essence of dependent existence is emptiness. If you can’t put those together, then you will always have difficulties. Then what you have is faulty wisdom.

There are people who will say, ‘Emptiness is emptiness, existence is existence. Existence has nothing to do with emptiness, emptiness has nothing to do with existence.’ If we have that understanding, then we are in trouble. Then we are separating compassion and wisdom. Then we are separating individual beings and wisdom. The moment you have separation, it is a problem. It is all inclusion. Nothing is excluded. You cannot exclude the interdependent nature of existence from emptiness; emptiness cannot be excluded from the interdependent nature of existence. Emptiness cannot be excluded from the subject of compassion. I don’t mean compassion and emptiness are the same. It is like this:

The absolute nature of emptiness is compassion;  
the absolute nature of compassion is emptiness.

That's the reason for the words 'pervasive' and 'creator.'  
That's the explanation of the first words, *kün kyab kün gyi rang zhin*.

PROMISE TO WRITE

*Do gyü men ngak gya tsö chü du ne  
lek par dom dze ge den ka gyü pa  
drup chok dharma benza yap se kyi.  
ka söl chak gya chen pö dam pa dri*

Gathering together the essence of the sutras and tantras and condensing oceans of guideline instructions, I shall write some advice concerning mahamudra from the Gelug-Kagyü tradition, deriving from the pioneering, fatherly Dharmavajra, a mahasiddha with supreme actual attainment, and his spiritual offspring.

The first Panchen Lama praises not only his own master, from whom he took this teaching, he also praises the great Mahasiddha Dharmavajra. What I am going to explain here, says the first Panchen Lama, is Dharmavajra's system of mahamudra. The Panchen Lama means that the essence of all the Buddha's teachings, both sutra and tantras, is explained to the fortunate ones by his own master, Dharmavajra, and the great Ganden Kagyupa masters. He says, 'I will explain Ensapa's<sup>183</sup> system of mahamudra.' That is first, his praise.

Then he says, 'I will write this.' This is the Tibetan old system of composition. First you praise someone, then you give your presentation. It is unlike Western books, where

you make everything as simple, easy to read and straightforward as possible. In the Tibetan approach, the first words, *Namo (Guru) Mahamudraya*, should contain all that you are going to talk about. Here, it is the essence of the subject, mahamudra. Every syllable has to carry a special meaning. Then it becomes a loaded book and not just a simple storybook.

*Di la jor ngö juk sum le*

For this, there are the preparatory practices,  
the actual methods and the concluding  
procedures.

The first Panchen Lama says, ‘To explain this, there’s prerequisite, actual and conclusion.’

#### PREREQUISITES

*dang po ten dang tek chen la  
juk pay go dang zhung shing chir  
ka tsam tik tsam ma yin pay  
kyab dro sem kyay nen ten cha  
sem kyi chö nyi tong wa yang  
tsok sak drip jang la tö pe  
yik gya bum tsam tung shak ni  
gya chak gang mang hgön tang ne*

As for the first, in order to have a gateway for entering the teachings and a central tent pole for erecting a mahayana mind, earnestly take the safe direction of refuge and develop a dedicated

heart of bodhichitta. Do not have these merely be words from your mouth. Since seeing the actual nature of mind is dependent upon strengthening enlightenment-building networks and purifying yourself of mental obstacles, direct [toward your root guru] at least a hundred thousand repetitions of the hundred-syllable mantra and as many hundreds of prostrations as possible, made while reciting *The Admission of Downfalls*.

The pre-requisites consist of three things. First is *taking refuge and generating bodhimind*. I'm not going to talk about this very long, because when you reach the fifth paramita, it means you have already covered those. Taking refuge makes it a Buddhist practice, and generating bodhimind makes it a Mahayana practice. Second is *purification and accumulation of merit*, and third is *Guru yoga*. Guru yoga is very important, extremely important.

*Meditation with body, speech and mind*. The Panchen Lama says this should not come only from your mouth. Don't just pay lip service. You have to move from the bottom of your heart. If you just say the words, and there's nothing behind them, then what is the use? If you teach a parrot, the parrot will definitely say 'Namo Gurubhye.' Maybe not exactly, but it will say it, if you have good nuts to give.

It reminds me of Geshe Lobsang Tarchin, in New Jersey. Many years ago I went to visit Geshe-la, who at the time was staying in a Mongolian monastery somewhere. Geshe-la told me that his Lhasa Apso, the dog can say, 'Om mani

peme hum.’ I said, ‘No, no,’ and he said ‘Yes, I’ll show you. Definitely he can.’ He had to have a cream puff biscuit and cream cheese. Then he would bring the dog, and the dog would stand up and bark, ‘Wa wa wa wa wa wa’, six times. Then Geshe-la would say, ‘See? Om mani peme hum!’ So, saying by mouth even Lhasa Apsos can do.

It is interesting. I repeat again and again, when you say ‘meditate’ in the west, more or less everybody—maybe not the pure yuppies but most open-minded people—will know what meditate means, that you have to sit down and all that. However, saying the prayers out loud and meditating together is quite new here. Yet, this is very important. Why? What you meditate on is joined with simple words that you can say. So you say the words, think about the meaning, and meditate. That really becomes powerful.

Otherwise, the words become just words, meditation becomes something else, and the body, mind and speech are separating. If they are, then how can you hope to achieve something together? If we want to achieve something, we have to bring our body, mind and speech together and push forward. This is something you have to pick up. You say the words, think the meaning and it becomes meditation. Before you can think about the essence of the words, it is important to hear and understand them.

*The four ngöndros.* In order to see the nature of the mind itself, you need purification and accumulation of merit. It is recommend to say one hundred thousand Vajrasattva recitations, plus as many thirty-five-Buddha purifications along with as many prostrations as possible. ‘As much as

possible' is used here because these words are in Tibetan poetry form, which has certain rules, like seven-word or nine-word lines. In English you can have as many words as you want, or you can have a shorter verse. Tibetans consider that bad poetry. It's the culture. So, as they can't say one hundred thousand thirty-five-Buddha purifications, it's too many words, they say 'as much as possible.'

In reality, you are recommended to do a hundred thousand of each, of the Vajrasattva recitations, of the 35-Buddha purifications and prostrations, and also of the mandala offering. Why? Whether the actual practice we do becomes good, effective and helpful depends on how we do the prerequisites. If the prerequisites are so-so, the actual practice will also be so-so.

*Pabongka and the preliminaries.* Kyabje Ling Rimpoche, the late senior teacher to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and one of my greatest masters, told me repeatedly about his Guru, Kyabje Pabongka, the great Pabongkapa and his teachings, particularly about the Heruka Body Mandala.

He said that he attended that teaching. He said there were about a thousand people attending, and this was up in the mountains of Tibet. North of Lhasa, on the other side of Sera [Monastery], Pabongka had his retreat area. At a point higher than that, Tashi Choeling, Pabongka gave his teaching. Included among the thousand people were Kyabje Trijang Rimpoche, Kyabje Ling Rimpoche and my late father, Demo Rimpoche. Kyabje Ling Rimpoche told me that Kyabje Pabongka Rimpoche had an interesting custom. When somebody came to visit him, particularly

certain Tibetan government officials, no matter how late it was, Pabongka Rimpoche would never rush.

One day a thousand people were waiting there, and normally they would start at 12 (noon) or 12:30. Some big officer was there who had been completely demoted and reprimanded. They almost put him in jail. Finally, they let him go. He and both Kyabje Rimpoches came visiting Kyabje Pabongkha, and they said, 'Today is going to be a big long holiday, so let us go and have a swim, and then go somewhere.' They were sure they would not start for at least two hours. Then, by nine o'clock at night, they were still there, Kyabje Ling Rimpoche said. Lunch came, then afternoon tea came, then dinner came and these guys still didn't leave. A little after nine they left.

Then Pabongka came down and started giving the teaching. Everybody presumed he was going to rush the pre-requisite prayers that you have to say. The chanting master even asked, 'Should I say it fast?' Pabongka said, 'No.' To illustrate, Kyabje Ling Rimpoche said a prayer first at a quick pace (Gelek Rimpoche says it in Tibetan). Then he gave his rendition at a very slow pace. He said, by the time the actual teaching started, it was after midnight. Pabongka gave the teaching in a very short time. Then they had to go down to another village below. It was all downhill. People were falling down. There was not a smooth road. Rocks were falling. (Rimpoche laughs.) There were all kinds of occurrences the whole night. Kyabje Ling Rimpoche told the story to emphasize that the pre-requisites are extremely important.

When Kyabje Ling Rimpoche was telling me the story, he was singing through all these verses. That conversation could have been finished in five minutes or so, but it took twenty minutes, because he kept on singing all these verses completely. He was giving a message about what not to do, like what I'm doing today. not to be casual about the pre-requisites. If any of you would seriously like to practice my mahamudra, after having received the teaching, you have to do them nicely. If the pre-requisites are nicely done, then everything works well.

Likewise, if you want to do a retreat. I have a number of people, throughout, who would like to do a retreat. In the middle of their busy life that is going up and down, all of a sudden they say, 'Aha, it is Saturday so I'm free. Here I go on my retreat.' (Rimpoche makes busy, buzzy sounds like someone hurrying through mantra repetitions.) 'My numbers are over, I'm done.'

That's not good. Not good. If you want to do a retreat, the pre-requisites have to be carefully done. Nobody's chasing anybody. We're not going anywhere, as long as we're alive. These pre-requisites that you do, don't have to have retreat-like restrictions. You do them nicely, in your own sweet time, and just properly.

The first Panchen Lama says in his auto-commentary, 'To gain the ability to see the reality and the nature of your mind, totally depends on purification and the accumulation of merit. So I recommend that you do one hundred thousand Vajrasattva recitations and one hundred thousand

prostrations.’ ‘Also you need to make mandala offerings and do the Guru prayers. He says, ‘The *ngön dro* instructions are good.’

*dü sum sang gye tam che dang*  
*yer mei tsa wei la ma la*  
*nying ne söl dep yang yang cha*

In addition, make repeated, heartfelt requests to your root guru inseparable from all Buddhas of the three times.

Here the first Panchen Lama places a special emphasis on guru yoga: ‘To your own spiritual master, your own root Guru who is inseparable from the Buddhas of past, present and future, from the bottom of your heart, you must make supplications as often as possible.’

#### ACTUAL

*ngö zhi chak gya chen po la*  
*zhe tsül mang du duk na yang*  
*do ngak ye we nyi su tö*

As for the actual basic methods, although there are many ways of asserting mahamudra, there are two when divided according to the sutras and tantras.

Now, the actual level. What are the divisions of the mahamudra? What different names are involved? How do I meditate on mahamudra? What doubts will I encounter and what are the answers?

*Ngö zhi chak gya chen po la.* As I told you, the bottom line is the wisdom of emptiness. Here the First Panchen Lama said, ‘When you ask what the real mahamudra is, there are a number of ways of explaining it, but it will actually come down to two ways. There is the sutra part of mahamudra and the tantra<sup>184</sup> part.’

Because sutra mahamudra is mentioned first, you would think it should be explained first. Here tantra is explained first. Why? It is because they are not going to explain it. It involves a great deal of secrecy. That’s why they basically just mention it first.

In absolute reality, the pure clear light is Vajrayana mahamudra. I’ll tell you straightaway: there’s impure clear light and pure clear light, impure illusion body and pure illusion body. Pure clear light is mahamudra. Simple. Period.

Sutra mahamudra is wisdom. That has to be divided into two—absolute and relative mahamudra. The relative mahamudra is the introduction of the mind and the absolute mahamudra is wisdom. The Panchen Lama says there are a lot of different ways of explaining the actual mahamudra, but he chooses to distinguish the vajrayana part from the sutra part.

Tantra is explained with one verse. Then it goes into explaining the sutra part of mahamudra.

*Transcendental wisdom.* If you are familiar with the Buddhist teachings, there is this Prajnaparamita, or transcendental wisdom. What does transcend mean? It means ‘going beyond.’ It is very much like the mantra ‘GATE GATE, PARAGATE, PARASAMGATE BODHI SVAHA—Go, go beyond and

beyond, well beyond and establish enlightenment. That's exactly what it is.'

When you say 'go' it means you have to go. But go where? Go from what or where? These are the issues. All of this means: transcending the 'here', which is where we have dualistic perception, and go to 'there', which is beyond this level. It means transcending the ordinary level, transcending it, go to the extraordinary level, from there to the meditative level and finally to the level of No More Learning. That's what they are talking about, the five paths to go.<sup>185</sup>

What brings you to a different level is not compassion, but wisdom. Who of what gives birth to each stage of the five different levels, what we call the five paths? The mother-like birth-giving is wisdom. Therefore, they are also referred to as 'Mother;' the mother of all spiritual development, the mother of all enlightened beings, the mother of all extraordinary beings. The teaching of the Buddha that explains this, is called 'the Great Mother,' *yum chen mo*, in Sanskrit Prajna Paramita, which translates as 'transcendental wisdom' teachings, or 'transcendental meditation' teachings.

That particular teaching has two messages; a direct message and an indirect message. The direct message is the wisdom aspects. The indirect message is the compassion aspects of it.

That transcendental mother-like teaching of the Buddha has three different versions. There is one detailed version in twelve volumes. Then there is a shorter one in one volume. The shortest is the Heart Sutra.<sup>186</sup> In each of

the three, there may be a big difference between the words, but the message they really carry is the direct and the indirect message. When we talk about mahamudra, or wisdom we are talking about the direct message of these mother-like teachings, the *Prajnaparamita* teachings.

#### VAJRAYANA MAHAMUDRA

*chi ma dor je lü nyi la*  
*ne du nün sok tap ke le*  
*chung wei de chen ö sel te*  
*sa ra ha dang lün drup zhap*  
*na ro mei trii chak chen te*

*drup nying dor ne ten pa yi*  
*la me gyü dei yang nying yin*

The latter is a greatly blissful, clear light mind manifested by such skillful methods as penetrating vital points of the subtle vajra-body and so forth.

The mahamudra of the traditions of Saraha, Nagarjuna, Naropa and Maitripa, it is the quintessence of the anuttarayoga class of tantra as taught in *The [Seven Texts of the] Mahasiddhas* and *The [Three] Core Volumes*.

