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**Further required reading includes the following texts:**

Wish-fulfilling Golden Sun, by *Lama Zopa Rinpoche* (pages 39-43)  
How to Meditate, by *Kathleen MacDonald*



# **The Purpose of Meditation**

*by Lama Zopa Rinpoche*

I would like to say a few words in introduction about the practice of meditation. Many people throughout the world, in the West as well as the East, are very interested in meditating. They are attracted to this practice and express great interest in it. Yet, of all the many people who engage in meditation, only a few really understand its purpose.

Each of us here possesses a physical body made up of bones, flesh, blood and such things. At present we are not able to exert complete control over this body and as a result we always experience problems. There might be a rich man whose wealth is equal to that of the entire world yet despite his enormous fortune, if his mind is tied up in an uncontrolled body, he will live in continual suffering. Rich or poor, none of us escape this problem. Try as we may, we never seem to find an end to our difficulties. If we solve one, another immediately takes its place. The conflicts and suffering involved in maintaining our physical body are the same no matter where we may be. If we have the wisdom to penetrate deeply into the heart of this matter and check the actual way things are, we quickly perceive the universality of this unsatisfactory situation. It also becomes clear that if we did not have such an uncontrolled body, there would be no way for us to experience the sufferings related to it.

The main problem we all have is the suffering of not achieving our various desires. These include the obvious physical necessities of food and clothing as well as such enjoyable things as a good reputation, the sound of pleasant and comforting words and the like. Some forms of suffering, such as the hunger of an extremely impoverished person, are more obvious than others. But in one way or another, we all hunger uncontrollably for things we do not possess.

Take the example of someone who was fortunate enough to be born into a wealthy family. During his lifetime he may never experience material want. He can afford to buy anything that arouses his desire and is free to travel wherever he pleases, experiencing the various delights and excitement offered by different cultures. When he finally reaches the point where there is nothing left to possess, no place left to visit and no pleasure left to experience, he still suffers from an acute feeling of dissatisfaction. In such a restless, dissatisfied state of mind many people go insane, unable to cope with this intense and pervasive suffering.

Thus even when there is no lack of material comfort there is still suffering. In fact it often happens that possession of material wealth increases dissatisfaction, because it then becomes even more obvious that such possessions have no ability whatsoever to affect or cut through the root of suffering. There is still the continuity of dissatisfaction, confusion, worry and the rest. If an accumulation of external comforts really were able to cut through and eliminate suffering, then at some stage of physical well-being this continuity of suffering would be severed and all dissatisfaction would cease. But as long as our mind is tied up with an uncontrolled body, suffering continues.

For instance, in order to protect our feet from rough ground and sharp thorns, we wear shoes. Yet this does not really eliminate the problem. The shoes themselves often hurt. They

can pinch our toes, produce sores and generally cause discomfort. This is not primarily the shoemaker's fault. If our feet were not so long, wide or sensitive in the first place, it would be possible to fashion totally comfortable shoes for them. Thus if we look deeply into the matter we see that the source of this discomfort is not external, but rather lies within our own physical and mental make-up.

This is merely one example of the suffering experienced because of our physical body. From the time we are born until the time we must die, we expend a tremendous amount of energy trying to protect this body of ours from suffering. In fact, most people spend all their time caring for their body in precisely this fruitless, self-defeating manner.

But the purpose of meditation is not merely to take care of the physical body. We should not think of using meditation in this way. It should have a higher, more valuable purpose. To use meditation as yet another external method to benefit our body is senseless. This would involve wasting a technique of true, ultimate value on a vain attempt to gain relief that is at best temporary. Meditation would then be like the aspirin we take to be rid of a headache. The pain may go away, but that does not mean we are cured. After some time it will return because the method of treatment was unrelated to the real cause of the difficulty and thus any relief gained will necessarily be short-lived. As temporary pleasure and alleviation of pain are available through many external means, there is no need to use either meditation or any other spiritual practice for such a purpose. We should not squander the power of meditation on such limited aims.

Meditation is primarily concerned with caring for the mind. Although our body and mind are intimately related and interconnected, they are quite different types of phenomena. Our body is an object we can see with our eyes, but not so the mind. The members of a particular family may share many similar physical traits, but each child will instinctively have a different personality, mental attitude, set of interests and the like. Though they attend the same schools, their intelligence and learning will differ not only from each other's but from their parents' and grandparents' as well. Such differences of mind cannot be adequately explained in physical terms.

It should also be noted that there are children who have accurate memories of previous lives. They can tell where they were born, how they lived and so forth, and can recognize people and objects from these previous lives. Such accounts are verifiable and provide intriguing evidence for any investigator prepared to study this matter with an unbiased mind.

In any event, the underlying reason for different mental aptitudes among members of the same family, and for certain children's memory of previous lifetimes, is the fact that mind is beginningless. Past lives do exist. While we cannot go into a subtle analysis here of what does and what does not provide the continuity between one life and the next, the important thing to keep in mind is this: just as our mind has continued from a past life into the present, so will it pass on from the present into the future. The circumstances of our present life result from actions, both mental and physical, performed in these previous lives. Similarly, our present actions will determine the circumstances of our future lives. Thus the responsibility lies in our own hands for shaping the remainder of this life and those to come. It is very important to recognize this if we are to find effective means for cutting through

both mental and physical suffering permanently.

