

# Welcome to Lama Kelzang's seminar "Shamatha Meditation". A general overview about calm abiding meditation (Shamatha), insight meditation (Vipassana), and their practice together with question-and-answer sessions.

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## What is meditation? How does one meditate correctly?

One should know about meditation because, otherwise, we might be sitting on our cushion for hours not knowing what to pay attention to: how to cleanse, what to recognize, etc. "Imagine we are in a jungle collecting all the mushrooms we can find. But we don't know which ones are eatable, and which can be thrown away. There was a family in Bhutan who ate all the red mushrooms. In the end the father was the only one left alive."

When meditating we might experience something similar: our mind becomes foggier and foggier, and we get bored. We meditate but think even more than before. Consequently, we find meditating highly uninteresting, because it is precisely what we wanted to avoid. It was the Dalai Lama who taught a Tibetan community: we have our everyday life and think everything is okay. Then we start to meditate and everything becomes problematic and strange: many ideas and emotions come to the surface with the result that we want to throw everything away.

Or we have a multitude of meditation methods and try them all but nothing does really change inside. Nevertheless, I will teach you several methods to meditate because it is important to know a few. Only then we are able to choose the best one to work with wholeheartedly and full of joy. Sometimes, a change of methods can also be refreshing and prevent boredom.

Two central aspects are important in meditation: (1) the body posture, and (2) the state of mind

## 1st The Body Posture

The 7-point-posture is the most ideal.

- 1.1 Legs: It is best if the legs are crossed (lotus seat, or something similar) or sitting on a chair, etc. Different positions are possible. The whole body depends on the legs: if the legs move, the mind moves as well – are the legs relaxed, the mind relaxes as well.
- 1.2 Hands: A classical position of one's hands is the following: your right hand rests on your left hand with the thumbs touching each other. This is a very comfortable position. Yet the same applies as above: if the hands move, the mind does the same.
- 1.3 Back/Spine: as straight as possible but not rigid. As a result the winds (energy) in the central channel and the accompanying 2 minor channels can flow well along the spine. This in turn makes the mind non-conceptual, relaxed and very present.
- 1.4 Shoulders: should somehow be similar to a vulture. This can be achieved quite easily if the hands rest on the knees – with some air below the arms. They should be straight and relaxed.
- 1.5 Neck: should be slightly bent forward so that the head can comfortably rest on the neck. As the central channel runs through here the energy can flow easily if the head is bent slightly.
- 1.6 Mouth: not wide open, not closed, relaxed. The tongue slightly touches the upper gum behind the incisors.
- 1.7 Gaze: ahead, slightly to the ground. The direction of the gaze can vary (up and down). More will be said later.

To sum up one can say that the body should assume as comfortable and relaxed a position as possible. Here is a comparison: if a container filled with water is still, the water is calm. The same is true of body and mind (= water): the mind is calm when the body is relaxed. Therefore Marpa the translator said: "You might have many methods of meditation, but what is a hundred, if not a thousand times more important, is the correct body posture".

## 2nd The State of Mind – let the mind relax

How can I let the mind relax? What to meditate about? What does meditation mean? In translation 'meditation' means 'to get used to something' – but to what? Are we to get used to negative emotions or to something we don't know yet? Or to wisdom, but what is wisdom? We want to know more after meditating, but how?

Without understanding how our mind functions, how it recognizes and understands, we will not be able to diminish our problems. For that very reason there are people who have no success even after many years of meditation – who do not lead a calmer, more relaxed, clearer and more knowledgeable life than others. Sometimes we think we need visualizations or mantras to transform our strong emotions – we can compare this with painting a red wall blue. Such methods help to a certain degree, but don't allow us to understand the root causes. For, if we really understand and apply meditation, problems will solve themselves.

This can be compared to the knot of a live snake: trying to loosen it might be very dangerous, as the snake must unroll by itself. The same is true of negative emotions and thoughts: if we don't do anything, don't change anything, leave them as they are, they will solve themselves. This is what Mahamudra meditation is all about: to be able to recognize whatever happens in our mind and to be present – then everything will solve itself. Without being present or aware there is no success. Therefore it is necessary to increase awareness, to leave everything coming up as it is but, at the same time, to be fully aware and present. Nothing should be transformed. If you wanted to test this, do not choose a difficult situation that is emotionally overwhelming. But with just a little sadness, trouble, or something similar we can practice: we notice that we are sad, afraid, angry, etc. We become aware and present and don't do anything. Everything solves itself. Where the emotions go, we don't know. On the other hand we didn't want them in the first place. This is a first glimpse of how we can meditate in our everyday life.