There is a system in Vajrayana that involves meditation on the body. We have a physical body, an emotional body and a psychic body. Here they are talking particularly about the psychic body, [called vajra body]. There is a point where one focuses completely on the psychic body.

By doing so, as a result one can bring about the fourth stage in vajrayana, the stage of actual clear light. That was shared by Saraha,<sup>187</sup> Nagarjuna,<sup>188</sup> *etc.*, in the essence of the real *maha anu yoga* tantra teachings. They will tell you just that much and they won't explain anything. Also for us, we should not explain that. Number one, that should not be discussed on the internet,<sup>189</sup> and number two, it should not be talked about in the presence of people who don't have certain initiations.

The wisdom of emptiness that you talk about in sutra and the wisdom of emptiness you talk about in the tantra path is the same one; there is no different emptiness. Even the Mahayana emptiness and the Hinayana emptiness are one. There is only one emptiness. The reason why it is talked about differently in tantra,<sup>190</sup> is that tantra has a way of developing it much better and much more quickly.

*Advantages of Vajrayana.* From the beginning of the year until now we've talked in great detail about meditation. Finally, what it achieves is concentrated focus, concentration power. Now if you look into Vajrayana, the method you use and the efforts you put in are the same, but the duration of our efforts is much, much shorter. That is a Vajrayana quality. Any discussion of it being the 'quick way,' however is immaterial, if you haven't achieved the first part,<sup>191</sup> which is the difficult one. That takes a tremendous amount of time, energy and effort. Still, Vajrayana does have this special quality.

There is a metaphor I am thinking of. It may not be a right one, I'm sorry; it's just a thought. When you get sick,

you take medicine. Sometimes you get better with that approach, sometimes you can't get better. Surgeons, however, can cut and remove whatever problem you have. They have the edge over oral medication, injections, *etc.* Likewise Vajrayana does have the edge over other methods; it can drastically cut. On the other hand, it is also dangerous and difficult. There is risk involved.

The bottom line is not the practice you do, but the person who is practicing, and what that practice does to the person. It is the mind of the individual person that makes a difference! The advantage that Vajrayana has over all other practices is that it gives the method of developing *joy* within the mindstream of the individual. That joy the individual obtains in the mind is the 'surgical' thing. That is what gives vajrayana the edge over all other practices. What you do is the same thing. There is no doorway to liberation other than compassion and wisdom. Shamatha meditation, vipashyana wisdom, even mahamudra, when practiced from the Vajrayana angle, have the edge over all others. That is because of the perceiver, the mind. It's not the thing you perceive or the practice you do. It is the perceiver that counts. Right or wrong? When you focus on something, who focuses? Who perceives what? It is the nature of the perceiver that makes a difference, which is me, the individual person who focuses. It is the mind that becomes of a joy nature that has a tremendous amount of additional power and force. That is Vajrayana.

Then, there are some methods that are different. For instance these words, *dor je lü nyi la ne du nün sok tap ke le*—'techniques such as piercing its points', is talking about

chakras and channels. It clearly talk about focusing on channels as well as chakras.

The bottom-line advantage that Vajrayana has over non-Vajrayana, or sutra, is mind. It is the nature of the mind that makes the difference.

*ngön ma gye dring dü sum gyi  
ngö ten tong gyi gom tsul te  
di le zhen pei tar pei lam  
me che pak chok lün drup sung*

The former refers to the ways of meditating on voidness as directly indicated in the expanded, intermediate and brief [prajnaparamita sutras]. The supremely realized Arya Nagarjuna has said, “Except for this, there is no other pathway of mind leading to liberation.”

You’re bound to have different translations in English, because even the Tibetan is different here. The message, however, doesn’t change. Whichever of the three versions of the Prajnaparamita you use none will show you any way to liberate the individual other than the direct message of emptiness meditation. That’s what Nagarjuna states.

*dir ni de yi gong oa zhin  
chak gya chen pö tri pok te  
sem kyi ngo trö che pei tsül  
gyü den la mei sung zhin jö*

Here I shall give instruction on mahamudra in accordance with these intentions of his and dis-

cuss the methods that lead you to recognize mind  
in keeping with the exposition of the lineage  
masters.

The Panchen Lama says, ‘I am going to give the mahamudra explanation in accordance with what Nagarjuna said. I’m going to introduce to you the mind.’ This translation says, ‘the way of discovering the mind.’ The word here is *ngo trö*, which means introducing. Direct introduction. What we are going to do here is introduce you to the mind. How?

*Gyü den la mei sung zhin jö*—Just as I learned from my masters. The purpose of this statement is to introduce you to the actual wisdom itself. First, who perceives this wisdom? It is the mind itself that perceives wisdom. So we have to introduce you to the mind. According to the traditional teachings, one shouldn’t make it up. Why does the author say, ‘described in the words of the traditional masters?’ It’s not that the First Panchen Lama didn’t know about it. The fact is, that some clever people can find some clever explanation. In order to avoid misleading people, he says to go according to the traditional teachings, because those are the people who have studied that, those are the people who have learned that, those are the people who have developed it; they are not wrong, so we will not go wrong.

*lhen chik kye jor ga-u ma*  
*nga den ro nyum yi ge zhi*  
*zhi che chöd yül dzog chen dang*  
*u mei ta tri la sok pa*

*Gelek Rimpoche*

*so sor min dok mang na yang  
nge dön lung rik la ke zhing  
nyam nyong chen gyi nel jor pe  
che na gong pa chik tu bap*

From the point of view of individually ascribed names, there are numerous traditions, such as those of the simultaneously arising as merged, the amulet box, possessing five, the six spheres of equal taste, the four syllables, the pacifier, the object to be cut off, dzogchen, the discursive madhyamaka view, and so on. Nevertheless, when scrutinized by a yogi, learned in scripture and logic and experienced [in meditation], their definitive meanings are all seen to come to the same intended point.

There are many ways of doing it. Gampopa, the great Kagyupa master introduced a way of developing: *lhen chik kye jor ga-u ma*, ‘innate communion.’ In Tibetan, the word is *ga-u*, which means ‘traveling altar.’ You have one little part here and one here, and by putting them together it becomes one piece. This is what Gampopa has introduced. The text says, *nga den ro nyum yi ge zhi*.

*Nga den*, meaning ‘five’, is the Drikungpa tradition, that will teach you there are five points. The first point is guru-yoga. The first and foremost is that your guru is like a snow mountain. (That’s how they teach.) If you do not have the sunrays of your devotion to the guru, the blessings of the water from the melting snow will not be there. There will be no running of the stream or river at all. The second

point is generating the bodhimind. The third, fourth and fifth have been taken by a thief named ‘forgetting.’ So that’s it. The Drikungpa tradition has the *nga den* system, the fivefold endowment. The Drikungpa teachings—bottom line—are these five and the Six Yogas of Naropa.

Another one is *ro nyum*, [common flavor], which is the system of the Drukpa Kagyus. Then there is the system of ‘four letters’ [*yi ge zhi*] that comes from the great father Padampa Sanggye. Then Machik Labdron has given the *chöd* tradition. The Nyingmapa tradition will tell you about *dzog chen*. The Gelugpa’s will give you *u ma* or Madhyamaka.

In short, as the root text says, ‘There are a lot of different names and traditions they give you, but in absolute, for someone who really knows, a yogi who has had experience, it will come down to one point. Experienced practitioners when they look, will come to one point.’

#### THE ACTUAL MEDITATION

*de na di la ta tok ne*  
*gom pa tsöl dang gom tok ne*  
*ta wa tso wei luk nyi le*  
*dir ni chi mei luk zhin yin*

Of the two main methods of the sutra tradition of mahamudra, namely seeking to meditate on mind on top of having gained a correct view of reality and seeking a correct view on top of having meditated on mind, [I shall explain] here in accordance with the latter method.

Now, actually, we're getting to the point. There are two systems. Either you find the viewpoint first and then search for the meditation, or, you find the meditation first and search for the view. Here, we are okay to go with the second system. You know why? Because we have completed the meditation course, so we are ready for searching the view.

#### THE BASIC PRE-REQUISITES

##### PREPARING THE PLACE OF PRACTICE AND THE SEAT, AND ASSUMING THE PROPER SITTING POSTURE

*sam ten de wei tek bu la*  
*lü ne düm dang den che la*

On a seat conducive for mental stability,  
assume the seven-fold bodily posture.

##### GENERATING AN INITIAL NEUTRAL STATE OF MIND

*lung ro gu truk dak tu sel*  
*rik pa dang nyik lek par che*

Clear yourself purely  
with a round of the nine tastes of breath.  
Thoroughly clean out your state of awareness.

In the actual meditation, the first set says: sit on a comfortable cushion. We talked about the required qualities of meditation before: what is a good place to meditate, what is not a good place to meditate, how to sit, in the sevenfold Vairochana's way of sitting *etc.*<sup>192</sup>

*Nine rounds of breathing meditation.* What do you do if the mind is not clear? Count the breathing: getting out, taking in. Or do the nine rounds of breathing meditation: three times breathe out from the right nostril and breathe in from the left; then three times breathe out from the left nostril and in from the right and finally three times breathe out and in from both nostrils. Why are you doing this? To clear your mind. Your mind has been influenced by so many busy daytime activities and crazy nighttime activities. Free yourself of that and make it clear. Whenever you are influenced by craziness or busy-ness, if then you try to switch to a good or positive mind, you can't. A gentle way of bringing the mind to the neutral level first is this nine rounds of breathing meditation.<sup>193</sup>

#### GENERATING A CONSTRUCTIVE STATE OF MIND

*nam dak ge wei sem den pe  
kyap dro sem kye ngön du tang  
zap lam la mei nel jor gom  
shuk drak söl dep gya tsa sok  
che ne la ma rang la tim*

And then, with a purely positive mind, direct [toward your practice] your taking of safe direction and the reaffirmation of your dedicated heart of bodhichitta.

Meditate next on a profound path of guru-yoga and, after making hundreds of very strong, fervent requests, dissolve your visualized guru into yourself.

*Positive mind.* Then bring your mind to the positive level. From there you take refuge and generate the bodhimind and do the profound guru yoga. This is important. We're not going to easily find the mind on which we'll be focusing, the mind that I call the 'NBB' state.<sup>194</sup> We're not going to find that state without profound guru-yoga practice. Here it continually says, *shuk drak söl dep gya tsa sok che ne la ma rang la tim*: 'Do the profound guru-yoga, make hundreds of single-pointed requests and finally dissolve your visualized guru to yourself.'

Why guru yoga? I emphasize guru-yoga, because that's where I come from. If you ask, 'To reach this level, do I have to have guru yoga?' I don't know. The guru has been extraordinarily important for me, and to my spiritual practice. The guru is the role model. The guru is representing the Buddha. The guru is the Buddha for me. Also, in mahamudra, we talk about our inner guru.

The visualized form of the guru is extremely important; to develop profound faith, joy, happiness and to make tremendous requests. Finally I want to merge with the guru, the guru wants to come down and merge with me. We don't want to separate. Finally we become like one person.

A commonly known example that may serve as a metaphor is when you fall in love, newly madly in love, sort of hot madly in love. At that moment, the two people have the mind of becoming one person. It's almost unbearable to separate the identities. They are merging.

Maybe we don't have that situation, but it is that sort of strong urge. When you have that strong urge, you think

toward the enlightened one. That one will merge with you and become one. There is some kind of joy, like that of a long-lost child who has found his/her mother, like the joy of returning home. That happiness and joy goes beyond words. The mind becomes almost ‘intoxicated.’ That level of joy of the mind is known as the NBB state—*nang wa ben bün*. That is your focal point.

Normally, this mahamudra is part of the *Lama Chöpa* teaching. That is how I received it from Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche in the summer of 1953 or 1954. As part of the *Lama Chöpa* it becomes quite easy. When at the mahamudra level you talk about prerequisites, it is the same prerequisites: the same purification, the same guru-yoga and all of those—no doubt about it. However, this mahamudra has its own little special things too, even the guru yoga has its own little way of doing it.

The detailed guru yoga, of which the best available for us is the *Lama Chöpa*, is sutra and tantra combined. For the sutra system alone we have the *Ganden Lha Gyema*. Most people in Jewel Heart are doing either one or the other. Then there is another guru yoga for Vajrayana practitioners, the *Six-session Guru-yoga*. These are all okay, very detailed and wonderful. [You can do your mahamudra practice within one of those].<sup>195</sup>

But this mahamudra has its own, shorter version of guru-yoga [that you use instead]. It is very simple.

I am not even sure whether it is appropriate to mention it here or not. If I don't mention it, not only do you not know, but also the NBB-state I mentioned earlier,<sup>196</sup> would be very difficult to generate [without a guru-yoga]. That

is also a problem. Anyway, if I am breaking any rule I am seeking forgiveness from the Lama-yidam.

#### MAHAMUDRA GURU-YOGA

This special guru yoga is very simple.

*You meditate Manjushri. He is orange colored, holding sword and book. At his crown is Buddha Vajradhara, [Tib. Dorje Chang] with consort. At his heart level is the wisdom being Tsongkhapa.*

*The moment you visualize that, your root guru looks inseparable from Tsongkhapa, Manjushri and Vajradhara together.*

*Then you do the seven limb practice,<sup>197</sup> including purification.*

#### SPECIAL PURIFICATION

Here you do the special purification called ‘the Thirty-five Buddha Practice.’ I won’t have much time to explain that.

*Either you have the guru in the form I just mentioned, or you have the guru as Lama Tubwang Dorje Chang as in the Lama Chöpa or you have Tsongkhapa and the disciples as in the Ganden Lha Gyema or you have Guru Vajradhara as in the Six-session Guru-yoga. Whichever one you generate, doesn’t matter.*

*From the heart of this guru tree, light comes out and brings up the Thirty-five Buddhas mandala.*

You can call it the mandala of the Thirty-five Buddhas, if you use the term mandala loosely, because there is a center and a circle. If you use it in a strictly conservative way, this would not be a mandala.