Each of us has been born as a human being. As such we have the potential to give meaning and purpose to our life. But to take full advantage of it, we must go beyond what the lower animals can do. By utilizing such a human rebirth properly and gaining control over our mind, we can sever the root of all suffering completely. Within the space of one or more lives we can escape from the compulsive cycle of death and rebirth. As it is, we have to be reborn again and again without any choice or control, experiencing all the sufferings of an uncontrolled physical body. But with the proper application this involuntary cycle can be broken. We can escape from all suffering and dissatisfaction permanently.

But to escape from the circle of death and rebirth ourselves is not enough. This is still not an appropriate way of using our human capabilities to the utmost. We are not the only ones who experience suffering and dissatisfaction; all other living beings share in the same predicament. And most other beings lack the wisdom—the Dharma eye of wisdom—to find the correct path to the cessation of their suffering. All creatures on earth, without exception, spend their whole life, day and night, searching for a way to overcome suffering and experience pleasure and happiness. But because their minds are clouded in ignorance, this search is in vain. Instead of leading to the intended goal, it brings them only further frustration and pain. They try to remove the cause of their suffering but instead only remove themselves further and further from nirvana, the true cessation of suffering.

All living beings suffer and desire release in the same way we do. If we realize this, it becomes apparent that it is selfish to work solely towards our own liberation, our own experience of nirvana. Rather we must strive to free all others as well. But in order to enlighten others as to the correct paths leading to a true cessation of suffering, we ourselves must first become fully enlightened beings. In other words, we must achieve buddhahood in order to help liberate others.

The situation can be explained like this. Suppose we want to bring a friend to a beautiful park so that she can enjoy it. If we are blind there is no way for us to lead her there no matter how much we may so desire. It is necessary for us to have good vision and to be well-acquainted with the road leading to the park before we can even think of bringing her there. In the same way, we must have a complete experience of full enlightenment before we can discern the best paths whereby all beings, with their varying mental aptitudes and temperaments, can be led to their own liberation from suffering.

Thus when we talk about the true purpose of meditation we are talking about the attainment of enlightenment, an attainment that enables us to fulfill not only our own aims but also those of all others. This is the entire purpose of and the only reason for engaging in meditation. All the great yogis and meditation masters of the past have practiced the Dharma with just this purpose in mind. Likewise, when we meditate—and in Buddha's teachings there are literally hundreds of different meditations to choose from depending on our level of realization—we should do so with this same motivation.

Thus spiritual practices are very necessary. We are not compelled to meditate by some outside agent, by other people, or by God. Rather, just as we are responsible for our own suffering, so are we solely responsible for our own cure. We have created the situation in

which we find ourselves, and it is up to us to create the circumstances for our release. Therefore, as suffering permeates our life, we have to do something in addition to our regular daily routine. This "something" is spiritual practice or, in other words, meditation. If we do not turn inwards and train our mind, but instead expend all our energy on arranging and rearranging the external aspects of our existence, then our suffering will continue. Our suffering has had no beginning, and if we do not adopt an effective spiritual practice, neither will it have an end.

Generally speaking, it is difficult to practice the Dharma in an environment of great material abundance. This is because there are many distractions to interfere with our meditation. However, the actual root of these distractions is not in the environment itself. It is not in the machines of industry, our food, or anything like that. It is within our own mind. It has been a pleasant surprise for me during this, my first visit to the West, to see that along with material progress there is substantial interest here in Dharma practice and in meditation of various types. Many people are sincerely searching for the higher meaning of human life, trying to transcend the everyday, animal concerns of their existence. In this respect I think it is very wise that people are trying to combine a spiritual with a practical way of life, one that provides deep mental as well as physical comfort. For such people life will certainly not be an empty promise.

Food prepared from many different ingredients can be truly delicious. In the same way, if we have a job or some such daily activity and also try to work as much as possible on perfecting a spiritual path and following the Dharma, our life can become very rich. The benefits we experience by combining these two approaches to life are far-reaching.

There is a great difference between the mind, feelings and experiences of someone who adds an understanding of Dharma to his or her daily life and one who does not. The former meets with far less confusion and experiences far less suffering when encountering difficulties in the material world. He has a controlled mind and a meaningful framework within which he can handle his problems skillfully. This will apply not only to his everyday experiences but especially to those encountered when he dies.

If we have never engaged in any spiritual practice, have never trained our mind through the discipline of meditation, then the experiences surrounding our death can be very frightening indeed. For the most advanced Dharma practitioner, however, death is like a pleasant journey back home. It is almost like going to a beautiful park for a picnic. And even for someone who has not achieved the highest realizations afforded by meditation, death can be a comfortable, not horrible, experience. Such a person can face his death—something we must all eventually do—with his mind at ease. He is not overwhelmed by fear or worry about what he will experience, or about the loved ones, possessions or body he will leave behind. In this life we have already experienced birth and are now in the process of growing old. The one thing we all have left to look forward to is our death. Thus if our spiritual practice can help us face the inevitable with peace of mind, then our meditations have been very useful, although there are much higher purposes to which our practices can be put.

To summarize, it is not the external appearance of our meditation that is important. Whether we sit with our arms folded this way and our legs crossed that way is of little consequence. But it is extremely important to check and see if whatever meditation we do is an actual

remedy for our suffering. Does it effectively eliminate the delusions obscuring our mind? Does it combat our ignorance, hatred and greed! If it does reduce these negativities of mind, then it is a perfect meditation, truly practical and greatly worthwhile. If on the other hand it merely serves to generate and increase our negativities, such as pride, then it is only another cause of suffering. In such a case, even though we may say we are meditating, we are not actually following a spiritual path or practicing Dharma at all.