I studied for 13 years, but little happened within me because I had not found the really important point. The result is a bad feeling, because you know a lot, but in situations, which are emotionally overwhelming when e.g. somebody is dying, you cannot apply anything. You go into retreats (retreats to meditate), know everything about rituals, mantras, visualizations, etc. but when such a situation occurs, you can't do anything. When I finally recognized what was happening, I changed my being present with my feelings and thoughts that in turn changed my bad feelings. So I thought: "Wow, I can indeed do something, even at a time when somebody is dying." To correctly apply this technique and to develop great trust will help us even at the moment of death. Sometimes I had had so many thoughts and had been so excited that I had not been able to find any sleep. I had thought: "Gosh, even with such a small difficulty I haven't got anything, what will happen when I die?" But this method helps in such situations, too, as I know from my own experience.

Here is the essential point, just a small thing: to recognize and to leave things as they are. And don't demand a situation to change in its outer appearance because the results will become even more complicated and difficult.

To get a better understanding of meditation and to make the application somewhat easier, I will give an overview about the structure of mind.

### **The 8 different states of mind:**

(The numbers in brackets represent the classic sequence of numbering)

1st (8) *storehouse consciousness* / „alaya“: according to the sutras this should be imagined like a big ocean; it is difficult to recognize as it is very subtle, fundamental, and very stable. During the day when our mind is at work and even at night it is always present but we don't notice anything. This state of mind can be understood as a big warehouse or storehouse that has stored every kind of information, all our memories and impressions since childhood. From this storehouse our impressions and certain memories, etc. emerge and revive. This process goes like this: when we create negative mental impressions (think negatively, etc.) they will be stored there like seed that can recreate exactly the same conditions. Sometimes, when we have negative emotions although nothing has happened at all, they are due to those seeds from "alaya" resurfacing within us. Thus, the "alaya" has two functions: on the one hand it is a storehouse, where impressions are stored like seeds, and on the other hand do these seeds carrying those impressions resurface again into our consciousness like fruit (as negative or positive emotions or thoughts). Here is an example: When we plant a rice grain, the developing fruit will be rice. Our common mind can only be understood on the basis of "alayas". But how can we meditate on that, if we can't recognize this condition because it is so subtle?

2nd (7) *Afflicted consciousness*: it is also very subtle and directed towards our inner being; it is the consciousness grasping our ego or "I": my, your, me, ... We do not get to know what the eyes see, but what MY eyes see, what "I" see. The knee hurts: MY knee hurts, or MY father is ill.

The more we feed this grasping consciousness, the more it hurts: "Why do I have this pain, I don't want any pain." Although this condition is a natural part of our life, it is natural to say "I". Even a baby feels: "I'm hungry" trying to find its mother's breast, trying to find milk. Pain grows the more, the more we are attached to somebody or something. When a good friend or relative is dying, we are strongly suffering. Yet if somebody is dying who we don't have a connection with, we hardly feel any sadness or pain. To meditate directly on this "afflicted consciousness" is rather difficult. It is also difficult to get rid of the grasping. It is not sufficient to say: "I'm a Buddhist and don't want to have any ego"; it also insufficient to meditate about unselfishness.

3rd -8th (6)-(1): The occupied states of mind

3rd (6) *Mental consciousness*: according to Shantideva it is the "wild, drunken elephant"; the thinking, judging, conceptualizing, remembering mind which keeps turning everything over, reviewing, evaluating, etc.

To meditate on this state of mind is really important, as it creates the most problems. If we leave it to itself, i.e. without meditation, it will react like a wild elephant trampling down our peaceful and relaxed mind. Therefore it is most important to

recognize, during meditation, the mental state of its activities. There are a number of methods or levels to achieve this step by step. By evaluating, conceptualizing, always backwards and forwards, we increase the emotionally negative factors. We increasingly become attached to things that seem to be enjoyable and turn down things that seem to be unpleasant. Therefore, the main focus of every meditation method should be directed towards this mental consciousness: this is especially true of negative evaluations, memories, and emotions coming up. The more we practice, the more relaxed we become.

This information and impressions of practice and relaxation will also be stored in our general consciousness “alaya”. The more we store such practice impressions, the easier it will be to detach from the ego-attachment. There is nothing else to do. By slowly working on it, step-by-step, our “alaya” will transform into wisdom – by storing more and more relaxed and peaceful impressions. Thus everything negative will be dissolved. The storehouse will have nothing but good seeds with positive fruits. When this development is complete, enlightenment has been achieved. That is everything. Enlightenment does not mean we get somewhere else when we die. This is positive accumulation, and at the same time, the main message of Buddhist meditation.

We now have learned something about the way our mind functions and have got an idea what results meditation can achieve.