*At the center is Buddha Shakyamuni, and he is surrounded by the thirty-five Purification Buddhas on lotus cushions.*

*You may say the purification text by naming each of the Thirty-five Buddhas. If you do so, then every time you say the name of one of the Thirty-five Buddhas, you remember that each one has a special commitment.*

*Just like the Medicine Buddha has a special commitment, each of the 35 purification Buddhas has a special commitment. We don't know exactly what these are, but they are commitments to purify.*

*Pray that all these commitments—as they have promised—may materialize for us today. With each name you focus on that Buddha.*

*Whether you have done prostrations, circumambulations, mandala offerings or simply have said the mantras, each of these thirty-five Buddhas will dissolve to you and you become pure.*

This purification is slightly different from what we are used to. Basically, wherever you look, in sutra or tantra, purification is based on the four powers.<sup>198</sup> There is no other way. Of course, meditating on bodhimind and on wisdom are the greatest one's, no doubt, but still, they have to be based

on the four powers. From the Buddhist point of view there is no other way. If you miss one of the four powers the purification is not guaranteed. If you have all four, then the purification is perfect.

That, however, doesn't mean that by doing it once the purification is complete. How strong and how much the purification works differs individually. There is no blanket way. This is the method, but how much the individual gets purified depends on how strong and how much we do it, how insistent we are.

Purification is extremely important. Why? If you die in a pure state, then no matter whoever or whatever is dragging you down—there may be a million different evils and non-virtues—they can do nothing, because you are pure. Basically, we are all pure, but negativities are there, like clouds in the sky. Purification is like the depiction of Buddha's meditation. All the maras came to attack him, throwing stones and weapons, but whatever they tried to throw, turned into flowers. Remember that from the movie *Little Buddha*? It is just like that. When you are pure, no matter whoever wants to harm you, for example inner evils or inner devils, they can do nothing, because you are pure. When you are not pure, then, no matter what, even if all the Buddhas are trying to pull you up, they will find it very hard to do. That's why purification is important.

That's also why, particularly if you are a Vajrayana practitioner, at the time of dying you should be pure. If at that time you take an initiation or self-initiation you can die in a pure state and then you don't have to hope and pray and seek anybody's help. You can go on your own, completely,

happy and wonderfully. No matter who wants to pull you down then, there is nothing they can do.

So purification is important. Particularly over here the Thirty-five Buddha's purification is really, really good. There are texts available in English.<sup>199</sup> I did not emphasize it much in Jewel Heart so far, because you cannot emphasize everything. There is so much, there are really zillions of practices. It also doesn't mean that you have to do everything you learnt either. But it is available for you, whenever you need it.

The guru yoga I just shared with you, is also very simple, just Manjushri, Vajradhara and Tsongkhapa inseparable from your guru. Very, very simple. There are a lot of simplified ways of doing a practice.

#### THE ACTUAL MAHAMUDRA PRACTICE

We are on the actual point of mahamudra, which has: common mahamudra meditation and uncommon mahamudra meditation. [Uncommon is emptiness]. Our subject is common<sup>200</sup> mahamudra. for which we made six outlines.

#### FOCUSING ON MIND ITSELF—SIX WAYS<sup>201</sup>

You have already heard the explanations on *zhi nay* according to the Lamrim. So I don't have to repeat what the focal point of meditation is. In the case of mahamudra—and we have even mentioned it during the *zhi nay* teachings—the focal point is the mind, rather than the Buddha image or anything else.

How does that work? I mentioned it briefly during the *zhi nay* meditation teaching. In mahamudra particularly,

they tell you that there are six different ways of doing the meditation. Do you have to do each of them? No, you don't. You have a choice here. The six different points are:

1. Leave the mind as it is and look at it.
2. Focus on the clear and lucid nature of the mind and meditate.
3. Whatever thoughts come up, recognize them and meditate.
4. Loosening the tightness of mindfulness.
5. Merging of steady and moving and look.
6. Recognize the movement of your mind.

I. LEAVE THE MIND AS IT IS AND LOOK AT IT

The traditional teachings divide that into:

- a. Actually leave the mind as it is
- b. Bring mindfulness and meta-alertness to it.

IA. ACTUALLY LEAVE THE MIND AS IT IS<sup>202</sup>

*nang wa ben bün ngang de la  
re dok la sok nam tok gi  
chen chö gang yang ma che par*

Absorb for a while unwaveringly in this state in which all haphazard appearance-making and appearances have been contracted until they have

disappeared.

Do not contrive anything with thoughts such as expectations or worries.

That means, you should remain within the NBB<sup>203</sup> state, without hope or doubt. The idea is that you generate a happy moment. I told you before that there is some kind of happy, joyful moment. I think I used some sexual example last time.<sup>204</sup> A sexual experience brings happiness and joy within us. However, that happiness and joy is not necessarily of virtuous nature. So the example might not be completely right, but at least it gives us a good idea. The kind of joy can be compared to a person having fallen newly in love, being separated forcefully and then being joined together again. It is that level of joy and happiness. Actually, where I come from, dissolving the guru within you is compared to a long lost child and the mother getting together. Such a happy mind is open, spacious, joyful, without sadness, sorrow, sourness or worry. Very natural.

When you can really join guru yoga and purification together, you experience this special state which I labeled NBB-sate. That mind of NBB should not have any hope of getting something, not even the hope of becoming enlightened or getting better, hoping to get happy,—wealthy, healthy. Just cut that out—don't have it. Also don't have any doubt that you may get sufferings, illnesses, loss of friends, losing yourself, getting downfalls and all of those. Have neither hope nor doubt.

The teachings will tell you, 'Do not follow the previous thoughts or invite future thoughts with hope or doubt.' In other words, there should not be a single thought. With

that sort of relaxed, open, joyful natured mind, remain and meditate. I did not say bliss, okay?

Wherever the mind is settling, let it be. Don't push it. Don't suggest anything. Don't let it follow previous thoughts. Don't let it invite future thoughts. There should be no doubt and no hope, nothing. Don't create anything. Just let it be alone. Meditating on this will be the actual first point: leave the mind as it is, leave it alone, don't bully it or push it around. Simple, isn't it?

The First Panchen Lama adds up one more thing: The relationship with your guru and you is so strong. You are so happy that you are actually shedding tears from your eyes. All your hair pores are raised. You feel tremendous devotion from the bottom of your heart, taking a long time for praying and requesting. Finally, your mind is inseparable from the guru's mind. The guru dissolves to you and blesses you. That level of mind will bring that joyful state, the real true NBB-state. At that moment leave that mind completely alone. Don't even hope of getting enlightened. Don't worry about any other problems that may come. The First Panchen Lama's major point is: Whatever is past, don't follow. Whatever is coming in future, don't try to receive it. Whatever is there now, don't change it. Let it be. Meditate a little bit on that. Focus.

IB. BRING MINDFULNESS AND META-ALERTNESS TO IT<sup>205</sup>

How do you focus on that? With mindfulness and meta-alertness

*yo me chung ze nyam par zhok  
gyel dang nyi lok ta bu yi*

*yi che kak pa ma yin pa  
ma yeng dren pei gyang so tsuk  
gyu wa rik pei shes zhin dok*

This does not mean, however, that you cease all attention as if you had fainted or fallen asleep.

Rather, you must tie [your attention] to the post of mindfulness in order not to wander, and station alertness to be aware of any mental movement.

Such a state, without hope and doubt, could be a state without any thought, just like fainting. When you faint, you don't have any thoughts. Actually, that's not quite true. I fainted once and I remember, I did have thoughts at that time.

*Fainting and thoughts.* Ribur Rimpoche was visiting Michigan. He always had great difficulty to get up. I offered to pull him up and I did pull hard. Right at that moment he told me a very interesting story about some great teacher, Kyabje Kangsar Rimpoche, who was giving the Kalachakra initiation in Tibet. Kyabje Ling Rimpoche received it from him and later the Dalai Lama received it from Ling Rimpoche. All these big Kalachakra initiations the Dalai Lama is giving, come from there. Ribur Rimpoche said that Kangsar Rimpoche was such a humble monk. He dressed

properly, but very simply. There was another rimpoche in a very fancy dress. All decorations were there for Kangsar Rimpoche as the lama who gave the Kalachakra. But Kangsar Rimpoche was so humble. He let the other one go first, so that everybody thought he was the attendant to the fancy rimpoche.

That was the story Ribur Rimpoche was telling me when I pulled him up. I really pulled very strongly but he didn't move. I pulled more and he was raised half way out of the chair. I did another one more pull and then suddenly whatever he was telling me became sort of a vision for me. I saw the lamas going round, with umbrellas and the real guy looked like the attendant. Then next thing I noticed that my cheek was touching the floor and I wondered what had happened. Then I realized that I had fainted. When I fell I had punched the wall with my elbow and there was a hole in the dry wall. Ribur Rimpoche thought that I was joking and playing, lying on the floor, but I had fainted for a short period and saw what he was telling me like a movie.

According to this text, when you faint you have no thoughts. Also, when you go through anesthesia you will not have any thoughts. It just goes dark and black and 'zoom!' you are in it. Sometimes, when you fall asleep it may go like that. Actually, the mind has been stopped and held back by some kind of mental and physical intervention that can hold back the thoughts themselves. Your meditation should be *not* like that. It should *not* be a state such as fainting or falling asleep.

When you leave the mind as it is, without fantasy or making anything up, without hope and doubt, when you

are leaving it alone, it doesn't mean that it is thoughtless. This is so important. A lot of people will think that the thoughtless level is a great state. It is not! If the thoughtless level is great, then being under anesthesia should be a great state. It is not. (You are lucky if the anesthetists can bring you back to life.) No, this meditation is not thought-less. It is with thoughts. And you are not cutting any thoughts.

*Mindfulness and meta-alertness.* Mindfulness is watching from the distance. There we could have a problem. We could think: First the Panchen Lama says, 'Leave the mind alone.' Then he says, 'Look into the mind.' Then he says, 'Have mindfulness and alertness.' So what are we supposed to do?

That problem will come when you meditate. The meta-alertness, or awareness, is the result of mindfulness, while mindfulness itself is the result of focusing. One brings the other. When you have it, you have it. When you don't have it, like we right now, you have to pretend that you have it. Then with only one mind, we have to sit over here, then over there, sometimes start looking, sometimes get into the mirror and pretend to be the reflection. We have to do all that because we don't have all these mental faculties at our disposal yet. But it will come.

What is *not* to be done? Your meditation should not be like falling asleep. If you fall asleep you have lost your attention. If you faint you have lost your attention. In my case, the story I was listening to became actualized. It was like watching a movie or participating in that event. That is how the mind works. These are uncontrolled things. There

is no attention. There is nothing. It should not be like that in meditation.

So first, the Panchen Lama says that it is not like fainting or sleeping and then he says that it is not thoughtless. He says to watch with mindfulness from a distance. In the next line he says that if anything comes in that doesn't belong there, whatever thoughts come, become immediately aware of it. Be alert. The meta-alertness should notice that. That is how you maintain that state: with mindfulness and meta-alertness.

Actually, this is the short way of explaining meditation. The longer way of explaining is what we already did during the meditation course earlier this year. For a long time we have explained how to maintain mindfulness. You have to overcome five faults,<sup>206</sup> use the six powers<sup>207</sup> and so on. The whole thing is contained in the shorter version here.

The beauty in Buddha's teaching is this. You can make it very detailed and systematic and there can be so much. On the other hand you can make it so short, by saying, 'Without losing focus, watch from the distance.' Meta-alertness will make sure that anything that doesn't belong in there, doesn't come in.

Out of all those, what is the most important? Mindfulness. Again, remember: this is not the mindfulness that you are used to hearing about in America. The mindfulness that you hear about in the insight meditation and so on teaches you

about what the mind is doing. Here mindfulness means: don't lose your focus. Remember whatever your focusing point is. If it is a pillar, remember the pillar all the time. Remember, we said that sometimes you can even recall each and every particle in the pillar and count them. It is that clear. That is what meditating on a pillar means. Then don't lose this focus. Again, at this moment we are not using mindfulness in the sense of remembering everything that goes on in the mind. Here it means, just don't ever get taken away from your focusing point, which in this case is the mind itself. Let the mind focus on mind.

When you are focusing, anything that doesn't belong in there is stopped, not allowed. That state is not like falling asleep or fainting. So naturally, you are focusing. When you look at focusing, what do you see? You are not going to see anything. But when you eliminate everything that it is not supposed to be, then you are left with what it really is. This is the Buddhist way of logic: discard what it is not, then you are left with what it is.

There are two types of discarding: 1) Something is not there, so you discard it. 2) Something is there, so you discard it.<sup>208</sup> But that is too philosophical. Let's not worry about it.

In any case mindfulness, remembering, is the most important. We talked about the image of tying an elephant to a pillar with the rope of mindfulness, while using the hook of alertness. All of that has to be applied here. Now we shift to the 2nd out of the six 'power points.'

2. FOCUS ON THE CLEAR AND LUCID

NATURE OF THE MIND AND MEDITATE<sup>209</sup>

*rik ching söl wei ngo wo la*  
*hril gyi drim la cher gyi tö*

Firmly tighten the hold of your mindfulness  
on that which has the nature of  
clarity and awareness and behold it starkly.

Translated it should say, 'Lucid, clear nature, look straight, put the focus with all force.' You are going to find some basis in the mind. There is nothing to be seen, nothing to be touched, but you are going to find some lucid, alert nature in there. There is no visual image, but you get some understanding. That probably has to be focused on.

The definition of mind is 'lucid and clear.'<sup>210</sup> That's what we are talking about. That means: knowing clearly. It is sort of a definition of the mind. When you are not knowing clearly, it may be mind, but it may not be right mind. What this line really is saying is that when you find that lucid and clear nature of the mind, then focus on that. That is the bottom line. Focus on that without any wavering, without any moving.

When you are focusing, it can't be too tight nor too relaxed. Otherwise you will lose it. There are the two problems, of wandering and sinking. Try to avoid these and bring your attention to the level where your focus is not too loose and not too tight and you are able to focus for long enough.

You have to look back into what we talked before, when we discussed the five faults, the eight awarenesses [or antidotes] *etc.*<sup>211</sup> You have to apply all of them when they say ‘look at without any wavering.’ That is all contained in this one verse.