Dharma is a guide away from suffering, away from problems. If our practice does not guide us in this direction then something is wrong and we must investigate what it might be. In fact, the fundamental practice of all true yogis is to discover which of their actions bring suffering and which happiness. They then work to avoid the former and follow the latter as much as possible. This is the essential practice of Dharma.

One final word. All of us who are beginning our practice of Dharma, starting to meditate and gain control of our mind need to rely on proper sources of information. We should read books of sound authority and, when doubts arise, we should consult teachers who have mastered their study and practice. This is very important. If we are guided by books written without a proper understanding, there is the great danger that our life will be spent following an incorrect path. Even more important is choosing the correct teacher, guru or lama. He or she must have correct realizations and must actually live the practice of the Dharma.

Our practice of meditation, of mental cultivation, should not be passive. We shall not be able to break the bonds of suffering by blindly accepting what someone, even a great master, tells us to do. Rather we should use our innate intelligence to check and see if a suggested course of action is effective. If we have good reason to believe that a teaching is valid and will be helpful, then by all means we should follow it. As with medicine, once we have found some that can reasonably be expected to cure us, we should take it. Otherwise, if we swallow anything that happens to come into our hands, we run the great risk of aggravating rather than curing our illness.

This is my final suggestion for those beginners who have an interest in studying Dharma and meditating. Spiritual pursuits can be very worthwhile. Yet even if you cannot practice Dharma, a mere understanding of it can enrich your life and give it meaning. I think that is all. Thank you very much.

*Colophon: Reprinted with permission from Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive. Edited by Nicholas Ribush.*





# The Practice of Meditation

*By Geshe Rabten*

When we are meditating, concentration or calm abiding occurs when our mental factors are purified and thus our mind is able to dwell peacefully on the object.

There are two kinds of meditation: analytical meditation and concentration meditation. It is necessary to use both kinds of meditation to remove delusion and reach the goal. Some people say that thinking and learning about Dharma are not meditation, but the scriptures say that these activities are in fact also kinds of meditation. If we do not think carefully and know the nature of the object we cannot concentrate well. The bustle within the mind is mind-produced; to quiet it, therefore, action by the mind itself and nothing external is required. The primary action must be by the mind; on this basis, factors such as a suitable place and the meditation posture can help.

The place in which we practice meditation should be clean, quiet, close to nature, and pleasing to us. Our friends should be peaceful and good. Our body should be healthy, not sick. Sitting in the correct position also helps. For meditation, there are seven aspects of the ideal posture:

1. If it is not painful, the vajra posture, with the **legs** crossed and the feet resting upturned on the thighs is best. However, if sitting in this position causes pain and distracts the mind, the left foot should be tucked under the right thigh and the right foot should rest on the left thigh.
2. The **trunk** must be as straight and erect as possible.
3. The **arms** should be in a bow shape, not resting against the sides of the body or pushed back; they should be at rest but firm. The back of the right hand should rest in the palm of the left; the thumbs should be level with the navel.
4. The **neck** should be curved slightly forward, with the chin in. This causes the spine to be straight like a stack of coins.
5. The **eyes** should be focused straight along the sides of the nose, not totally opened or closed.
6. The **mouth and lips** should be relaxed, neither open nor tightly shut.
7. The **tongue** should be pressed gently against the palate.

These are the seven aspects of the vajra posture. Each is symbolic of a different stage of the path, but each also has a practical purpose. The legs crossed and the feet on the thighs make a locked position. We can lock ourselves firmly in place with legs crossed and the feet on the thighs as described above; positioned like this we could sit in meditation for a long time, even for months, without falling. The straightness of the body allows for the best functioning of the channels carrying the airs on which the mind rides in our bodies. If the body is straight these channels will not be blocked. The position of the arms is also to allow the best functioning of these channels. If one looks too high one can easily see something distracting; if the head is too low one gets pain in the neck or becomes sleepy. The mouth should not be closed so tightly that breathing is difficult if the nose is at all blocked; nor should it be open so widely that strong breathing causes the fire element of the body to

increase with high blood pressure resulting. If the tongue is pressed against the palate, the throat and mouth will be kept moist. These are the immediate reasons for the meditation posture. Very rarely, people's arrangement of the inner channels is different, in which case they need a different position.

By just sitting in the vajra posture we achieve a good frame of mind, but the main work has to be done by the mind itself. If a thief enters a room, the way to remove him is to go in and throw him out, not just to shout from the outside. Similarly, if we are sitting on the top of the mountain while our mind is wandering in the village below, we shall not be able to develop concentration.

There are two enemies of concentration. One is busyness, wildness, or scattered attention; the other is sleepiness, torpor, or sinking. Our attention is distracted when a desire arises and the mind immediately races after it. Whenever the mind goes after anything other than the object of concentration, this is wild, or scattered, mind. Sleepiness, or torpor, occurs when the mind is sleepy and not alert. If we want to concentrate well, we have to overcome these disturbances. If there is a beautiful picture on the wall of a dark room, we need a candle to see it, but if there is a draught, the flame will flicker and we shall not be able to see it properly. If there is no draught but the flame is very weak, there will not be enough light and we shall still not be able to see the picture. If there are neither of these difficulties, the flame will be strong and steady and we shall be able to see the picture clearly. The picture is like the object of concentration, the flame is the mind, the wind is scattered attention and the weak flame is torpor.

In the early stages of the practice of concentration, the first of these disturbances is more common. The mind immediately flies away from the object to other things. This can be seen if we try to keep our mind on the memory of a face; it is immediately replaced by something else. It is very difficult to quell these disturbances because, over many lives, we have built up the habit of following them, while we have not developed the habit of concentration. We may find it very hard to develop new habits of mind and leave old ones behind, but concentration is the basic necessity for all higher meditation and for all kinds of mental activity.