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Question: Can “alaya”, the storehouse consciousness, at all be experienced, is it at all tangible?

*Answer: Yes, we can experience it, only it is very difficult. When we pass out, when we black out, and can be present, we can experience it. That means, if our working mind is switched off, e.g. when we are unconscious or during dying such functions begin to dissolve. Then the mother substance meets the father substance and we experience a kind of blackout. Should we be really present at such a moment, insight will take place. It is said that mindfulness (achieved through meditation) meets the mother of all wisdom. Should we not be clear at such moments, we experience them as if in dark clouds.*

Question: Is our Karma from past lives also stored in the storehouse consciousness or “alaya”?

*Answer: Yes, of course, everything is stored there. Karma is nothing else but deeds and impressions.*

Question: Can memories from past lives come up?

*Answer: Yes, something is there, but we don't know our last life, just as we can't remember small moments of our childhood. Yet as everything is stored in the “alaya” we have habits or subtle behavior patterns originating in our childhood.*

Question: Is “Rigpa” the same as the cleansed “alaya”?

*Answer: Yes, exactly. Rigpa = wisdom. The more present we are in our mental consciousness (6), the more “rigpa” appears. It is the original purity.*

Question: What is the precise difference between mental consciousness (6) and afflicted consciousness (7) in relation to “I and others”?

*Answer: The difference between (6) and (7) is that (6) is active and works conceptually and judgmentally. (7) On the other hand it is very subtle and directed towards the inside and not active. It is a more subtle concept of the “I and others”. On the basis of the storehouse consciousness develops (7) with its concept of “I and others”. Through the activities of (6) such concepts are reinforced. An example: We have a fever, a cold and problems with our lung. Due to the high fever we do not notice the other two illnesses. When the fever goes down, we first notice only the cold. If the cold disappears, we notice our lung problem. The same happens to the different forms of consciousness: they are only an expression of a mind that knows different states.*

If we can practice meditation in such a way that we can start at any moment, all our problems dissolve themselves. Ultimately you can say that all our sufferings result from our thoughts.

## **Saturday, 1st teaching**

4th –8th (5)-(1): the five sensory consciousnesses (and their objects)

4th (5): visual consciousness – the eye sees forms and colors

5th (4): auditory consciousness - the ear hears sounds

6th (3): smell consciousness – the nose differentiates smells

7th (2): taste consciousness – the tongue distinguishes different tastes

8th (1): tactile consciousness – the body/skin perceives touch

The objects of sensual perceptions are very instable, they come and go. Perception is neutral. For that very reason we don't meditate with them. You could compare this with a stupid person who can only see, or hear, etc., and not more. He/she can never complain, think about it or even say something. (Just like a child entering a temple and seeing all the wonderful things it can't address.) The mental consciousness (6) is like a blind person: he/she doesn't see anything, but can gossip about it a great deal. It makes comments about the sensual perceptions without experiencing them directly. It works with an image of sensual perceptions adding a lot. An example: We remember a person, see his/her face or think of his/her words and become aggressive immediately. Such an image is sufficient for the mental consciousness beginning to create problems like labeling thoughts, etc. In addition, the mental consciousness fetches every kind of information from the past from the "alaya" (8) despite the fact that they don't correspond to the directly experienced perception. At that moment it relates them to the stored information creating a whole lot of problems. In regard to the future the mental consciousness anticipates a lot. As far as the present is concerned it speculates quite a bit: it judges, labels every perception, etc.

### **Meditation on the mental consciousness:**

The meditation on the mental consciousness is outside the three times past, present and future. In Dzogchen one says: "Everything which does not concern the times the mind is staying in – that is meditation." That is staying in "rigpa", the staying in natural mindfulness without judgment and without times. That means whatever emerges in (6) has to be noticed but not evaluated. One is also not in a nothing-situation not noticing anything. We are just present. "Whatever emotions and thoughts come up look at them nakedly and steadfastly." (Mahamudra) Leave it as it is and rest. That is meditation. That means to rest as natural as possible: to assume a relaxed body posture and mind set, to relax and to perceive everything directly and experience how it is and to leave it, not to focus on anything special. We don't have to practice this in long sittings, but it is important to repeat it as often as possible. Milarepa said: "Meditate for a short time, but again and again."

This is essential meditation that is also beyond Shamatha. One could call it Shamatha without object, but in reality it goes beyond it. Therefore it is important to go in this direction and never to think now I'm meditating.

### **Afflicted consciousness**

More about (7) afflicted consciousness: We have 2 functionalities of (7): on the one hand there is the mind grasping the "I" or the awareness of "I". If we ask ourselves where the root cause of this disturbance comes from, we find out that it does not have any beginning but an end. To gain an impression beyond our afflicted consciousness, we have to be able to rest completely in "rigpa", which means to be able to recognize the nature of our mind.