Up to here it is general meditation. Remember? There is finding the focusing point, learning to focus, how to extend it, remembering the obstacles of sinking mind and wandering mind, and overcoming them. When applying those, there are the five faults and the eight antidotes, which will lead you to the nine stages by the six powers and the four types of attention. All of them are just this one line here: Look straight without wavering. That’s what it is.

3. WHATEVER THOUGHTS COME UP,  
RECOGNIZE THEM AND MEDITATE<sup>212</sup>

*nam tok gang dag gang kye pa*  
*de dang de nyi nö zin cha*

Should your mind give rise to any thoughts,  
simply recognize them.

These two lines are saying, ‘Whatever thoughts come up, recognize them at that moment.’ This is simply saying that when you are meditating, you have mindfulness functioning and you also have meta-alertness. Any other points, any other thoughts that come up, whether it is the internal sinking mind or the external wandering mind, whatever, should be recognized immediately by the meta-alertness.

The mental faculty meta-alertness is the result of mindfulness. Right now, we are talking about it, but we don't have it. We do have mindfulness, whether full or not full, because we can focus. If you focus long, you are going to find something internally that tells you, 'Hey, you are not focusing.' Something like an alarm going off. That's called meta-alertness. If you have the mindfulness, you know it's going to come up. When you don't have mindfulness, you don't expect to get meta-alertness.

For example, you are going somewhere and you're carrying a bag, that goes with you everywhere. Suddenly, when you've forgotten the bag, your hand will feel something is missing. Then you realize it's your bag that is missing. That is the meta-alertness. It is too light, or something. Did I drop something out of my pocket? All those kinds of things are body alertness. That part we can easily talk about. 'We are used to thinking on physical points. Even when you say 'meditate' we have a visual image.

At the mind level, right now everything is blank. However, the mind has the actual exact function that the body consciousness has. The way the body alertness functions, tells you you're missing something, the same way you can get the mind alertness. That's why I say meta-alertness is the result of mindfulness. You don't have it before.

For lay people like us, when we try to get this meta-alertness, which is knowing, it becomes a new thought for us. Although we are meditating on mind, recognizing this is a new thought for us. Here we're telling you to cut out all thoughts. However, that means: 'Cut out anything beside meta-alertness and mindfulness.' So this is a new thought

for us. When you are used to it for meditation, this will not be a new thought, it will become an old thought. At this level, it's called a new thought.

So, what you are really doing is watching. Mindfulness means that whatever you are focusing on, you are remembering. It is recognized thoughts on which you are being mindful. Meta-alertness may come up, but it may not be recognized. It is a new thought. Still, we need that meta-alertness. Besides the meta-alertness, any new unrecognized thought that ever comes up has to be deleted.

Actually, there is a twofold question here:

- What to do?
- What to do after that?

#### WHAT TO DO?

A LOT OF THOUGHTS ARE GOING TO POP UP. THESE DON'T BELONG IN THERE. BEFORE WE READ A LINE: GYU WA RIK PEI SHES ZHIN DOK<sup>213</sup> —‘THINGS THAT DON'T BELONG THERE, DON'T LET THEM IN.’ SO HOW CAN YOU STOP THEM? THE ANSWER FOLLOWS,

*yang na rel kor ken zhin du.*  
*nam tok chi kye be be chö*

Alternatively, like your opponent in a duel,  
cut thoughts immediately as soon as they occur.

I gave you the example of the Indian arrow-man and the swordsman. That's what these two lines are telling you.<sup>214</sup>

Any thoughts you don't want, somehow push them out. It is just like an elephant walking on the head of somebody and pushing them below. But don't think of human beings! That will be too much. But it is like a heavy elephant pushing them down. This is one way of stopping them.

Another way of stopping them is just not entertain them. When a thought pops up you say, 'Hey, here you are. What do you want to do?' And keep on watching what it does. After a while it will disappear by itself. That happens even to us here, at our level. If some thought comes, don't let it go anywhere and start looking it in the face. If you do that, somehow it begins to feel shy and disappears. When it disappears some kind of void comes in. Focus on that void. That void will become a little clearer. It looks like you have found something called 'void.' That means you are beginning to find the object of meditation.

#### 4. LOOSENING THE TIGHTNESS OF MINDFULNESS<sup>215</sup>

AFTER CUTTING [NEW THOUGHTS] WHAT TO DO

*che tar ne pa de yi tse*  
*dren pa ma shor lhö kyi lö*  
*hril gyi drim la lhö kyi lö*  
*sem kyi jok sa de na da*

Once you have completely cut these off  
and have settled your mind,  
then, without losing mindfulness,  
loosen and relax its tightness.

This is one of the major important points. After [all new thoughts] are cut out, there will be just mind that you

are focusing [on]. What to do is remain focused on that [mind], free of the two obstacles of sinking and wandering, both gross and subtle. You are focusing on the mind that is not changing, or I rather should say, not moving.

*zhe dang zhen yang ji ke du*  
*zur bü ching pei sem nyi ni*  
*lō na dröl wa te tsoṃ me*  
*che sung pa tar ma yeng lö*

As has been said, “Loosen and relax its firm tightness and there is the settled state of mind.” And elsewhere, “When mind ensnared in a tangle is relaxed, it frees itself without a doubt.” Like these statements, relax but without any wandering.

This is one of the major important points. A lot of earlier teachers are telling you here, ‘Let it go. Let it loose.’ There are two great Mahasiddhas speaking here. One is Machig<sup>216</sup> and the other is Saraha.<sup>217</sup> It is Machig who said, ‘Let it loose, and hold it.’ Saraha says, ‘Whatever the mind squeezes, if you let it loose you will be liberated.’ It means that when you reach a certain level, you just let it go.

A lot of people misunderstand this and think it doesn’t matter whatever you do, however you behave. They will say after a little while, you don’t have to pay any attention to moral discipline, because it’s crazy wisdom. Not only for the view, but even for practical purposes and everything they think: ‘If you let it loose, you’ll be liberated.’ That is a misinterpretation, a misunderstanding; This is what comes

out of this [type of texts that need interpretation].

What this is really telling you here is to not try to hold the object of meditation so tight, to let it loose. That is true, but the mind must have alertness within that. If you loosen the alertness, then it becomes the dull nature of the mind. Then it cannot be samadhi or yoga at all.

Therefore, the mind must be alert, yet not holding too tight. Why? If you hold too tight, there is a danger of the wandering mind coming in. If you're too relaxed, the sinking mind will come. So at that level the great mahasiddhas will say, 'Let it go. When you loosen it, you are liberated.' Again, it doesn't mean exactly what we think it means. It really relates to certain points of focusing.

In short, what to do is to remain focused on that mind, free of the two obstacles of sinking and wandering, both gross and subtle. That will be the answer to, 'after cutting new thoughts, what to do?' What to do is *remain focused*. Basically, *relax, yet with alertness*. The focusing mind must be alert in nature. It should not be tightening too much. That is the balancing we learned between the two problems of mental excitation and sinking that we've talked about a number of times.

##### 5. MERGING OF STEADY AND MOVING<sup>218</sup>

*nam tok gang kye ngo wo la*  
*te tse rang yel tong sang char*  
*de zhin ne tsang tak pa na*  
*ma drib tong sel hrik ge wa*  
*tong wa ne gyu dre pa zhe*

When you look at the nature of any thought that arises, it automatically disappears by itself and a bare absence dawns.

Likewise, when you inspect when settled, a non-obstructive bare absence and clarity is vivid. You see that the settled and moving minds are mixed together.

*Void.* There are earlier voids and later voids. When you mix the void you are looking at in the beginning<sup>219</sup> with the later void, and when you make them oneness, becoming one big void, then this is called ‘growing and remaining or steady and moving becoming one.’

As for the earlier and later voids becoming one for the perceiving mind, some earlier Tibetan teachers thought it was fantastic. But Tsongkhapa and his tradition don’t think it is. They say it is something usual that naturally happens when you focus.

Maybe we need to clarify this a little more. If you go in detail on the shamatha meditation, one covers the nine stages. Remember those?<sup>220</sup> We should be able to apply them here. As I told you, that can be presented in detail or in short.

The root text says, ‘*rik ching söl wei ngo wo la, hril gyi drim la cher gyi tö*—look in that clear, lucid nature mind and look nicely and strongly. Whatever thoughts may come up, recognize them.’<sup>221</sup> Within these two lines the nine stages of meditation are talked about.

*Ne gyu* [short for *ne wa gyu wa*]<sup>222</sup> means either changing or moving; they give you the word ‘moving. Here they talk of mixing or merging. In order to mix something, you need two. What are the two we are talking about?

What this particular verse is telling us is: any new thoughts, unrecognized thoughts that pop up in our mind, keep on looking at those. When you keep looking at it, the thought by itself will stop; it will disappear. It will sort of shy away and disappear and after the thought disappears you will see a void. That is the moving part, or the movement. That is one of the points you will mix.

The other point is the ‘old thought’, the mind on which you are meditating. When you look at the nature of that mind it will be lucid and void, yet anything can be perceived and projected.

It is lucid, yet void, void yet capable of projecting anything. If you have a big mirror that sees nothing, shows nothing; it is clear. So it is lucid. It is capable of delivering any reflection if shown something. If you show your face, it will appear in there. That is what I mean: capable of receiving and projecting anything, yet void, free of anything. There is nothing blocking it. That lucid quality, that void, is called the void that is remaining. It is called remaining, because it is your meditation focal point. It is called the remaining [or settled or steady] one.

The thought that pops up is the new one, the traveling one, [the moving one], the coming and going one. When you look at that [new] thought, you will [finally] find a void.<sup>223</sup> When you look at the remaining real meditation

point, you also have a void. These two voids become one within you.

Now, when you look at the new thought, it's gone and there's a void. Then you look here at your focal point of meditation, there's nothing really to be found; that is a void too.

At first you're not getting these two mixed together. You're seeing this one here, you're seeing that one there. But after a little while, they are going to merge together: the void that is a consequence of the traveling thought and the void that is a consequence of the mind on which you are meditating—the new void and the old void—almost merge together. The two voids become one when you don't see the difference. A void is a void, no matter what it is a void of. That is called the mixing point.

You have three points here: there is the point of steady or remaining void; then there is the traveling or moving void; and then you have the mixing together. They almost merge together. Certain traditions will tell you that to recognize these three is extremely difficult. The Second Panchen Lama, I think, said there is nothing difficult and he gives the following example. If you have a wall over here and the wall remains; that is remaining. If the wall falls down, that is moving. Then the dust of the standing wall and the falling wall mix together.

It is like this. When you are focusing on the mind, that is of void nature and it is steady, remaining. Within that, thoughts come and you recognize them. Thoughts are the perception of the mind. When you really look at them very

carefully, these thoughts cannot stand be looked at by you or by your mind. It looks like they're being dissolved into the mind itself. That's called steady and moving mixed together.

To make it clearer, before the thoughts pop up when you are meditating on your mind, that void is the steady void. When thoughts come up and they disappear, that is the second void. Then those two voids merge together, mix.

What do you expect out of this mixture? With the shamatha meditation, as you focus strongly on the subject, it [*i.e.* the mind] will be like a lake, or an ocean. Then you will have the analytical mind analyzing and concluding. Focusing and analyzing normally are going to contradict each other. At the end, however, they don't. The example is, no matter how much the fish will move within the water, it will never shake the water. The fish will move very smoothly through the water, without disturbing the water. What does that mean? Analyzing will not disturb focusing. Focusing will not disturb analyzing. They will complement each other. That is the true mixture of steady and moving.

That is Tsongkhapa's way of explaining it. Before Tsongkhapa, when you mixed these two voids, when you were at that level, you were almost regarded as a mahasiddha. Tsongkhapa said no, this is not the case. You moved up, but you really only learnt to complement the focusing mind and the analyzing mind.

How do we see the new thoughts? We will see and recognize any thoughts that pop up in our head. They just pop

up in our mind. We will really see that it is the mind that produces them. We almost see that this has nothing to do with the mind on which we are focusing. These things do pop up. Yet we see that these two have no connection. It is an independent thing that has come up.

When you begin to look at it very carefully, all these pop-up thoughts came up because of certain terms and conditions. Certain terms and conditions have made them appear. Basically, however, they are part of the mind. It is the functioning of the mind itself and nothing separate. What they tell you is that after mixing them together, what you are perceiving is that there's nothing blocking anything. It is a huge void. Yet, it is solidly able to perceive the functioning of anything. This is a sort of special language that great meditators use: nothing blocking, void, yet clear, solid. What do we mean by 'nothing blocking'? It means there is no gross thought blocking the nature. Why is it void? It is because there is no physical thing at all. Why is it clear? Because you recognize it clearly. The nature of the mind is hold tight. So it is tight, clear and vivid.

All of this has come out of one word from Milarepa. Milarepa says, 'It is such a joy, the mind looking at the mind.'

## 6 RECOGNIZE THE MOVEMENT OF YOUR MIND<sup>224</sup>

*drak shing nam tok chi kye kyang*  
*mi gok gyu wa ngö zin par*  
*che te de yi ngo wo la*  
*jok pa dzing kyi cha tsön ni*

*Gelek Rimpoche*

*pur wei pe dang tsung pa yin  
ji tar zing ne pur wei cha rok ni  
chok nam kor ne lar yang der bap zhin*

Thus, no matter what thought arises, when you recognize that it is a movement of mind and, without blocking it, have settled on its nature, [you find] it is like the example of a bird confined on a boat. As is said, 'Just as a crow having flown from a ship after circling the directions must re-align on it'

The sixth point is actually the same thing we have told you before: don't stop it. One of the points said 'Stop it, cut it.' You don't have to do all six. One of them is good enough. Here this choice is simply telling you, 'Alright, let the thought grow.'

How do I meditate here? Let's say I didn't choose to cut the thought, like in the earlier mentioned cutting, which is also called 'smashing it.' If I don't cut it, what do I do? It says, 'Alright, let the thought come up, good or bad, let it grow. Just make sure you recognize that it grows. Whatever grows, recognize that. Look at that thought itself in a very relaxed way. Follow it wherever it's going to go. The thought will transcend; it will become something else, something else, something else, something else, something else. It will keep on transcending, and changing, changing, changing, and finally there is no place, nothing to go. It will come back.'