Mindfulness and awareness consciousness are the antidotes to scattered attention and torpor respectively. The drawing here represents an aspiring meditator, who is following the path of meditative stages that ends in the [The Stages of Meditation] accomplishment of calm abiding and the beginning of the practice of insight meditation. At the bottom of the page we see the practitioner, who holds a rope in one hand and a hook in the other, chasing after an elephant led by a monkey. The elephant represents the meditator's mind; a wild or untrained elephant can be dangerous and wreak enormous destruction, but once trained will obey commands and do hard work. The same holds true for the mind. Any suffering that we have now is due to the mind being like a wild, untrained elephant. The elephant also has very big footprints; these symbolize the mental defilements. If we work hard at improving our mind it will be able to do very great work for us in return. From the suffering of the hells to the happiness of the Buddha, all states are caused by the behavior of the mind.

At the start of the path the elephant is black, which represents torpor or sinking of the mind. The monkey leading the elephant represents scattering of the mind. A monkey cannot keep

quiet for a moment—it is always chattering or fiddling with something and finds everything attractive. In the same way that the monkey is in front leading the elephant, our attention is scattered by the sense objects of taste, touch, sound, smell, and vision. These are symbolized by food, cloth, musical instruments, perfume, and a mirror. Behind the elephant is a person, who represents the meditator trying to train the mind. The rope in the meditator's hand is mindfulness and the hook is awareness. Using these two tools the meditator will try to tame and control his mind. Fire is shown at different points along the path to represent the energy necessary for concentration. Notice that the fire gradually decreases at each of the ten stages of zhi.nay, as less energy is needed to concentrate. It will flare up again at the eleventh stage, when we start practicing insight meditation.

### **The Stages of Developing Single Pointed Concentration**

*(To best follow the following teachings, please refer to WISH-FULFILLING GOLDEN SUN, page 184.)*

In the beginning, just as the elephant following the monkey pays no attention to the person chasing behind, the practitioner has no control over his or her mind. In the second stage, the practitioner, who has almost caught up with the elephant, is able to throw the rope around the elephant's neck. It looks back; this is the third stage, where the mind can be restrained a little by mindfulness. Here a rabbit is on the elephant's back, symbolizing subtle torpor, which previously might have seemed to be a state of concentration, but now can be recognized for the harmful factor that it is. In these early stages we have to use mindfulness more than awareness.

At the fourth stage the elephant mind is more obedient, so less pulling with the rope of mindfulness is necessary. By the fifth stage the elephant is being led by the rope and hook and the monkey is following behind. At this point we are not much disturbed by scattering or distracted attention; mostly we have to use awareness instead of mindfulness. In the drawing, the sixth stage of practice is depicted with the elephant and the monkey both following obediently behind the practitioner, who does not have to look back at them. This means that the practitioner does not have to focus continually on controlling the mind, and the absence of the rabbit shows that the subtle torpor, which appeared at the third stage, has now disappeared.

Upon reaching the seventh stage, the elephant can be left to follow of its own accord and the monkey takes leave; the practitioner has no more need to use the rope and hook—scattered attention and torpor occur only mildly and occasionally. At the eighth stage the elephant has turned completely white and follows behind the practitioner; this shows that the mind is obedient and there is no sinking or scattering, although some energy is still needed to concentrate. At the ninth stage the practitioner can actually sit in meditation while the elephant sleeps peacefully nearby; at this point the mind can concentrate without effort for long periods of time—days, weeks, or even months. The tenth stage, where we see the meditator sitting on top of the elephant, signifies the real attainment of calm abiding. At the last, eleventh, stage, the meditator is sitting on the elephant's back holding a sword. At this point the practitioner begins a new kind of meditation called “higher vision,” or insight meditation.

If we practice the calm abiding type of meditation, we might use an image of Buddha as our object of concentration. The first thing we do is look at it very thoroughly. Then we start meditating. In meditation we do not look at the object with our physical eyes but focus with the mind's eye. At first our memory of it will not be at all clear, but even so, we should not try to force it to become clear—this is impossible at the start. The important point is to keep our attention focused on it, clear or otherwise. The clarity will eventually come naturally.

At the beginning, concentration is very difficult; the mind always turns this way and that. When we persist in the practice, however, we shall find that we are able to keep our mind on the object for one or two minutes, then three or four minutes, and so on. Each time the mind leaves the object, mindfulness has to bring it back. Awareness has to be used to see if disturbances are coming or not. If we carry a bowl full of hot water along a rough road, part of our mind has to watch the water and part has to watch the road. Mindfulness has to keep the concentration steady, and awareness has to watch out for disturbances that may come. As we saw in the drawing, we need progressively less mindfulness after the initial stages, but then our mind, tired from fighting the scattering of attention, produces torpor.

After a while there comes a stage where the meditator feels much happiness and relaxation, which is often mistaken for the true state of calm abiding; in fact, however, it is subtle torpor, which makes the mind weak. If we continue our practice with energy, this subtle torpor will also disappear. When we have removed this disturbance, our mind becomes clearer and more awake, and thus the object of our meditation is seen more clearly. As our perception of the meditation object increases in clearness and freshness, our body will be sustained by our peace of mind, and we shall not have hunger or thirst. Eventually, a meditator can continue like this for months at a time. The feeling experienced in the mind at this stage cannot be described.