The nature of our mind: the aspects of clarity and emptiness

The "nature of our mind" is within our mind, despite the fact that it is different from the daily experience of our common mind. Therefore, to have such an experience we have to look within our mind, not outside of it. The problem why we do not recognize its nature is due to the fact that we cannot observe their two aspects, clarity and emptiness, in their pure forms.

We are mostly aware of a clouded aspect of clarity: e.g. when we are aggressive, our emotions are very clear and alive. This is then the perception of the aspect of clarity, but covered over by negative emotions, and therefore a misleading form of this aspect. The more we can perceive or respectively develop the aspect of emptiness, the purer we experience the aspect of clarity. Yet, as long as we have negative emotions and consequently illusions, their nature cannot be completely perceived.

Like the sky that is obscured by clouds. We think we see the sky, but we do not see it completely as our view is blocked or restricted by clouds. Yet, if we understand the aspect of emptiness, we know that the sky is free of clouds and illuminated by the sun. It is our mental consciousness that produces the clouds. It makes our mind duller and duller, cloudier so that we can hardly see the clear sky. To experience the aspect of emptiness means, "not to evaluate". There are many more levels, but for the sake of meditation it suffices not to evaluate. Not to depend on past, present and future times. This in itself is an experience of emptiness transcending a purely intellectual understanding. If one remains there, it is a different experience that we cannot talk about the here and now as it needs to be experienced. But as long as one is not beyond the three times, one is captured by the ego. For that reason the ego is said to be beginningless. It is always there, as long as we don't have experiences beyond

the three times. When we meditate, we transform the ego. There will still be something called “I” or “me”, but reaching for it diminishes, and judgment stops. In the enlightened state we exist beyond the perception of “I” and “non-I” (duality). The terms are unimportant – it is important to understand it.

And who will remain who can experience enlightenment? We still exist, yet our perspective has changed, and our mind does no longer function in the old ego-way. One could also talk about selflessness or ego-lessness, when we experience the quality of the nature of the mind. That is the aspect of emptiness. To say it in simpler terms: don't get lost into past, present, or future times, and don't evaluate, but remain present in the present moment, and be aware of the upcoming thoughts. That is everything.

To continue about afflicted consciousness: it also has an aspect of communication, or conveying of a message. All kinds of information stored in “alaya” (8) reach the mental consciousness (6) via the afflicted consciousness or the other way round. All kinds of information from (1) to (6) (= sensual perceptions) reach “alaya” via the afflicted consciousness. Every perception and thought pass through (7) and back. Just like a satellite that keeps taking and saving photographs at every moment.

Question: Are there also two levels at the mental consciousness?

Answer: Yes, there is also a conceptual and a non-conceptual level. Meditation takes place at the conceptual level, as the non-conceptual level is not accompanied by pain. With the conceptual level we target the non-conceptual level.

So much about general information, about the essentials of meditation. We now go over to

## **Practice of Meditation**

### **Sequence of a meditation session:**

Each meditation begins with Shamatha without an object.

Then we change to Shamatha with an object.

At the end of a session, for a few minutes, we meditate Shamatha without an object.

This sequence never changes.

*1st Body posture:* for the first few minutes we adjust our bodies and take up a comfortable body posture (if possible the seven-point posture). When we have found a comfortable posture, we remain in it and don't move any more.

*2nd Mindset:*

### **Meditation without an object:**

Our attention is directed towards nothing in particular. Our mind can be said to be on vacation: we don't process the past as we are off duty and don't plan for the future as we are on holiday. We relax completely and keep our attention towards what is just present. That is Shamatha without an object, a very important kind of meditation. Our meditation lasts as long as it is comfortable for us. When we have difficulties and our mind tries to find a reference object we can change to:

### **Meditation with an object:**

#### **1st Meditation on forms**

1.1 Meditation with an impure object:

We take a stone, a piece of wood, a flower, a candle/butter lamp, etc., and put it in front of us. We can also look up into the sky. At the beginning it would be best to choose a concrete object like a small piece of wood or a stone that is not too big, not too near or not too distant. The colors should be comfortable for the eye, not white and transparent, but preferably natural colors. The objects themselves do not carry much meaning, what is important is our mind staying with them. When we are distracted, we notice that and return to our object. Again and again we return to our object. We pay attention to a balanced concentration: not too strained and not too relaxed. The balance is very important. When we become dull or sleepy, we become more concentrated, and when we become too agitated and everything is too tight, we let go a bit.

## Saturday, Part 2

### 1.2 Meditation with a pure object:

We can stay with three different aspects of a Buddha or Bodhisattva: with the aspects of the body, speech, or mind.