The example given is a bird carried on board a ship, and in the middle of the sea you let it fly in the air. The bird

will keep on flying. Finally the bird will get too tired, need to land and can find no other place to land. If there were a rock or mountain or land, the bird would land there. But there's not. Therefore, finally the bird has to come back to the same boat where it went from. Just like that, if you trace the thought, after a little while, there's no more way to go, nothing more to manifest. So the thought, just like a dead-tired bird, has to sit and rest.

This is not, however, very strongly recommended for us. Number one, if you have all the time in your hands, you can sit there and keep on watching it. If there's no time limit, no pressure, nothing, if you don't have to go anywhere, no telephone ringing, nobody, no appointment, nothing and if you're not going to get hungry or anything, just sit there and keep on watching thoughts; that's okay. Number two, following these thoughts, actually the thought can really trick you. It can go and build a huge castle on ice. We all know that. Sometimes it even helps to grow some attachments, or hatred, all this. It does, if you let it go; it really does. So, it may be great for certain people, but not for everybody.

RESULT OF THE MEDITATION: [ATTAINING SHAMATHA  
FOCUSED ON THE CONVENTIONAL NATURE OF MIND]<sup>225</sup>

Now, after having said how to meditate, including these six methods, what do you expect? Here, we have to recognize what meditation really is. The root text says,

*She pa ji zhin kyang pa le  
nyam zhak ngo wo gang gi kyang*

*Gelek Rimpoche*

*ma drp dang shing sel wa dang  
zuk chen gang di-ang ma drp pe  
tong zam nam ka ta bu dang  
chi yang char we hrik ge wa  
de tar sem kyi chönyi ni  
ngön sum lhak gi mökyang  
di zhe zung zhin ten du me  
gang shar dzin me lhuk par jok  
di ni sang gye bar chang su*

From cultivating such methods as these, you experience the nature of the totally absorbed mind to be a non-obstructive lucidity and clarity. Not established as any form of physical phenomenon, it is a bare absence which, like space, allows anything to dawn and be vivid. Such nature of mind must in fact be seen straightforwardly with exceptional perception and cannot be verbally indicated or apprehended as a 'this.' Therefore, without such apprehension, settle in a fluid and flowing manner on whatever cognitive dawning arises.

Just like we explained before, when you are meditating in that way, what do you get as a result? You get that meditation which is absolutely clear, not blocking, which is pure, clear, free of any fault, therefore void like space. Yet anything that is projected to that mind, the mind is capable of perceiving.

*Nine qualities of that mind.*

1-2-3. It is void like space, it's clear, and it is lucid [or knowing], capable of projecting anything, perceiving anything. When you look at these three—void, clear, lucid—as one point, it means: anything projected can be seen. So, then what happens? Whenever you are seeing that mind, it has no manifestation or anything; it is clear. Whatever you see or perceive, whether it is the mind itself or the perceived thing outside, it is absolutely clear, too.

4. It has the capability of developing all the qualities of total enlightenment.

5. Yet it is nothing new that we have obtained. It is with us, with every living being, from whenever we have been existing. Continuously, we have it. We don't recognize it, but we have it. Yet we don't see it. We only see it once: during the time of death. Or if you're meditating, you can recognize it through the power of meditation, particularly in such cases as when you focus on the Vajrayana points, when all the airs are collected in the central channel. Not only collected, but made stable and remain in there. Not only stable and remaining, but when they dissolve into your central channel. At that moment you will see your mind face to face.

6. That nature of mind remains whether the individual has a good life, like a great human life, or samsaric god; or the individual has a bad life in the hell realm; hot, cold, hungry ghost, wherever it may be. The nature of that mind never changes.

7. It is pure like sunshine or sunrays. Even if it has some problems we encounter, it is natural; it is like pure gold. The pure nature like sunshine is the seventh quality, even if it has collected wrong thoughts here and there, it really remains like pure gold.

8. Any faults are temporary, so they can be removed. They are removable, temporary. Why? Because it is not its true nature, not part of its nature.

9. It is pure like pure water. If there is no dust involved, it will remain completely pure. Just like that, mind is pure. However, whenever there is attachment, hatred, etc., then it is a block that blocks us, and as an ordinary person, we don't see it.

These are some qualities of the mind. The Hevajra Tantra says,

It is very hard to explain, but it simultaneously grows with us all the time. It's hard to find it. By the teachings of the lama, and by the luck and the fortune of mine, may I be able to get it.

The great Mahasiddha Saraha said,

The nature of it is very hard to explain by anyone.

To conclude this, the mahamudra is divided in two; common and uncommon. The common part conventional or relative mind is completed. The uncommon part is total emptiness.

The actual meditation itself concludes by saying:<sup>226</sup>

It is a clear focusing without any obstacle, absolutely lucid. It is not in any physical form, it is void, just like space. Yet it is capable of perceiving everything, and empty, solid.

That's what we already talked about. What does it mean? Looking at the actual meditative state, it is a lucid mind, completely clear, and not physical. It is void, just like space, yet you can perceive anything; whatever you focus on appears to you. When you talk about mind, it must be something like that. If mind would have some physical form, then we could talk about whether the mind is a bearded or a bald-headed one. But there is no tall, no short, no fat, no thin, no black, no white, not anything like that. So it is void, space-like. It is empty in nature.

Some of the earlier teachers say this is the nature of the mind. Whether it is the nature of the mind or it is mind itself, depends on how you use the word 'nature.' If you talk about the nature of the reality, then you are talking about the true nature, [*i.e.* emptiness]. But if you are talking about the nature of mind, it's not the true nature, not the emptiness aspect of mind you are talking about. What mind really is, in the sense of what we are talking about here, is: something very solid and vivid, yet you cannot point it out and you cannot show it. Perhaps that's what we said earlier. I also mentioned to you earlier that when meditating with mind as a focal point there is actually a mixture, an overlapping of two voids. When you are looking at the mind itself, when you are perceiving the mind,

[that's one void]. And then different thoughts will pop up and when you trace the thoughts, [you eventually perceive a void]. Either way.

Remember, we have given you six different ways of looking at the thoughts. One of them was: when you follow the thought it actually disappears, and you see the empty or void nature of it. That's not emptiness, as far as I'm concerned, but the *absence of* the thought. In other words, you are tracing the thought. Suddenly it disappears and there is nothing left to trace. That is the void we are talking about. It is not the emptiness of the thought; it is just a void, an absence of.

Then you look at 'who is tracing?' Which is the mind? That is another mind that pops up, the mind tracing, watching, facing and challenging the thought. That also will disappear. So you have two voids here. The void created by looking at the original thought, and the void created by looking at the thought [or mind] that recognizes thoughts. Are you with me? So you've got a double void now. When the two voids overlap, they become one in the mind of the individual. This is called a mixing of 'the steady and the moving.'<sup>227</sup> One void came out of the steady [or settled] thought, and the other void came out of the moving thought. When they overlap, becoming almost like one, it is like water in water, milk in milk.

Once you have these two overlapping voids together, you'll see something solid; a solid-nature void. Does that make sense? Or is it more confusing?

On the one hand we're saying void, on the other hand we're saying solid. Solid and void just don't go together.

Right? It sort of contradicts. However, solidness doesn't necessarily mean physically strong. It is solid like a rock, yes, but it has no physical appearance. That is the solidness of void, that's what I am talking about. When these two solid voids are becoming one, and the person is accepting them as one, it is the merging of steady and moving thoughts together—void like space yet solid and able to perceive anything.

Perceive means see, understand and take it in, but not necessarily accept or acknowledge it as truly or inherent existent. So the mind is capable of seeing every appearance. Whatever appears, it is capable of being seen, yet you do not buy it [as truly or inherently existent]. When that happens, it is fantastic.

*Misinterpretation of this meditative state.* Many people will tell you that this is a wonderful state; a state that delivers total enlightenment. In other words, those people accept the nature of mind—not the true nature, but the mind itself—as emptiness, as wisdom. You have these two voids; in other words, the watcher and the watched become merged together. There is no separation between going and goer, no separation between what you watch and who's watching. These are merging all together. Yet, it's not lost. Everything can appear but does not become something. Many people say this is the ultimate emptiness. To prove that they quote what Naropa was instructed by his guru, Tilopa,

Appearance will not tie you, but the acceptance of appearance will tie you. Therefore, let the acceptance of appearance go.

That's what Tilopa said to Naropa. This is true. The words itself are true, and what it tells you is true. However, these people now interpret this as: you can see everything, everything appears, but you don't accept it in the nature of reality [*i.e.* as conventional reality]. Or: you accept everything and it becomes one; there is no separation [between] one who watches and what is watched, the one who goes and the going, perceiving and the perceiver.

Many people spend a lot of time meditating on that, and then watch and wait. This is a problem, according to the First Panchen Lama. Meditations that do not accept anything, do not think anything, do not focus on anything are simply experiencing mind—lucid, and solid. You see that it is clear, yet you cannot say 'this is,' and 'this is not'; it cannot be clarified, you cannot even speak about it; you can only feel it, you cannot see it; you experience yet you cannot speak about it. This is, they say, because this is inexplicable through words, only experience can tell you. This is called a great, profound state. Clearly seeing the face of the mind is considered the ultimate wisdom. Therefore they say, you can see it, feel it, but cannot point it out. They say that these are the explanations given by Buddha on the wisdom—emptiness.

Actually, in the Heart Sutra, before the Heart Sutra begins, it says,

Even if you want to say it, you cannot say it.

You cannot describe it by words.

That is the prajnaparamita or the wisdom. It is the only Mother. It is continuous. Its nature is like space. Yet it is

completely discriminating wisdom, which is lucid. It is the Mother of all Buddhas of the three times.<sup>228</sup>

What happens in this misinterpretation by the people who hold that view of the conventional nature of mind being wisdom of emptiness is that the quality Buddha talked of, the wisdom itself, has been brought down here, by trying to present it as qualities of seeing the mind.

### CONCLUSION

*tö pei dam ngak yin no zhe  
deng sang gang rii gom chen pa  
pel cher gong pa chik gi drok  
de ta mö kyi tsül di ni*

The great meditators of the snow mountains  
are practically of a single opinion  
in proclaiming that this is a guideline  
indicating how to forge a state of Buddhahood.

*dang pö le chen sem ne pa  
drup pei me chung tap ke dang  
sem kyi kün dzop ngo trö tsül  
yin zhe chö kyi gyel tsen ma*

Be that as it may, I, Chökyi Gyeltsen, say that  
this is a wondrous skillful means for beginners  
to accomplish the settling of their mind  
and is a way that leads you to recognize [merely]  
the conventional nature of mind that conceals  
something deeper.

The First Panchen Lama himself said, ‘For laypeople like us, who are at the beginning level, it is a wonderful basis to meditate, to develop mental quiescence. This is the wonderful method and this is the introduction to relative mind, the mind itself. I proclaim this as the relative mind.’ He praised this state tremendously. That state is the introduction to mind. It is a wonderful method to develop mental quiescence. This is also a beautiful way of keeping the mind within you, keeping it inside, not focusing outside. It is really wonderful quiet focusing inside.

Then in the reality of mind, there are two; the relative gross mind and absolute refined true nature of mind. This is the relative, gross, what we normally call mind. That is what I, the author, Chökyi Gyeltsen proclaim.

That’s it. This is what I wanted to cover, and we did. We finished the course on meditation, and then there was a little extra few weeks, so we thought, ‘What will we do? Review or go to the mahamudra? Some of you chose to do the mahamudra. So we did address the relative aspects of the mind. It’s sort of in line with the meditation course we did. That is completed here.

Now the next question comes, ‘If that is not emptiness, if that is just the [conventional] mind, then what is the true wisdom—what is the emptiness on mind?’ This question is the subject of the whole next half of this mahamudra text here, and over the whole of 2005 I plan to talk on the wisdom here in New York, on the basis of Tsongkhapa’s *Lamrim Chenmo*. I really want to thank all of you here.

## VIII EPILOGUE

In the teachings in Ann Arbor this year, on the eighth chapter of Shantideva's *Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, I did bring in the development of love-compassion through the Exchange System. We talked on the basis of five important resolutions:

- Resolution one: seeing the equality of self and others.
- Resolution two: seeing that self-cherishing is the source of all trouble and problems
- Resolution three: seeing that cherishing others is the doorway of joy, happiness and all great qualities.
- Resolution four: one can exchange the idea of self-cherishing for the cherishing of others.
- The fifth point: the practice of give-and-take, *tong len*, doing the exchanging of self-cherishing for cherishing others.

*Tong-len practice.* In the *tong len* practice there are three things you give and three things you take. Giving will be the giving your body, wealth and virtues of the three times. Taking will be taking in the suffering, which is the result,

its cause, the gross delusions and the imprints of the gross delusions, which block you from reaching total enlightenment. The gross negative emotions and their consequences block the individual from happiness and joy. Furthermore, liberation, nirvana, is blocked by the gross negative emotions. Actions following those emotions become negative karma, which again block the individual from liberation. Even if you are free of that, you still have the imprints of gross negative emotions such as hatred or obsession. These imprints alone block the individual from becoming totally enlightened

What you take is suffering, its causes and the imprints of the causes—three. What you give is body, wealth and virtue—three. That is basically the give and take, the *tong len*.<sup>229</sup>

It is not just simply sitting there and: ‘While breathing out, I’m giving all my good things with white light to you, and I take all your bad things with black light into me’, and this and that. It’s a good thought, but it is just childish give and take. The real give and take is the three things mentioned that you give and the three things that you take.

The question arises: ‘When I take that in, what do I do? Am I going to get all these overwhelming [sufferings, causes and imprints]?’ No, you don’t. What you do is you give all that to the ego, who is at your heart level. The ego is sitting there just like a brutal dictator, dictating all the time. So you throw [all sufferings, causes and imprints] in there and you destroy it completely. [It will be as though] a collection of dust has been washed away by a bucketful of water. That

is one traditional example. The second traditional example is thundering and lightning on a collection of rocks, which [scatter] into pieces and disappear. That's it.