If we look at a piece of cloth with our eyes we can see it, but not in great detail. But a person who has concentrated on it well with the mind's eye can see it very clearly in all details. When we die our mind becomes weaker, but if we practice meditation then our mind, at this time, will actually become fresher and clearer. Normally, dying people experience delusions and fears which lead to a bad rebirth. If, however, we have meditated well, then during the death process our mind will be concentrated on Buddha, Dharma and so forth; this helps very much for the next birth.

The scriptures say that in the ninth stage of the practice of calm abiding, even if a wall crashes down next to the meditator, he will not be disturbed. As the meditator continues to practice, his body and mind experience a special pleasure; this feeling marks the attainment of the final goal of calm abiding. The meditator's body feels light and tireless, symbolized in the drawing by the person flying. His body has become very supple, and his mind can be turned to any meditation, just as a thin copper wire can be turned in any direction without breaking. The meditator feels as though the object and his mind have become one.

Although at the ninth stage of calm abiding we feel very happy and peaceful, this is not the real end of meditation. Firm concentration on the object is still not the complete achievement. Now the meditator can combine concentration with an examination into the real nature of the object of meditation. After continuing the simultaneous practice of both

types of meditation, a special pleasure arises from the seeing into the object. “Seeing the object” involves seeing whether an object is suffering, seeing if it is permanent or changeable, and looking for the highest truth to be found about the real nature of the object. In Tibetan, the name for this meditation with insight is lhag.thong; lhag means more, or higher, and thong to understand or realize. Through this kind of meditation the mind obtains more understanding of the object than it can through simple concentration; when this practice has been perfected, the mind can turn to anything. The perfection of lhag.thong gives great spiritual satisfaction, but if one is satisfied merely with this, it is like having an aeroplane built, ready to fly, but left on the ground.

The mind can be turned to deeper and higher things. It has to be used on the one hand to overcome karma and defilements, and on the other to obtain the virtues of a Buddha. For this, the object can only be emptiness, or shunyata; other meditations prepare the mind for this final object. If we have a very good torch that can show up anything, we have to use its light to find what is important. The root cause of all our trouble is ignorance. We have to use our knowledge of emptiness to dispel ignorance; we must use our mind, purified by calm abiding and special insight, to cut the root of the tree of ignorance. In the drawing, at this stage, the practitioner is holding a sword, symbolizing the realization of emptiness, to cut the two black lines symbolizing the two obscurations: the defilement-obscurations and the knowledge-obscurations.

The realization of emptiness is essential to remove ignorance. Once we come close to a thorough understanding of emptiness we are on the way to the perfection of wisdom.

*Colophon: Taken from Tse Chen Ling Center's “Buddhism 101” collected teachings. Original text unknown.*



# **Meditation on the Mind Itself**

*By Lama Thubten Yeshe*

Now, we try to concentrate on one's own consciousness. This approach to concentration we call sometimes non-conceptualization, non-conception, non-superstition. In Tibetan, "me.togpa".

At this point the great yogi Lama Tsong Khapa in his lam-rim says that one should contemplate on the clarity of one's own consciousness and not follow any other kind of phenomena, any other object, like some deity or form, or color or sound, or seed syllable or mantra. Lama Tsong Khapa said we should abandon these. So when we meditate and a special vision, a fantastic vision comes, even if the Buddha is coming or some other image comes, do not follow it.

The great yogi Tilopa said, "Leave the mind on consciousness alone without any color or any clothes added. Thereby the muddy superstition becomes clear. Contemplate on the consciousness only."

Fundamentally there are two things: the subject - consciousness, and the object - you can say the sensory world of phenomena. Lama Tsong Khapa said that when we contemplate on the consciousness mind we should never allow any kind of object, like form, color, or deity to come.

I think it is very sensible and very logical. Normally we are distracted by superstition thoughts of the sensory objects, aren't we? The five sense objects. This is our experience isn't it? So the superstition is most of the time linked with the sensory object. In conception, normally, our habit is a sensory object. So this habit we have to throw out. For that reason, contemplate on the clarity of one's own consciousness. It is so powerful.

Of course, in the beginning we have such a strong habit that the superstition of the sound, smell, color - all these things, comes out. But we use skill—we talked about that—we keep our memory strongly on our consciousness. Without disturbing this memory or consciousness concentration we use the skillful fish, remember, our mindfulness or awareness fish to examine or to watch the essence of superstition when that distracts and also sometimes watch how superstition manifests, how we conceive the superstition. So you are sort of mindful. Those are techniques. Remember yesterday we discussed this, that we need to eliminate distraction and also we have to abandon expectation: expecting something to happen, some kind of higher realization to come out. This kind of expectation, any kind of expectation becomes superstition. Just let go.

So the memory, concentration memory is strong and when enough satisfaction, clear, at that time let go.

The "let go" has many meanings. In other words, be a little bit loose rather than tight - putting tremendous effort. Sometimes we put too much effort and too much discipline. That

also is not good because there is not enough letting go. Like when you are driving a car, you know, the speed, the situation, everything. Every situation is sort of the middle way: then you have to let go. But the new driver, he cannot let go. He also somehow wants change, busy, you know. New meditators have to learn how to let go. If you know how to let go, the root text of Mahamudra says, without doubt you will be liberated from superstition.

If you don't know how to let go then you can never experience bliss. Like a car, at a certain point you let go, you enjoy, at a certain point is almost like flying, like an aeroplane you know, blissful car. But the new driver he doesn't know how to let go. So he can't feel blissful. It is similar with a meditator. So when you try too much, too much tight, not knowing how to let go, then at some point you hate meditation isn't it? Even if you see a temple or your meditation cushion you don't want to go near there. But when you know how to let go you taste blissful chocolate cake of meditation, so each time you do meditation you enjoy, blissful.