*The body aspect:* For that we take a statue, a thangka or other images of a the Buddha or Bodhisattva, and concentrate on them. To meditate on these images helps the meditation on gods because, later, it is easier to visualize them mentally. We begin with a small detail of a statue or the image: e.g. the forehead, the eye, or the ear and concentrate on them. The process is exactly the same as with the meditation on an impure object. Then we slowly follow the rest of the body piece after piece: from the forehead to the eyes, every detail one after the other. As a result our mind becomes clearer and more relaxed. When we have gone through every part of the body, we can pass on to the image as a whole to direct our meditation. Then we shut our eyes and solely imagine the picture/statue in our mind. We generate such an object in our mind. Such a mental object gives direction to our meditation and we stay with it in a relaxed way. The sequence of our sittings is always the same: we begin with Shamatha without object, and then do Shamatha with (here: a pure) object, then again with an object.

*The speech aspect:* We meditate on syllables written on fabric or paper; e.g. “OM AH HUNG”. One begins with one letter and slowly continues from top to bottom with the letter, continues further till one stays with the whole syllable. Here, too, we can regard the syllables as mental images helping with the practice of mantra recitation in the practice on gods. Whether we look at syllables or letters or use them as a mental image, they help in the same way.

*The mental aspect:* This can be a circle drawn on paper or fabric in any color: red, blue, green, etc. Yet the color of the circle as well as its background should be pleasing to the eye. The process is the same again: we focus on it, are aware and relaxed. After that we can use the object as a mental object, too, which is again helpful for the Vajrayana meditation, e.g. for the Guru-Yoga practice. During Guru yoga one imagines one’s teacher as a light ball in the heart.

That is everything about the topic meditation on forms.

It is important to keep one’s awareness, because without awareness we lose all the meditation.

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Question: Is there a difference between meditating on a pure or impure object regarding the developing qualities.

Answer: No, there is no difference. Pure objects are perhaps somewhat special objects and they are helpful for the Yidam practice. On the other hand it is decisive that we relax. Then the qualities develop within us. What is best for us we have to find out ourselves. E.g. Tilopa, the great Kagyu master, had a very special object of meditation. Mashing sesame in his mortar became his object of meditation. This is why he was called “Tilopa”, because “Til” means sesame: the great meditating one of sesame. We could become the same. Perhaps we will then be called the great meditating one on stones, because we can meditate especially well on stones. The focusing object is unimportant, but the longer you can stay on it in a relaxed way, the better the meditation.

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## 2. Meditation on sound:

As always we begin with meditation without object. Then gradually listen to the sound, become focused on the sound. At the beginning it is best to choose natural sounds like e.g. the murmuring of water or the twitter of birds. We can also choose a recitation of mantras like e.g. “OM MANI PEME HUNG”. The focus in on the sound of the mantras, we rest on the sound, relax. Slowly we can go over to making regular sounds objects of meditation, e.g. the sound of a singing bowl or regular pieces of music. A continuous sound is best. In that way we become the great meditating ones on music. It is probably easy for a musician to meditate.

A story: an Indian sitar player was traveling throughout the world to play. His wife became unhappy because he was never at home and therefore got divorced after a while. The sitar player became very sad and depressed. At that moment he heard about a meditation master nearby and thought that he would have less difficulties if he meditated with him. The master gave him several methods to meditate but he simply could not contrite on them. He kept thinking of his sitar and concluded that he could not meditate. His master asked him what his problem was. He answered that he was a professional sitar player who kept thinking of his instrument. The master advised him to meditate on the music he played. Then he compared meditation with the strings of a sitar: Don’t tighten your strings too loosely and not too tightly. It’s the same with your mind. This direction the



sitar player was able to understand meditation. And thus he became a great meditating one besides being a good sitar player. To rest the mind on sound in a balanced way – that is meditation on sound. Whichever sound we choose, we stay in it and are aware of it with our mind.

### **3rd Meditation on smell:** good for cooks!

We can use any kind of smell as an object to meditate on. Here, too, after beginning relaxed without an object we remain, without any hurry, focused on our smell object and are absolutely present. As a stimulus we can use perfume or incense. This allows a good scent meditation.

### **4th Meditation on taste:**

When eating e.g. a candy, chocolate, soup, Chili or whatever else, we remain with our taste object. When we are sucking a delicious candy, it can always happen in meditation, i.e. in awareness.