In general, we are learning the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* on the one hand, and the meditation points on the other hand. So we have both: the material to meditate on and how to meditate. So utilize that as best you can every day.<sup>230</sup>

You know, everyday things count. Yes I know, some of you have commitments of saying this and sadhana; they are great, you have a commitment, you are doing it. Great. But the bottom line of Dharma practice is really one thing. One of the earlier Sakya lamas said,

You have to see the total obsession, where it lies. It really tries to make your self wonderful. If you begin to judge what that wonderfulness is all about and what the quality of people is all about, the moment you begin to measure the wonderfulness in terms of the green dollar, in terms of wealth and comfort, then that is a clear sign there is something wrong from the spiritual point of view. That is because there is still strong obsession with material comfort and benefits within our goals.

We cannot manage without material things. So, I don't mean that you should give that up completely, run into the forest or the caves and live there. That time has been completely over. Now, your priority, the future life or total enlightenment, is not superior as you may think. It is considered to be equally important for the individual as the

material life. Truly we know, material things do not really answer what we are seeking. We absolutely know that. You people are educated and intelligent, and many of you are brilliant, so you know that clearly. But the problem is you are still lost in between these two. Yes, you know material benefit doesn't answer all your needs. But still, priorities will make you work for that. Yes, you have to pay your bills. You have to have an easy, comfortable standard of living. Yes, you do.

Again, we are no longer living in the caves or the forests. That was the case 2,600 years ago, during Buddha's time and even afterwards. Very good. But now, for one to two hundred years ago, it's no longer in our vocabulary. We will rejoice with those who do, but that is not in our vocabulary. Those who claim to be celibate, all look back. They go to the monastery, but they always look back. They are always revisiting. You know, Tibetans have an interesting song. It is a public song. It goes something like this:

This wonderful western paradise may not be that great. Why those great Rimpoches and masters going up there are revisiting us and looking back to us? What they call the eighteen different hell realms may not be that bad. The powerful leaders, one over the other, are cutting into the lines and rushing there.

That's what they sing. People who are or claim to be celibate; even they revisit. If they can remain celibate we rejoice. But that's not meant for us. The time is different. People are different. A great Tibetan master says,

One who remains in the beautiful home, the homemaker, the father and mother of kids, can have a wonderful liberation. If you don't believe me, look at the great Marpa Lotsawa, the founder of the Kagyu tradition and many others.

So, it's really relevant for us to remain in the home, be a wonderful parent or companion and have a perfect spiritual practice. To have a perfect spiritual practice is your priority, your goal. You should not have a totally material goal. Your spiritual goal must have equal importance within your family, within your home, within yourself; by you, by your family, for you, for your family. That is number one.

Number two, through you, it should be for all beings, not only for the family, but for everybody else. And, it is simply the good motivation, good dedication, and being kind and compassionate. Think about love and compassion all the time. Don't forget to give compassion, even to the terrorists. It's hard to say it in New York and over here, even though it's been two or three years. Even now it's hard to say it, but think of each and every one of those hijackers. They thought they were doing the best in their religious service, in their path's service. It shows how terribly brainwashed they are. So they are really a subject of compassion. If one cannot generate compassion for such a pathetic state, for what else do we generate compassion?

Yes, at the time we had to say, 'Yeah, get them and kill them and do whatever.' But the reality is, you can get them, you can kill them, you can do all of them—but with compassion, not with hatred. Compassion is the key to make

a difference for ourselves and for others. Peace, harmony and all love is going to come out of compassion, not out of hatred. Hatred brings hatred. It builds up.

I am really sorry to say this; I am an American citizen now, so I can say it: You know, the American embassy in Delhi, where I used to live, used to be a source of joy. It was wonderful, it was symbolizing freedom and wonderful qualities. People loved to go there, whether they had business or not. People would just go there and hang around in that lobby. Sometimes they would bring some coffee and donuts and things like that. You would enjoy that; it symbolized freedom and love and all this. Now, everything is concrete blocks, right in the front. You can't even go in. You have to go around to the back door, and wherever you look the embassy is hiding behind newly built huge concrete walls.

This tells us something: that's where we are. But all of that can be changed. As Americans we can go safely without any trouble, without any worrying, even if you are traveling in a plane. So we can do this, if we bring compassion. I didn't say caring. I said compassion. It's really true, *if* you bring compassion. Compassion is such that when each and every individual contributes to it, it makes a difference. A country in general is not going to develop compassion. But if each and every individual citizen contributes towards that, no matter how weak it may be, finally, the only thing that will bring peace and harmony is compassion. Nothing else can do it.

I'm sorry, it's my personal feeling; it's not a political statement. I think it is a spiritual statement. That's what

we should think, and we should function in our lives on the basis of love and compassion so that people can trust people. The politicians—they can't trust each other. When they meet each other and they are shaking hands, probably they are thinking, 'What do you have in your hand? What are you going to give me?' That is not the normal people's way. People build relationships with trust. When you don't have hatred, when you don't think 'I get you before you get me', then, you know, things are different.

Yes, you are right. Terrorists are absolutely crazy. They will get us before we get them, if they can. However, they are in a very pathetic situation, and are the subject of compassion. Really. Truly. That doesn't mean if some people have compassion, we must surrender. That's not right. We have to protect and help ourselves with compassion, with love. The best protection is love.

With this I would like to thank you so much.



# APPENDICES

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# OUTLINE

## SHAMATHA MEDITATION

(mahamudra part not included)

A. 1. a. i. 1) a) i) (1) (a)

- A. Shamatha and vipashyana
  - 1. Benefits of shamatha and vipashyana
  - 2. How shamatha and vipashyana are the basic formula
  - 3. The nature of shamatha and vipashyana
  - 4. Why we do need both
  - 5. What should be the order of practice.
- B. How to develop shamatha
  - 1. The prerequisites
    - a. Dwelling in an appropriate place
    - b. Having small needs
    - c. Being content
    - d. Going away from the demands of society
    - e. Having pure ethics
    - f. Lessen the thoughts of desire
  - 2. How to develop *zhi nay* on that basis
    - a. Preparation—prerequisites for the actual meditation of *zhi nay*
    - b. How to do the actual meditation
      - i. The meditative posture
      - ii. The meditative process
        - 1) How to develop flawless concentration
          - a) What to do before focusing on an object of meditation

- b) What to do while focusing on an object of meditation
  - i) Identifying the objects on which to focus
    - (1) General presentation of the objects of meditation
      - (a) Universal objects of meditation—pervasive focusing
      - (b) Meditation according to the different addictions
      - (c) Objects of meditation for expertise—intelligence meditation
      - (d) Objects of meditation for overcoming obstacles
    - (2) Identifying the object of meditation for this context
      - (a) The Buddha image as focal point
      - (b) The mind as focal point
  - ii) How to focus the mind on the object of meditation
    - (1) What is a perfect meditation
    - (2) What is a wrong meditation [and what do you do about it]
    - (3) The length of the sessions
- c) What to do after you focus [on an object of meditation]
  - i) What to do when sinking and excitation arise

- (1) Applying the antidote for failing to notice sinking and excitation
  - (a) The defining characteristics of sinking and excitation
  - (b) The way to develop introspection that recognizes them while meditating
- (2) Applying the antidote for failing to try to eliminate them even though they are noticed
  - (a) Intention and the way it stops sinking and excitation
  - (b) Underlying causes of excitation and sinking
- ii) What to do when sinking and excitation are absent
- 2) The stages in which the mental states develop
  - a) The actual stages in which the mental states develop—nine stages
  - b) The process of achieving them with the six powers
  - c) How the four types of attention are involved in this
- 3 The measure of having attained zhi nay
  - a. When is zhi nay attained—the dividing line between having and not having attained *zhi nay*
  - b. How do we move along the path on the basis of having attained *zhi nay*



# CHARTS

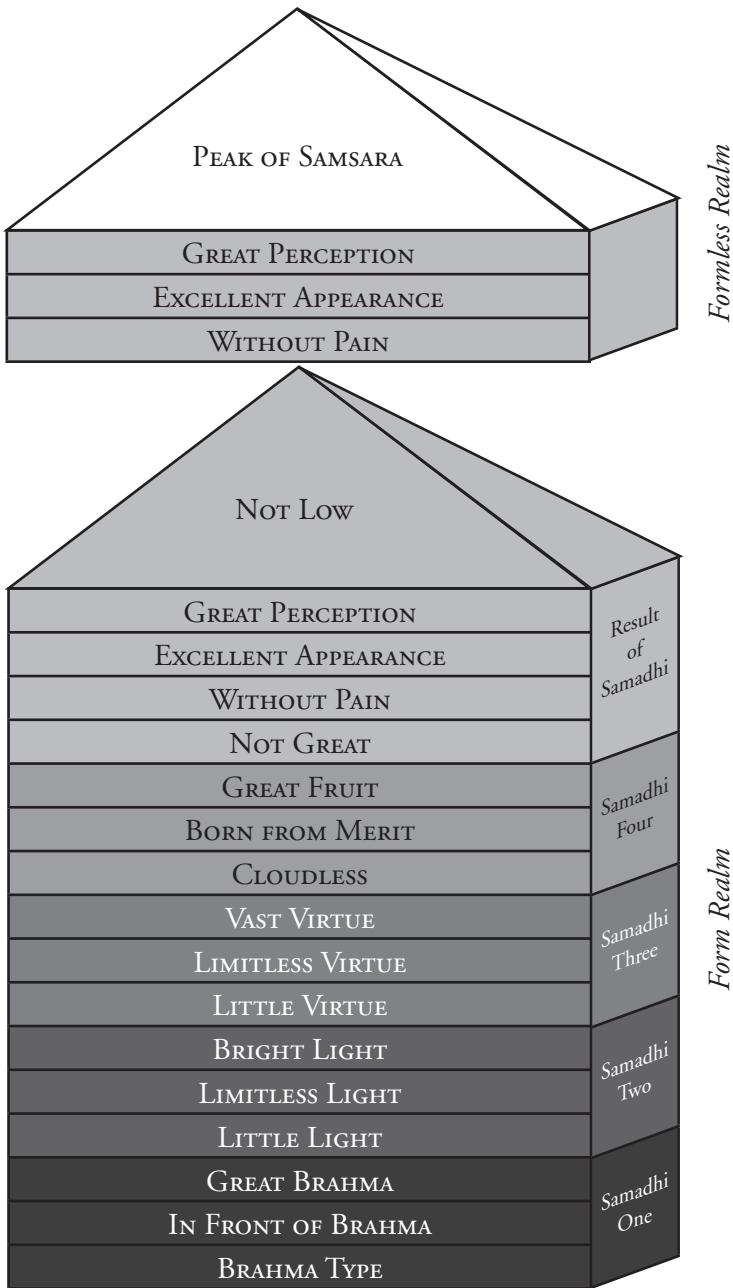
CHART 1: FIVE FAULTS AND EIGHT ANTIDOTES<sup>231</sup>

<b>Five Faults</b>	<b>Eight Antidotes</b>
1. laziness	physical and mental pliancy enthusiastic effort desire faith
2. forgetfulness	mindfulness
3. excitation or sinking	meta-alertness
4. non-application	application
5. over-application	equanimity or relaxation

CHART 2: NINE STAGES, SIX POWERS, FOUR TYPES OF ATTENTION

<b>The Six Powers</b> indicating the method	<b>The Nine Stages of Mind</b> indicating the development	<b>The Four Types of Attention</b> indicating the way of focus
Habituation	9. equanimity	effortless focusing
joyous effort	8. single-pointed focus	focusing without interruption
	7. completely pacified	interruptedly focusing
meta-alertness	6. pacified focus	
	5. controlled focus	
mindfulness	4. close focus	
	3. patch-like focus	
CONTEMPLATING	2. continual focus	forcefully focusing
LEARNING	1. focus	

CHART 3: FORM AND FORMLESS REALMS OF CYCLIC  
EXISTENCE—STAGES OF MEDITATION



*Desire Realm*

## NOTES

- 1 *Gom* is the Tibetan word for “meditation,” or “getting used to it.”
- 2 General literature for Part I: Gelek Rinpoche, *Lamrim Teachings*, Ch. 24; Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. III, p.13–90; R. Thurman, *Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, p. 108–115; B. Alan Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*; Gen Lamrimpa, *Samatha Meditation*; Geshe Gedün Lodrö, *Walking through Walls*; Geshe Rabten, *Treasury of Dharma*, p. 101–122. Pabongka Rinpoche, *Liberation in Our Hands*, vol. III, p.231–260; Pabongka Rinpoche, *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, p. 647–671; Lati Rinbochay & Denma Lochö Rinpochoy, *Meditative States in Tibetan Buddhism*, p. 53-83.
- 3 *'khor 'das*
- 4 Lit.: Gelek Rinpoche, *Lam Rim Teachings*, chapter 16; Denma Lochö Rinpoche, *The Wheel of Existence*. Tarab Tulku, *Unity in Duality*.
- 5 Tib. *lang kar gshegs pa'i mdo* Translation D.T. Suzuki, *The Lanka-vatara Sutra, an epitomized version*.
- 6 Lamrim means: Stages [*rim*] of the Path [*lam*] to Enlightenment.
- 7 This Lamrim course *Odyssey to Freedom*, has been taught in New York City on a weekly basis for some years. For concise *Odyssey* teachings see Gelek Rinpoche, *Odyssey to Freedom in Sixty-four Steps*.
- 8 *Odyssey to Freedom*, Step 53.
- 9 Skt. *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*. It has been taught in great detail on a weekly basis in Ann Arbor, starting in 1996. Up to now the first five Chapters have been published as Jewel Heart Transcripts in separate chapter volumes: Gelek Rinpoche, *Shantideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. Other commentaries: Dalai Lama, *A Flash of Lightning in the Dark of Night*. Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Meaningful to Behold*.