Also, when we say, "let go", that means the memory is kept going continuously. And also when we are distracted we use the awareness, the mindfulness and watching. We have a way to watch the essence of the superstition. That also is without losing (the object) At some point you reach, it's difficult to eliminate the superstition, distraction, then you can stop again. Then better to stop meditation on the consciousness and just do breathing. Technical breathing concentration, just let go breathing, only just breath watching, that quickly cuts the gross levels of superstition. When the mind is neutralized, then go back again. Neutralized mind is already clean clear, isn't it. So then you go back to concentration on the clarity of one's own consciousness.

Also Lama Tsong Khapa emphasized much that the first time you get some experience of the clarity, you should be satisfied. You should not intellectualize, saying "Oh this is not enough, this is not clarity as my lama says". That means just too much intellect is going, you know. It's through your experience, not the words, intellectual words. So one should be satisfied. The clarity is infinite—now we have clarity.

Lama Tsong Khapa, in his experience, he said that when you contemplate on your own consciousness, at a certain point you develop such clarity that almost you have crazy thoughts. "I could count all the universal atoms"—you get this kind of experience. You can see clean clear because the subject consciousness develops such clarity and is sort of so sharp to discriminate all the subtle physical energy. You get that kind of experience. And also, because of developing clarity you can experience bliss: ecstatic bliss.

First you feel blissful physically, this is sort of the gross blanket; take that blanket off somehow and you only experience the consciousness level and feel the consciousness is experiencing universal space, a sort of unified experience. You feel you are no longer living in the physical world, no longer involved in the physical world, so that eliminates superstition because when we feel we are in the physical world, the superstition populations of form, sound, smell are busy complicating. For that reason non-conceptualize, because it is such a sensitive way to cut the conception of the sensory world. You can experience by developing concentration at a certain point, the ecstatic state of meditation; you can experience no form, no smell, no five sense objects that's why it becomes so powerful.



Of course, when you stop meditation, again you feel sort of a new body, because in the meditation there is no body. So when you stop meditation you feel a new sort of body. Because it's a new body even superstition has to come out, it's sort of a new thing isn't it? So easily we can kill superstition. Very light. Because we develop such clarity of concentration, even in dreams the conception for superstition, the five sense objects are much lighter. So even if you are sleeping, your sleep becomes meditation. Normally when we sleep, we have a heavy, impure projection: the dream coming. Remember? This is eliminated and also the dreams are sort of pure visions coming.

Lama Tsong Khapa said that we develop that way. If we change concentration many times, it is not so good because here we try to develop *samadhi* meditation, which means we should keep the same meditation object.

Samadhi meditation is the source of liberation and the source of telepathic power, this is only sensible isn't it? This we talked about. Lama Tsong Khapa said that if you develop such clarity of your own consciousness, you reach the ability of being able to count atoms or neutrons, such subtle energy you can count. It's almost telepathic isn't it? The scientific people, even if they use scientific equipment, they can't count them, but Lama Tsong Khapa can, isn't it. So now I have to be proud of Buddhism, OK.

This way the mental telepathic ability comes, from mind training. According to Abhidharma there are two things: through training you develop telepathic power, and also intuition.

Intuition I think maybe everybody has to some extent. Like you are here but somehow in your deepest heart you feel that something has happened to your dear friend in Melbourne; you know without superficial logic. Those are intuition, intuitive, telepathic. To gain the perfect samadhi and such telepathy is so essential. There is no way you can become liberated, no way you will become enlightened without this realization. That has no exception whether you are Buddhist, Muslim, or Christian, whatever. From the Buddhist point of view, everybody who wants to become enlightened has to have this kind of realization.

Also it is possible, due to the power of habit, repeated habit. So in consciousness meditation, when done repeatedly in such a skillful way, we eliminate the sluggishness and distraction, it becomes a sort of habit.

The gross levels of superstition are like these clothes. Each time you go deeper, deeper, you take off a layer. You reach more subtle, subtle states. When your mind reaches the subtle point, maybe deepest unconscious according to the western psychological view, so subtle that you touch reality, it is super powerful. Because subjectively your wisdom is so unbelievably subtle, so sharp—to touch reality is more powerful than a nuclear bomb. That is the feature. When you are developing deeper concentration, the superstition, gross levels of mind, you sort of keep taking out.

For that reason the tantric approach to Mahamudra is to eliminate the gross levels of consciousness and try to touch the subtle consciousness. This subtle consciousness will come out, then there is some automatic experience of non-duality or the great Mahamudra. It seems like the subtle consciousness is at the moment neglected, is no longer functioning because gross superstition is overwhelming. Of course if somebody intellectually debates,

they say how can one stop this superstition? This superstition mind is, sort of scientifically speaking, present until we reach the tenth bodhisattva bhumi, almost difficult to stop isn't it. Then you say, if you reach a point of concentration, maybe four hours concentration on your consciousness without distraction or sluggishness then do you reach non-superstition? You can debate like that.

You can debate yes, but now we are talking about experience. The superstition is almost like the number of creatures in the ocean. From the Buddhist point of view, there are so many aspects of superstition in the ocean of our consciousness. So we have slowly, slowly, organically to remove them. Each time you get rid of a gross whale or a gross crocodile, you banish the gross animal mind. You experience no superstition. That's why I remember when I received the Mahamudra teaching from my guru, he exactly said "At a certain point of the Buddhist philosophical way of understanding, debate and these things, at a certain point you have to abandon. Don't bring this argument, go beyond this argument". I remember exactly because for me my conception was so strong because I trained in philosophy, so I have preconceptions, always trying to add strong concepts you know. If he says this, I try to make it this way. If he is this way, I try to make this way. I remember. So these preconceptions sometimes eliminate such a powerful experience.