Speciality:

### **5th Meditation on pain:**

When we have toothache, or problems with the knees or something similar, we can use the pain as an object of our meditation. We relax our mind and remain present with our pain. In that way pain can support Shamatha meditation. The process is always the same: we remain non-judgmental and relaxed. Pain creates a problem with judgments: “My poor self, I have pain, which the others don’t have.” Then there is really a problem. When meditating on pain we can gain a lot of relaxation through meditation. We have pain, but remain quite cool and relaxed. That is the fine difference. Great masters experiencing strong pains don’t think them terrible as they are meditating. A story: The 16th Karmapa was very ill and dying. Pönlop Rinpoche who had visited him shortly before his death reported that his pains must have been terribly strong, so that he (P.R.) had hardly been able to bear them. Everybody was worried and nervous. Only His Holiness Karmapa was absolutely relaxed.

An additional story from Japan: a man was suffering from very strong headaches and therefore tried to find help from several medical doctors and specialists. Eventually he had no idea any more where else to find help. Then he met a Japanese meditation master teaching him meditation on pain. Thus, his pains gradually disappeared. This proves that meditation on pain can be really helpful. That does not mean we should not consult a doctor any more. Both are good. We could use the time waiting at the doctor’s office to meditate. We do not need a master for that. We simply have to do it.

Before: Meditation with direct objects

### **Now: Meditation on mental images**

A mental object can be e.g. a Buddha statue, pictures, a light ball, syllables or circles on fabric or paper, etc. Whatever comes to one’s mind like a person can be used as an object for meditation. What is important here is its mental image of e.g. a person.

A story: Once there was a cowherd. Eventually he heard about a meditation master visited by many people. So he went to this master as well and told him that he wanted to meditate. After he received his instructions he wanted to turn them into practice. But whenever he wanted to do that he kept thinking of his cows that he had to count all the time. After some months he thought he had to give up meditation. The master asked him: What is your problem? I can’t meditate because I keep thinking of my cows that I have to count. The master answered that whatever happens to cross his mind could be used as a meditation object. You know your cows: what they look like, which color they have. Thereafter he used his cows as meditation objects with the result that meditation became very easy for him. At the next meeting the master asked him: How does your meditation go? Much better. Now I keep thinking of the horns of my cows. No problem either, said the master, take the horns as your object. He did that. Then he received the instruction: Now think you yourself have horns. Indeed, the cowherd imagined having horns himself. That was very unpleasant because he could no longer stand upright. Now the master said he should meditate on not having horns any more. That worked well, too, and everything became easier.

That is a good example that we all can take as a mental image. We already have sufficient ideas that we can take as meditation objects. We call that meditation on mental images. Even the cowherd became a good meditating person.

When driving we see the many traffic lights or when we look at the computer screen, or when we, as teachers, think about what is written on the board, or when we remember what we as doctors or nurses encounter, then we can meditate with everything. When we can recognize objects there then we can meditate well. We remain present on these objects. We can even meditate during a telephone call.

### **Meditation on thoughts**

For that kind of meditation we can meditate on every kind of thought or emotion. We don’t evaluate the thought but recognize it and leave it as it is. We remain present in the thought. Whether it is an idea of fear, or jealousy, etc. whatever comes up, we

just recognize it, and leave it as it is. Whatever idea comes up during a formal sitting meditation or later in our everyday life, we can use them as well. We do not follow the thought, and don't explain or evaluate it. Thus, it will gradually disappear. We only have to relax and should not create something artificial.

### **Formal practice**

It is good for beginners to decide beforehand what to meditate about. Later we will perhaps have a favorite meditation, then whatever happens to come about. Now and then to change methods is good. Thus, we will collect different experiences. The length of sittings should develop naturally. It is good to begin with shorter periods of 10 to 15 minutes but to do them more often till a habit develops. Later we can achieve unguided meditations of perhaps an hour's duration. If we can manage that it will be wonderful. Smaller successes are just as good.

So far about meditation of calm abiding. Shamatha meditation is to calm wild thoughts and emotions – to smooth waves, to relax and pacify.

With **Mahamudra meditation** there is the expression “**non-meditation**”. As long as we think we are still meditating and conduct soliloquies during meditation, we are still in a conceptual condition (even if it is sometimes very subtle). With Mahamudra meditation, i.e. the “non-meditation”, we achieve a non-conceptual condition. To achieve such a condition we have to clear our mind of concepts.

### **Three examples of non-meditation:**

1st Non-meditation means to be present: full concentration without a focus like threading a needle. Whatever comes up in our mind should not be evaluated and remain non-conceptual. No distraction through thoughts.

2nd Non-meditation means without distraction: without movement of thoughts, like the sea without waves, no thinking, judging, ...

3rd Non-meditation does not mean to make something: in a fully natural way we are flying like vultures in the sky, gliding naturally without using our wings and balancing, no thinking, no artificial manufacturing, without beginning unnecessary processes. Relaxed, aware, present, that is the key to Shamatha without object.