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- 10 Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*. Shamatha meditation in Volume III.
- 11 On the basis of the Lamrim the method of meditating is taught, while the eight chapter of the *Bodhisattvacharyavatara* gives the ‘what to meditate on.’ See page 215.
- 12 *zhi gnas*
- 13 *mnyam par bzhag pa* - resting in evenness, meditative equipoise.
- 14 Lit.: Gelek Rimpoche, *Lam Rim Teachings*, Ch. xxiv. Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. III, p.13–26; B. Alan Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 105–128; R. Thurman, *Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, p. 108–115.
- 15 *zhi gnas* and *lhag mthong*
- 16 *shing sbyang* or *shin tu sbyang ba*—thorough training; pliancy, suppleness, one of the eleven virtuous states.
- 17 Short for *zhi nay* and *lhak tong*—Skt. shamatha and vipashyana.
- 18 See Gelek Rimpoche, *Lam Rim Teachings*, chapter xxiv.
- 19 *rlung* also translated as wind, breath, vital energy, psychic energy, the ‘winds’ or energy-currents of the body.
- 20 *sems*.
- 21 Alternative translations: meditative absorption, intense concentration, meditative stabilization, contemplation. In terms of the 51 mental factors, it is included in the five object-ascertaining mental factors. Lit.: Geshe Rabten, *The Mind and its Functions*; Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Understanding the Mind*; H. Guenther & Leslie Kawamura, *Mind in Buddhist Psychology*.
- 22 ‘Samadhi is a meditative power that is useful to analytical and concentration meditation both. However, in order to develop samadhi itself we must cultivate principally concentration meditation.’ Gelek Rimpoche, *Lamrim Rim Teachings* Ch. xiv.
- 23 See page 165. For details on this, also see Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. III, p. 18–19; R. Thurman, *Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, p. 110–11; B. Alan Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 113.
- 24 1868-1969. Published a.o. *My Journey to Lhasa. Magic and Mystery in Tibet*.

- 25 Published a.o. *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa, The Tibetan book of the Dead*.
- 26 1898–1985. Published a.o. *Way of the White Clouds, Foundations of Tibetan Buddhism, A Living Buddhism for the West*.
- 27 The *lhak tong* in strict sense of seeing emptiness face to face.
- 28 For the different samadhis of the form- and formless levels, see Appendix chart 3.
- 29 Gelek Rimpoche, *Solitary Yamantaka Teachings on the Generation Stage*, index entry: meditation.
- 30 Lit.: Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. III, p.28–30. Alan Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 129–133.
- 31 These verses plus commentary have been taken from the Ann Arbor teachings.
- 32 Skt. pratimoksha, Tib. *so so thar pa*. Vowed discipline common to followers of all three Vehicles. a) 8 fasting vows, taken for one day only; b,c) the 5 vows of laymen and -women; d,e) vows of male and female novices; f) additional vows taken by probationer nuns as a step towards becoming full nuns; g–h) the discipline of the full nun (bhiksuni); of the full monk (bhikshu)
- 33 Lit.: Alan Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 133–136.
- 34 Odyssey points 1–12, counted in terms of the six Preliminaries: 1) Create a sacred environment. 2) Arrange symbolic offerings. 3) Position body and mind. 4) Envision Supreme Field. 5) Seven-limbed practice: Express praise, entreat qualities. Present symbolic and boundless imagined offerings. Purify all that is negative. Rejoice in all that is positive. Seek guidance. Request to remain. Dedicate effort. 6) Ask for inspiration and blessings.
- 35 At least up to Step 46.
- 36 At least up to the Six paramitas.
- 37 Lit.: Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. III, p.31; Alan Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 137–138; Gen Lamrimpa, *Samatha Meditation*; p. 47–51; Geshe Gedün Lodrö, *Walking through Walls*, 31–43.
- 38 Seven refers to the physical posture and eight adds up the breathing.

- 39 The five buddhas or buddha families: Vairochana: form, mirrorlike wisdom; Ratnasambhava: feeling, wisdom of equality; Amitabha: intellect, wisdom of discrimination; Amoghasiddhi: volition, all-encompassing wisdom; Akshobya: consciousness, wisdom of dharmadhatu.
- 40 That is the case in the Gelugpa tradition of maha anu yoga tantra. The placing of the five buddhas can vary with the different practices and different traditions. That is why in popular books you may sometimes find Vairochana in the center and Akshobya in the east.
- 41 Crossed-legged, the feet placed on the opposite thigh.
- 42 Allen Ginsberg, *White Shroud, Poems* p. 20.
- 43 See page 38.
- 44 Also called the five obstacles. See page 161.
- 45 Also called the eight awarenesses, or requirements.
- 46 Also called four mental engagements or four conjunctions.
- 47 Lit.: Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. III, p. .31–34; Alan Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 139–143; Gen Lamrimpa, *Samatha Meditation*, p. 55–63.
- 48 Ref. Gen Lamrimpa, *Shamatha Meditation*, p. 56.
- 49 *dun pa*—also translated as yearning, aspiration, intention, interest. One of the five object-determining mental states.
- 50 *dad pa*—faith; confidence, willingness to participate. One of the eleven virtuous mental states.
- 51 See color insert for more on this elephant chart.
- 52 Lit.: Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. III, p.34–42; Alan Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 143–149; Geshe Gedün Lodrö, *Walking through Walls*: p. 67–147.
- 53 *rnal 'byor*
- 54 *khyab pa'i dmigs pa* also called 'focus of all-pervasiveness.'
- 55 *rnam par rtog ba med ba*
- 56 *rnam par rtog pa dang bcas pa*

- 57 *dnegos po'i mtha.* 'Also called, 'Extreme of existence'
- 58 *dnegos pa yongs grub.* Also called 'perfectly established purpose.'
- 59 Tib. *'dod chags;* Also called attachment or desire.
- 60 *mi sdug pa*
- 61 *zhe sdang*
- 62 Wisdom is the subject of the weekly teachings in 2005, in New York as part of the *Odyssey to Freedom*, in Ann Arbor as a commentary on the ninth chapter of Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacaryavatara*.
- 63 Ref. Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. III, p. 36 and Alan B. Wallace, *The Cultivation of Quiescence*, p. 148.
- 64 Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. III, p. 37.
- 65 Lit.: Geshe Gedün Lodrö, *Walking Through Walls*, p. 119–139.
- 66 Lit.: Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. III, p. 42–46 Alan Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 149–155
- 67 See Alan Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 159.
- 68 For more details about meditation with the mind as a focal point, also see the chapter of Mahamudra, p. 157 and the upcoming transcript on the nature of the mind. Lit.: Geshe Rabten, *Echoes of Voidness*, p. 113–128.
- 69 See note 66.
- 70 Panchen Lozang Chökyi Gyeltsen, 1570–1662.
- 71 The Mahamudra root text as well as the Panchen Lama's auto-commentary. Dealt with in more detail in chapter VI.
- 72 *sngon 'gro*
- 73 See page 38 and note 54.
- 74 Like the *Ganden Lha Gyema*, or in the case of vajrayana the *Lama Chöpa*, or the *Six-session Guru-yoga*.
- 75 In the practice of a guru yoga.
- 76 In a meditation according to the *Odyssey to Freedom* or any other Lamrim-meditation.

- 77 Lit.: Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. III, p. 47–50; Alan Wallace, *The Cultivation of Quiescence*, p. 155–161.
- 78 See page 73.
- 79 Mindfulness [Skt. *smṛiti*, Tib. *dran pa*] is also translated as remembering, not forgetting, focusing recollection, or presence of mind. Meta-alertness [Skt. *samprajanya*, Tib. *shes bzhin*] is also translated as alertness, watchfulness, introspection, attentiveness, awareness, or vigilance.
- 80 Lit.: Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, p. 50–54. Alan Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 161–165.
- 81 *rgod pa*
- 82 *bying ba*
- 83 Dealt with in Chapter V.
- 84 Also called excitation and laxity respectively. Dealt with in detail in Chapter V.
- 85 *gnas gyu*— also called thinking and stillness; presence and absence of thought activity.
- 86 *do ha*: spiritual songs in verse.
- 87 Drugpa Kagyu master, 1213–1258.
- 88 See page 11.
- 89 See page 279.
- 90 Referring to the transcriptions of earlier teachings published on a website for the participants of the course.
- 91 See page 105.
- 92 See page 112.
- 93 See pages 113–114.
- 94 See pages 115–118
- 95 Lit.: Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, p. 54–55. Alan Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 165–167; Gen Lamrimpa, *Samatha Meditation*, p. 76–77; Geshe Rabten, *Treasury of Dharma*, p. 106.

- 96 More on this in Chapter VII, page 251ff.
- 97 Lama refers to one's teacher, Lozang to Je Tsongkhapa, Thubwang to Buddha Shakyamuni and Dorje Chang to Buddha Vajradhara, the tantric form of the Buddha.
- 98 During the mahamudra teachings from the winter retreats 1995–1996 and 1996–1997. A transcript of it had not been published as of 2007.
- 99 Those tree are also sometimes translated as 'mere clarity and awareness. Lit.: H.H. The Dalai Lama, *The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra*, p. 59–65
- 100 See page 274.
- 101 See page 279.
- 102 *tha mal gyi shes pa*—the nature of the mind
- 103 See pages 115–118.
- 104 See color insert. Literature on those meditative states, Lati Rinbochay & Denma Lochö Rinbochay, *Meditative States in Tibetan Buddhism*.
- 105 Lit.: Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, p. 57–67. Alan Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 168–184. Gen Lamrimpa, *Samatha Meditation*, p. 89–102.
- 106 Tib. *rgod pa*. Also translated as mental excitement, mental agitation, distraction, restlessness. As part of the twenty secondary delusions, it falls in the category of attachment. Also see J. Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness*, p. 74–75 and 262.
- 107 Tib. *'dod chags*
- 108 The six ornaments of Buddhism are the great pandits Nagarjuna, Asanga, Aryadeva, Vasubandhu, Dignaga and Dharmakirti. The two excellences are the *vinaya* masters Gunaprabha and Shakyaprabha.
- 109 See Gen Lamrimpa: *Shamatha Meditation*, p. 90.
- 110 *rmugs pa*—also translated as lethargy, drowsiness, sloth, inertness, depression. As part of the twenty secondary delusions, it falls in the category of ignorance [gti mug]. Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise*, vol. III, p. 59: 'It is a heaviness and inserviceability of body and mind.' For the relation laxity-lethargy also see Lati Rimbo-

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- chay & Denma Lochö Rinbochay, *Meditative States in Tibetan Buddhism*, p. 59 and J. Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness*, p. 75.
- 111 This category of ignorance is called *gti mug* in Tibetan, translated as ‘delusion, stupidity, close-mindedness, foggy-headedness. The Tibetan word *ma rig pa* refers to ignorance as the root of *samsara*.
- 112 Also see Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise of the Stages of the Path*, vol. III, p. 58–59.
- 113 Also see Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path*, vol. III, p. 59 and Alan Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 169.
- 114 See page 106.
- 115 About foggy-mindedness, or lethargy, versus laxity, also see Geshe Gedun Lodrö, *Walking through Walls*, p. 175 and 179–180.
- 116 See page 116. Tib. *shes bzhin*. Often translated as alertness, vigilance or introspection.
- 117 More on mindfulness and alertness in Gelek Rimpoche, *Shantideva’s Guide to the Bodhisattva’s Way of Life*, Chapter volume V.
- 118 Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path*, vol. III, p. 62–66.
- 119 Literature on the 51 mental faculties: Geshe Rabten, *The Mind and its Functions*; H. Guenther, *Mind in Buddhist Psychology*; Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Understanding the Mind*.
- 120 *sems pa*; intention, also translated as will. One of the 5 omnipresent mental factors.
- 121 *zhum pa*
- 122 *bde ba can*
- 123 Full prayer ‘Offering Food’ is to be found on: [www.thubtenchodron.org](http://www.thubtenchodron.org)
- 124 Lit.: Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, p. 67–71; B. Alan Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 184–187. Gen Lamrimpa, *Samatha Meditation*, p. 102–103.
- 125 Translation of this work plus commentary: The Dalai Lama, *Stages of Meditation*.

- 126 For applying equanimity see Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, p. 68; B. Alan Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 184–185
- 127 Lit.: Gen Lamrimpa, *Samatha Meditation*, p. 56–63, 68–76; 89–102. Jeffrey Hopkins, *Meditation in Emptiness*, p. 71–80.
- 128 See pages 68–71.
- 129 The fourth of the nine mental states.
- 130 Also translated as eight mindfulnesses or eight awarenesses.
- 131 See page 67.
- 132 For a chart on the five faults and eight antidotes, see Appendix II on page 297.
- 133 Lit.: Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. III, p.73–79; B. Alan Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 188–197; Gen Lamrimpa, *Samatha Meditation*, p. 115–130; Geshe Gedün Lodrö, *Walking through Walls*, p. 163–198; J. Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness*, p. 80–86; Lati Rinbochay & Denma Lochö Rinpochoy, *Meditative States in Tibetan Buddhism*, p. 58–70; Geshe Rabten, *Treasury of Dharma*, p. 107–117.
- 134 The nine stages and six powers and their relation are dealt with in a very clear, simple and practical way in: Gen Lamrimpa, *Samatha Meditation*, p. 115–130.
- 135 For the six ways of focusing on the mind, see pages 115–118.
- 136 *sems 'jog pa*—also translated as setting the mind
- 137 *rgyun du 'jog pa*—also translated as continuous setting.
- 138 *slan te 'jog pa*—also translated as re-setting
- 139 *nye bar 'jog pa*—also translated as close setting
- 140 *dul bar byed pa*. Also called ‘disciplining.’
- 141 *zhi bar byed pa*. Also called ‘pacifying.’
- 142 Ref. Gen Lamrimpa, *Shamatha Meditation*, p. 117.
- 143 *nye bar zhi bar byed pa*. Also called ‘thorough pacifying.’
- 144 lethargy, *mug pa*
- 145 *rtse gcig tu byed pa*. Also called ‘making one-pointed’