Now, the experience of non-conceptualization or non-superstition doesn't mean suddenly you reach beyond dualistic concepts. No. Dualistic conception is like blankets, you know. So many. That's why, I'm sure, some of you know already from the first bodhisattva bhumi to the tenth there are something like nine different obstacles. Each stage eliminates certain of the dualistic obstacles. OK? So you understand how this experience comes, this is possible if we go in the right direction.

I think sometimes I experience that if I'm looking someplace strongly my mind is totally involved in maybe a flower or something like that, I can't even hear a loud sound. I think this is a normal experience, everybody has experienced this. So simple, a normal example. It's possible, that when we contemplate and continuously stop perceiving form, color, sound, smell all these things, these things stop, so the superstition door is sort of closed. Then tremendous ecstatic bliss energy comes, it intuitively comes. This is very powerful to eliminate the dualistic thinking. By contemplating one's own consciousness, when you reach a certain point the two things, object and subject, are no longer existent in a certain way, just because you are in such a unified state. The longer you stay in that state, the more powerful to eliminate such complex dualistic thought.

I feel it is so simple, the clarity energy is always existent within us. What matters is that we penetrate and concentrate. Such bliss, universal reality, is within us: we have to sort of switch it on.

The more you experience an internal state of bliss, the more you develop concentration, the more you will be happy to meditate. In other words, as the result of your meditation you will experience this.

Our consciousness is like Australian land. Before there was no wire, no fences, now so many people put wire: the superstition is like wire, as long as each of us feels individualistic. When we remove this wire it's one land, one Australia land. This is similar. The one state of

omnipresent wisdom, eternal peace, eternal bliss state. If you understand this you understand that we human beings are capable of communication with each other. I think that's also good psychological understanding. Sometimes we think, impossible. I can't communicate with you. No way. No point in trying. Normally we think that way. Wrong conception, wrong conception. The Buddhist point of view is every being, male or female, chicken or insect, everybody can reach the certain point, total state, without any distinction.

Lama Tsong Khapa says that when we contemplate on our own consciousness we should not think concerning time: past, present future. It becomes a distraction.

Our habit is so concerned with time, and our habit, which has actually very little value, has to be broken. Only when you contemplate, only when the clean clear state is existent, is the energy of consciousness not concerned with time and space - not concerned with color or whatever it is, sensory objects. At this stage any concept, even how wonderful that all living beings reach Buddhahood, at that time is not valid. It's only this experience. Even if you remember your previous life, fantastic yogi in the Himalayan mountains, you understand, all the memory in this kind of meditation should be stopped.

You should not be scared—"wow, I have to stop all my normal memory, that means maybe I have to become unconscious, you know. This monk tries to teach me totally to go to sleep, to have sleepy mind." No. No. Why? Because normally our memory is on, off, on, off; and on, off, on, off...it is an interference to develop mindfulness. The continuous non-stopping memory is the resource of mindfulness or awareness.

I think good enough. So now somehow you know how to deal better. Maybe two questions, then we stop.

**Q:** Lama, you have given us the idea of contemplating clear awareness. How can we do this if we have never experienced it?

**Lama:** OK. Good question. I understand that sometimes the concept of clarity of consciousness is difficult for the western mind, but I say the way to bring comprehension of clarity of consciousness is by observing, contemplating, sticking to the vision of thought. Through the vision of the rays of thought you can go into the clarity of thought. The example is, through the rays of the sun you can discover the sun.

I think he (Kelsang) is shocked. He knows I went beyond Tibetan culture. Tibetan lamas when they give Mahamudra teaching, I'm sure, never teach like that. Not like that. I think it's historically non-existent. Sorry but only in Australia!

Also remember I made the example, when the mirror is clear the reflection is taken. When the water is clear, the reflection of the moon is there, clean clear. Similar: we do have such clean clear energy within us, that's why we can take all the sensory perceptions, and that's the beauty of the human quality. OK.

**Q:** When I try to realize the non existence of anything, I choose the sun and pull it apart into pieces until I have broken the atoms up and there's nothing there that I can see. Is it only my delusion that brings it together?

**Lama:** I think so. That's a good example isn't it? I think normally the dualistic mind is putting things together, that is its function. When this disappears then we can experience non-duality. For example sometimes in my mind I completely chop my body into pieces, like it becomes atoms. Sometimes that is helpful to quickly experience non-duality.

**Q:** Also, does that mean that if everybody believes the world is flat then it will become flat?

**Lama:** If you believe it, you see the world as flat. If you believe it round it becomes round.

**Q:** If I believed snow was purple and everybody else believed it was purple, would it still be white?

**Lama:** Everybody who? Shakyamuni, his eye could not believe it as you see. Everybody means who? Everybody means Buddha also is there. OK. So if you see white as purple, it could be in a certain environment, a certain energy involved to see this white as purple, but those who don't have such a condition obstacle don't see that. They just see white as it is.

**Q:** Then if Buddha looked at the earth would he see it as round or flat?

**Lama:** Buddha sees the earth round according to your mind. Buddha sees the earth flat according to my mind. Not for him. OK. Maybe twelve o'clock. Better we stop.