### **Practical tips with difficulties and for everyday:**

Sometimes we don't feel like doing anything at all, and then everything runs smoothly. At other times one loses interest in everything and is full of thoughts, more than busy and lost. The best is not to think at all and to sit down and to breathe the cleaning breath three times: inhale three times lightly and gently, and exhale stronger three times. Then we sit down, don't focus on anything and relax. That always refreshes the situation. Don't think about the method, but simply relax.

If we have difficulties with a colleague or a friend, then we simply leave the situation for a short time by going e.g. to the bathroom. Thus we gain some distance and recover a bit by taking the tension out of the situation. The chances of finding a solution will rise that way. This doesn't mean fleeing from difficulties but finding a way of making things easier. We will notice that even in our bodies. Everybody has his/her own tricks not to neglect other people and at the same time to regain our capacity to act. It is important in such situation to apply something actively and not to focus on nothing else but the formal practice of meditation. The formal side is important, too, but in our everyday life we don't need such tricks, because, otherwise, our practice would be too limited. Therefore, it is very important to create possibilities that can be useful in our everyday life and can be applied as often as possible.

The great master Milarepa once composed a song: “When I am asleep, I meditate. If everybody did the same, I would be happy. When I eat, I meditate. If everybody did the same, I would be happy. When I am going for walk, etc.” That means we can turn everything into meditation, every activity. Otherwise we would have learned many methods but nothing could be applied. If we are able to apply meditation in our every-day life, then it will also help us in extreme situations, e.g. when we are dying. Therefore our practice should become quite natural. For we want to be safe and without fear and be able to die full of faith. Therefore, when we include our practice into our every-day life, we are on the safe side and everything develops easily. The more faith we develop, the better we can deal with every situation and will not be dominated by that situation. Therefore we practice with small situations to be able to later apply them in difficult situations. Some can drive a car in their sleep but only because they have practiced that. In the same way we practice meditation methods till we can apply them in our sleep. There was a driver in our monastery, who drank a lot and therefore was nearly asleep when driving. The roads were difficult, and I (Lama Kelzang) was very worried about going with him. But he proved to be a good driver who never had an accident and consequently had a good reputation. With his vast experience everything went off on its own. We can practice our meditation in the same way.



## Saturday, Part 3 and Sunday morning

The two functions of the storehouse consciousness (“alaya”) (8):

On the one hand the storehouse consciousness has the function to store all the seeds, on the other hand these seeds also develop fruits. The mental consciousness (6) activates the seeds. The afflicted consciousness (7) acts as the messenger.

The germinating seed resurfaces in the form of thoughts (6) or as sensual perceptions (1)-(5), and is evaluated by the mental consciousness (6). It can resurface as emotion or as a thought, i.e. in different kinds.

The cleansed “alaya” functions somewhat different from the non-cleansed “alaya”. As a comparison one could take a computer, which is free of viruses (cleansed) or infested with viruses (un-cleansed).

Depending on what is stored in the storehouse, the “alaya”, determines the quality of the storehouse. When we store disgusting, ugly things, it becomes a house full of disgusting things. When we store fine, clean, and good things, the quality will change. When we only store good things like wisdom, it becomes a storehouse for wisdom.

Question: Is the “alaya” cleansed by the Vajrasattva practice?

Answer: Nobody knows for sure, whether we indeed delete negative seeds or whether we even paste new ones. Perhaps it is just copy and paste, haha. Yes, indeed, we have the practice for that. But, in the end, we will never know what will happen, because depending on our motivation and our mind we can or cannot benefit from it. It is not a problem of the practice itself. We can even accumulate new negativity if we have the wrong motivation or complain, don't value anything, are reluctant, unclear or have a disturbed perception. If we, on the other hand, are clearly alert and do our practice with the correct motivation, then we can delete a lot, even a great deal. The Vajrasattva practice is a good anti-virus program.

Question: Wisdom itself has different levels. On a relative level are simple, contented, and good people sages: they have love and compassion. Limitless qualities of compassion and wisdom we want to achieve, that is then the absolute level.

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Rest relaxed and aware = meditating

What are we to do, if we are full of thoughts and distracted?

If we feel totally disoriented and nervous during meditation, are distracted and restless, then we can apply the following method: We imagine a ball of black light underneath our pillow. We concentrate on this dark ball of light and let us sink. The more restless we are, the more we let us sink. At the same time we lower our eyes a bit. This helps to restore our concentration.

What do we do, when we are dull or tired?

If we are sleepy, dull, or tired and unclear, then we imagine a bright ball of light above our head. The bright light ball rises higher and higher till our mind is clearer and more alert. At the same time we raise our eyes a bit.