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- 146 *mnyam par 'jog pa*. Also called 'setting in equipoise.' Note: The equanimity of the four mindfulnesses as well as the equanimity as one of the eleven virtuous states is called *btang snyoms*.
- 147 *thos pa*, literally 'hearing.'
- 148 *bsam pa*, usually called 'thinking.'
- 149 *dran pa*
- 150 *shes bzhin*
- 151 *brston 'grus* [Skt. *virya*]
- 152 *yongs su 'dris pa*
- 153 *yid la byed pa zhi*—also translated as the four mental engagements, the four ways of rightly focusing, the four conjunctions or the four connecting principles. Rimpoche also calls them the four mindfulnesses. See page 65.
- 154 *sgrim ste 'jug pa*—also translated as forcibly engaging, or concentrated engagement.
- 155 *bar du chad cing 'jug pa*—interrupted engagement.
- 156 *chad pa med par 'jug pa*—uninterrupted engagement.
- 157 *lhun grub tu 'jug pa*—spontaneous engagement.
- 158 For a chart on the nine stages, six powers and four types of attention, see page 297.
- 159 *shin tu sbyang ba* - thorough training, or pliancy
- 160 Lit.: Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. III, p. 79–91; B. Alan Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 197–213; Gen Lamrimpa, *Samatha Meditation*, p. 133–137; Geshe Gedün Lodrö, *Walking through Walls*, p. 199–264; J. Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness*, p. 86–88.
- 161 Tib. *yid la byed pa*; Skt. *manaskara*, also translated as intention. It is one of the five ever-present mental faculties 'continually having the function of holding the mind to what has become its reference.' Ref. Herbert V. Guenther, *Mind in Buddhist Psychology*, p. 28. Here 'mental engagement' refers to *zhi ne*. Ref. Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. III, p. 80 and. A. Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 198.
- 162 *sems shin sbyangs*

- 163 *lus shin sbyangs*
- 164 Lit.: Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, vol. III, p. 91–103; B. Alan Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 213–221; Geshe Gedün Lodrö, *Walking through Walls*, p. 264–268.
- 165 *khams gsum sa dgu* - expl. the nine levels of the three realms. 1) {dod khams} desire realm. 2) {bsam gtan dang bo} first concentration. 3) {bsam gtan gnyis pa} second concentration. 4) {bsam gtan gsum pa} third concentration. 5) {bsam gtan bzhi pa} fourth concentration. 6) {nam mkha' mtha' yas} infinite space. 7) {rnam shis mtha' yas} infinite consciousness. 8) {di yang med} nothingness. 9) {srid rtse} peak of existence.
- 166 See chart 3 in the Appendix. Lit.: Lati Rinbochay & Denma Lochö Rinpochoy, *Meditative States in Tibetan Buddhism*.
- 167 Being a bodhisattva he gave it without hesitating to a beggar who asked for it.
- 168 Hindu philosophy.
- 169 Cittamani Tara winter retreat February 2004.
- 170 The Eight Chapter of the *Bodhisattvacaryavatara* will be published as a chapter volume in *Shantideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* by Gelek Rinpoche.
- 171 See page 202.
- 172 See color insert. Lit.: Lati Rimbochay and Denma Lochö Rimbochay, *Meditative States in Tibetan Buddhism*
- 173 See color insert, 'Meditator's Journey.'
- 174 Tomo Geshe Rinpoche's place.
- 175 See note 61.
- 176 Literature on this chapter: H.H. The Dalai Lama, *The Gelug Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra*
- 177 In this meditation course Rinpoche explained the relative mahamudra = the nature of the mind as such. That is taken as object of shamata. Then the absolute mahamudra is the emptiness of that mind (either gross or subtle, the subtle amounts to vajrayana mahamudra, because you can only activate the primordial mind through vajrayana methods in the life time, otherwise you have to wait for death. and then at that point one still has to meditate

on the emptiness of that mind, which is absolute mahamudra. Therefore, all this year he is teaching on emptiness and if you apply that to the teachings on the relative mahamudra you will know the absolute mahamudra, meaning that he wouldn't have to teach that separately. Therefore, his mahamudra teaching is basically complete, although he didn't go through all the outlines of the 1st Panchen Lama's text. That's my take on that remark about relative and absolute mahamudra.

- 178 The translation of the root text is from H.H. The Dalai Lama, *The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra*.
- 179 *phyag rgya*—symbol, seal. A. Berzin: 'Just as a wax seal is stamped on legal documents to authenticate their signature, likewise the nature of reality is figuratively stamped upon everything as a guarantee that nothing exists in a fantasized, impossible way. The fact that everything is devoid of existing in any impossible manner thus validates that things actually exist.'
- 180 Accepting what appears as something real, existent from its own nature.
- 181 This translator's word for vajra.
- 182 *kun khyab*—all-pervading, all-pervasive, all-permeating, widespread, omnipresent factor, universal, all-encompassing.
- 183 Gyelwa Ensapa, disciple from the Mahasiddha Dharmavajra. More about him in Gelek Rimpoche, *Guru Devotion; how to integrate the primordial mind*, chapter I.
- 184 The words tantra and vajrayana are synonymous here.
- 185 Lit.: Gelek Rimpoche, *The Perfection of Wisdom Mantra*.
- 186 Lit.: Conze, E. *The perfection of wisdom in eight thousand lines and its verse summary*. Conze, E. *The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom*. Heart Sutra: Geshe Rabten, *Echoes of Voidness*, p. 18–45. Allan Ginsberg, translation of the Heart sutra in Jewel Heart Prayer Book.
- 187 Tib. *Bromze chenpo*, 9<sup>th</sup> century
- 188 Saint, scholar and mystic of Buddhist India, born about four hundred years after the Buddha
- 189 During the course, these teachings could be listened to on the internet.
- 190 Tantra and Vajrayana are synonymous in this transcript.

- 191 Referring to the ‘common mahayana practices.’ As it says in *The Foundation of All Perfections*, ‘One who trains in these common mahayana practices, becomes a vessel worthy of the supreme vehicle, vajrayana.’
- 192 See pages 38–54 and 58–61.
- 193 For more details on this nine rounds of breathing, see Geshe Rabten, *Treasury of Dharma*, p. 21–24.
- 194 See pages 103 and 121.
- 195 Also see Dalai Lama, *The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra*, p. 276.
- 196 See page 246.
- 197 Any seven-limb practice, e.g. from the *Ganden Lha Gyema*, or the *Lama Chöpa* or any other practice.
- 198 The four R’s: **R**ecognition, **R**egret, **N**on-**R**epetition, **R**e-direction. They are to be brought in here. Lit.: Gelek Rimpoche, *Odyssey to Freedom*, Step 7. *Lojong, Training of the Mind in Seven Points*, Chapter 3.
- 199 For a complete text, see Kathleen McDonald, *How to Meditate*.
- 200 Also called relative or conventional.
- 201 Lit.: HH the Dalai Lama, *The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra*, p. 277–290.
- 202 Lit.: HH The Dalai Lama, *The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra*, p. 132–3 and 277–80.
- 203 *nang wa ben bün*
- 204 See page 247.
- 205 Lit.: HH The Dalai Lama, *The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra*, p. 134–5 and 280–3.
- 206 See pages 166–170.
- 207 See pages 181–186.
- 208 See Alan B. Wallace, *The Bridge of Quiescence*, p. 160–161; Geshe Rabten, *Echoes of Voidness*, p. 127.
- 209 Lit.: HH The Dalai Lama, *The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra*, p. 135–7 and 282–3.

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- 210 Tib. *rig gsal*. Also translated as awareness and clarity. Also see H.H. The Dalai Lama, *The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra*, p. 59–65.
- 211 See pages 166 and 175.
- 212 Lit.: HH The Dalai Lama, *The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra*, p. 137 and 283–5.
- 213 See page 182
- 214 See page 83
- 215 Lit.: HH The Dalai Lama, *The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra*, p. 137–8 and 285–6.
- 216 Machig Labkyi Drölma, 1062–1150.
- 217 Late 8<sup>th</sup> century. Lit.: Keith Dowman, *Masters of Mahamudra*, p. 66–72.
- 218 Also called: 'Mixing of settled and moving minds; or growing and remaining mind.' Lit.: HH The Dalai Lama, *The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra*, p. 138–9 and 286–7.
- 219 See page 264.
- 220 For the nine stages of meditation, see page 173.
- 221 See page 261.
- 222 *gnas gyu*: abiding and moving, stillness and movement of, presence and absence of thought activity.
- 223 '... even if our mind gives rise to a conceptual thought, the thought cannot hold its ground.' Ref. H.H. Dalai Lama, *The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra*, p. 287.
- 224 HH The Dalai Lama, *The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra*, p. 139 and 287–288.
- 225 HH The Dalai Lama, *The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra*, p. 140–1 and 289–90.
- 226 Part of the root text verse above, reworded by Rimpoche.
- 227 See page 266ff.
- 228 The *Praise to Prajnaparamita* says: I pay homage to the Great Mother of the Buddhas of the three times, who is original wisdom, the expression of highest self-awareness, the essence, which is

space, unceasing and unborn, the highest wisdom beyond words, thoughts and expression. Translation: Tarab Tulku. Tibetan: *ma sam jo meh she rab pa röl chin, ma kye mi gag nam key ngo wo nyi, so so rang rig ye she chö yül wa, dü sum gyal wey yum la chag tsel lo.*

- 229 Lit.: Gelek Rimpoche, *Lojong, Training of the Mind in Seven Points*.
- 230 Also see note 169.
- 231 For the Tibetan names of chart 1 and 2, see J. Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness*, p. 72, 81.



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## ABOUT GELEK RIMPOCHE

Born in Lhasa, Tibet, in 1939, Kyabje Gelek Rimpoche was recognized as an incarnate lama at the age of four. Carefully tutored from an early age by some of Tibet's greatest living masters, Rimpoche gained renown for his powers of memory, intellectual judgment and penetrating insight. As a small child living in a monk's cell in a country with no electricity or running water, and little news of the outside world, he had scoured the pictures of torn copies of *Life* magazine for anything he could gather about America. Now Rimpoche brings his life experience and wisdom to both the east and the west.

Among the last generation of lamas educated in Drepung Monastery before the Communist Chinese invasion of Tibet, Gelek Rimpoche was forced to flee to India in 1959. He later edited and printed over 170 volumes of rare Tibetan manuscripts that would have otherwise been lost to humanity, many of them only retrieved due to his memorization as a young man. Rimpoche was also instrumental in forming organizations that would share the great wisdom of Tibet with the outside world. In this and other ways, he has played a crucial role in the survival of Tibetan Buddhism.

He was director of Tibet house in Delhi, India and a radio host at All India Radio. He conducted over 1000 interviews in compiling an oral history of the fall of Tibet to the Communist Chinese. In the late 1970's Rimpoche

was directed to teach Western students by his teachers, the Senior and Junior Masters to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Kyabje Ling Rimpoche and Kyabje Trijang Rimpoche. Since that time he has taught Buddhist practitioners around the world.

Rimpoche is particularly distinguished for his thorough knowledge of English, familiarity with modern culture, and special effectiveness as a teacher of Western practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism. He has brought Buddhism into strong dialogue with science, psychology, medicine, metaphysics, politics and the arts, skillfully addressing the dilemma of living a spiritual life in a material world.

In 1989, Rimpoche founded Jewel Heart, a Tibetan Buddhist Learning Center. His Collected Works now include over forty transcripts of his teachings, numerous articles as well as the national bestseller *Good Life, Good Death* (Riverhead Books, 2001) and *The Tara Box: Rituals for Protection and Healing from the Female Buddha* (New World Library, 2004).

#### WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING ABOUT GELEK RIMPOCHE

*What I like about Gelek Rimpoche is that he has consistently shown resiliency and flexibility of character. I have also seen in him sound understanding of selflessness, the hallmark Buddhist teaching. He can be an elegant lama in a formal setting, a truly worthy representative of his illustrious lineage. He can be a wise advisor in another setting, placing responsibility for growth wherever it belongs: on the individual. He can be a*

*loyal and creative colleague, in the endless work of seeing to the long duration and continuing usefulness of the Dharma. Throughout it all, he remains a cherished and jolly person, a good friend.*

—**Robert A.F. Thurman**

*Gelek Rimpoche is one of the wisest, most cheerful people I know. He is a beautiful and gracious spirit who carries the great wisdom of Tibet. We are fortunate to have him teaching in the West.*

—**Jack Kornfield**

*Gelek Rimpoche constantly shows wisdom, gentleness, depth, rascality, humor, spaciousness, and the spiritual side to everyday life.*

—**Ram Dass**



## ABOUT JEWEL HEART

Jewel Heart Tibetan Buddhist Learning Center is dedicated to helping individuals live the most productive, peaceful, wise, and compassionate life possible. By putting into practice methods for freeing oneself from jealousy, hatred, obsession and pride, participants discover an unlimited source of energy, strength and compassion that is available to each of us.

Jewel Heart programs are based upon Buddha's path, blazed into the present-day by the internationally recognized teacher and bestselling author, Gelek Rimpoche. Rimpoche's teachings address current questions of identity and purpose as well as bridging the dilemma of having both spiritual and material ambitions.

Jewel Heart's graduated program of study and practice program is based on the teachings of Gelek Rimpoche and facilitated by Jewel Heart instructors. These courses, available throughout Jewel Heart chapters and study groups, are open to all and range from questioning the need for spiritual development, to serious and engaged study of the Tibetan Buddhist path. Taking a creative approach to learning, Jewel Heart programs engage the arts, the sciences and multiple media platforms to maximize the ability to absorb knowledge to a level that changes the way we think and live. The complete program provides a foundation for entering the Vajrayana path, transformative practices designed to quickly unlock the mystery of life and end all forms of suffering.

*Gelek Rimpoche*

Jewel Heart presents annual open and Vajrayana retreats in the U.S., the Netherlands and Asia; regular teachings by Rimpoche in Ann Arbor and New York as well as frequent events in Bloomfield Hills, Chicago, Cleveland, Houston, Nebraska, San Francisco, Northern Michigan, Philadelphia and Pittsburgh; many of them accessible live as webinars. Jewel Heart has on demand subscription options, downloadable teachings, on line courses, teachings and workshops with guest speakers; meditation and practice retreats. In addition, Jewel Heart's Buddhist-inspired introductory talks, open meditation sessions, film and discussion evenings, various workshops, and yearly pilgrimage offer diverse levels for participation and service to surrounding local communities.

Jewel Heart Tibetan Buddhist Learning Center offers a wide variety programs for spiritual development, supports senior lamas and the training of young monks, a children's school and orphanage, and Buddhist performing arts tours. Sales from the Jewel Heart Store support Tibetan refugees and monasteries in India and Nepal.

For more information on national and international programs, classes, webcasts, recordings and books, visit:

**[www.jewelheart.org](http://www.jewelheart.org)**

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