*Colophon: Excerpt from MAHAMUDRA, "Fourth Discourse" by Lama Thubten Yeshe, transcript reprinted here for the "Discovering Buddhism" program with permission from Wisdom Publications. Lightly edited by Kendall Magnussen, FPMT Education Department.*

# Simple Meditations

*By Lama Zopa Rinpoche*

## **BREATHING MEDITATION FOR PURIFICATION**

Visualize Compassion Buddha, Tara, or Medicine Buddha, etc. As you inhale, light from the deity's heart, which is in the nature of great compassion, blesses all sentient beings. It fills the whole body and mind with great compassion, in the heart. Keep the mind in that state for awhile, in that feeling of great compassion towards every sentient being, without discrimination, feeling their suffering and generating the thought to free them all from the sufferings and problems, by oneself.

Then exhale all the defilements, all the delusions, negative karma, negative imprints and particularly the ego. It comes out as you exhale in the form of smoke or pollution. It goes beyond this world. This is using the breathing meditation for purification.

Then again, as you inhale slowly, again light comes from the heart of Compassion Buddha. Think that it is the essence of wisdom, the fully awakened mind, the omniscient mind, in the form of white light. It fills the whole body and mind. Keep the mind in that state.

Then exhale all the defilements, negative karma, and negative imprints, particularly ignorance. It comes out in the form of smoke or pollution, like pollution comes from a chimney. It goes away from beyond the world. Think you are completely purified.

Then inhale, again light comes from the heart of Compassion Buddha, think that it is the essence of power, power to be able to help everyone, to free them immediately, to be able to free them from all the problems, the sufferings and the causes of sufferings. This thought is the highest thought: to free them from negative imprints and for them to achieve perfect happiness immediately, to free them from the suffering and the causes of sufferings. Think that the light is perfect power to give temporal and ultimate happiness all the way up to enlightenment. Receive this in the form of white light, the whole body and mind is filled with white light in the nature of perfect power to do perfect works for all sentient beings, like the Buddha.

[For example, some doctors are able to know exactly the person's sickness and able to give the right medicine and able to heal immediately. So, to be able to realize that perfect power for all the activities you are doing for others.

If you are a schoolteacher, then being able to awaken the children's minds from ignorance immediately and be able to eliminate their ignorance by teaching.

If someone is doing consultation, then to realize perfect power and be particularly able to solve that person's problems. By seeing and talking to that person, you are able to solve immediately their problems and able to fill that person's mind with great peace and happiness. Also all the person's anger - immediately you are able to purify and generate open heart and the thought of love and compassion towards others, including the person with whom that person has problems.]

First, you do breathing meditation. Then, you watch the mind.

### **MEDITATION ON THE MIND**

The mind is looking at the mind that is concentrating. You are watching that mind, that is doing the breathing meditation. You are paying attention to that mind that is watching the mind.

**There are two things.** Mind watching the mind - thoughts passing through but at the same time you are aware, like police watching people go out and come in. The other is the mind looking at the nature of the mind, that which is formless, colorless, and shapeless, but clearly perceives the object. Some may find it difficult, but some able. I think that especially for western people these things are difficult so you can do the meditation (above) for beginners, which brings quietness and peace. After that, then one can also have discussion about Buddhist philosophy, reincarnation, the meaning of life, why people suffer. Start with some analysis.

Use Tara or Medicine Buddha, something nice that just by seeing or visualizing there is peace in the heart. Then chant the mantras.

### **MEDITATION ON THE FOUR IMMEASURABLES**

[Please see Ven. Sangye Khadro's explanation on "The Practice of the Four Immeasurables" in *Awakening a Kind Heart* (Amitabha Buddhist Centre, Singapore, or on-line at: [www.fpmtabc.org.sg](http://www.fpmtabc.org.sg).) The prayer of the Four Immeasurable thoughts can also be found in *How to Meditate*, by Kathleen McDonald, pp. 145 & 149]

This is very good for beginners; it is very good to make the life very meaningful. The meditation for generating the four immeasurable thoughts is very good. You can do it like this:

First is generating the immeasurable thought of equanimity. You can do it over and over again. You can do it 3 times, 4 times, 5 times, 6 times, etc.

Then, generating the immeasurable thought of loving-kindness, over and over again.

Then, generating the immeasurable thought of compassion over and over again.

Then generating the immeasurable thought of joyfulness.

It depends on the students, one can repeat many times and do the meditation because with each practice you collect merit like limitless sky. With the immeasurable thought of loving-

kindness, each time you meditate you create the cause to be born as a wheel-turning king because you create incredible merit.

I think the result of being born a wheel-turning king is collected with each of the practices. Each time you generate these thoughts, you create limitless skies of merit, especially if one does it with Tong Len, generating the thought of taking on all the sentient beings sufferings within ourselves within one's own heart, the ego, and then it destroys the ego.

With the immeasurable thought of equanimity, take on other sentient beings sufferings and the cause of sufferings, also the cause of sufferings from wars and global pollution.

When you practice the immeasurable thought of loving-kindness, at that time you give your body, a wish-fulfilling jewel, and all the merit up to enlightenment, and all the causes.

With the immeasurable thought of joyfulness, you give to sentient beings.

### **ABOUT DEDICATION**

It is very good if someone is very sick or has large problems, maybe who is dying or has died, for the group to dedicate. Even if you are only a few people, when you dedicate to Buddha and purify together and include those people who are dying, or have problems, etc., sometimes due to the power of people's minds, it can cure. It can have success.

*Colophon: From Lama Zopa Rinpoche's advice to Jhamba Drolkar on how to start a study group in the area of Amherst, MA, USA. Ven. Holly Ansett was the scribe, 13 Nov 2000, Aptos CA USA. Edited by Kendall Magnussen, FPMT Education Department.*