Are we neither sleepy nor distracted, we look with slightly lowered eyes and imagine a ball of light in any color. The ball is before us and not too big, which is advantageous for the concentration. Or the eyes rest on the leaves of a green tree, something that is good to the eyes. When we notice that we are again distracted we can use the method with the dark ball, when we are sleepy we can apply the method with the bright ball.

Question: I learned to imagine a ball that becomes darker when it sinks, and brighter when it rises.

Answer: Yes, this method is similar. But we don't need this method here.

Question: Can I still use the method I learned?

Answer: Yes.

## Vipassana meditation

The second important meditation method is the Vipassana meditation, the clear recognition. We should practice both methods alternately. Without a relaxed and peaceful mind it is difficult to apply. If we are peaceful, we can look directly at our mind. In the Shamatha meditation we only want our mind to calm and do not look directly at our mind (it is of marginal importance). Vipassana means to confront the mind directly in the form of “rigpa”, the original awareness. This is what we want to face.

An example: if we are very angry or aggressive, our mind is not peaceful and relaxed but wild. We forget everything around us and are caught by our emotions. We are only concentrated on bad sides and things that the person has done to us and only think of his bad words. We completely ignore the good qualities of this person. Our mind becomes narrow, dull, dull with thick clouds, and any clarity is lost. A Shamatha meditation gives peace in this situation and begins dispersing the thick clouds; with Vipassana the cover becomes even thinner and thinner till it disappears altogether. When our emotions cool down and we become aware of our emotion, i.e. we are full of rage, we can begin to look at our emotion. The Shamatha method helps to remain relaxed on our emotion and to look at it fully present. If we are practiced, we can also use the Vipassana method: We look directly at the emotion, look directly at our mind and experience and recognize the nature of our emotion. Through this real understanding the emotion completely loses its damaging effect, and we feel very well. Then we feel that there was something but what was it? Shamatha, first of all, calms our mind, and with the Vipassana meditation we directly recognize our mind. The less we evaluate, the clearer we see. We do not reinforce thoughts and emotions any more. The aggression dissipates. Just like a mala: if we strike with it, then it is solid and hurts. With the Shamatha meditation it can already lose its solidity, with the Vipassana meditation without an evaluating mind, but with the perception of the mala burning, its solidity dissolves in flames. When striking it does not hurt any more, the solidity has disappeared. In general, the solidity of thoughts and emotions dissolves. A Vipassana meditation goes so much deeper, but is much more difficult without a preparing Shamatha meditation, if not even impossible. A Vipassana meditation is not intended to recognize anew, but to recognize what one has already known beforehand. The mala hits because of strong concepts. When drop it, it becomes light and hits like a flower. As we have original knowledge things, we know that a mala is not solid, that you can't be hurt when you are hit. Only due to our strong concepts it becomes solid and firm. Another attitude turns it into a flower that is caressing us. The solidity was just a concept. We can see every thought and sound during meditation like a burning mala. This is how Shine and Vipassana meditation meet. We rest in an open mind: the mala is burning and the solidity has been dissolved. The mala is there but does not hurt any more. The emotions are there, but don't hurt any more and don't cause any damage. The Vipassana meditation is very important, as it "cleanses" the afflicted consciousness. As a consequence the grasping for the "I" and dualistic thinking becomes even less. What is necessary is to directly address whatever comes up and to dissolve such thoughts and emotions that therefore lose their harmfulness. Once one has experienced this principle, one can apply it to every situation.

### **Meditation and post-meditation:**

Meditation does not only mean meditation, when we sit on our cushion. The post-meditation is equally important. In reality meditation is 24-hour process, in which meditation and post-meditation alternate in a natural way. We just have forgot, how it works. Without such a key "meditating" is just a waste of time. When we are meditating on the cushion we accumulate certain experiences that help the post-meditation. In that way they work together. We will never be bored.

The more we practice meditation, the more relaxed and peaceful our mind will become. With Vipassana it will also become clear and refreshed. Through the post-meditation this process continues. We always remain peaceful and relaxed in our everyday life. Should our negative emotions go overboard, we could turn these emotions into the object of our meditation. Thus, the post-meditation, i.e. our everyday life, turns into meditation. When we are ill, we can use, e.g., the methods of Shamatha meditation. We take a look at our symptoms, determine what they are, stay with them and become calmer and more peaceful. We do not focus on our illness or pain and do not get lost in complaints and self-pity, but relax our mind. Okay, we are ill, we accept that, and let go every concept and judgment. It will become the easier for us.

Whatever problems we have to deal with, whether stress, tension or gear: the same method is valid everywhere. Relax; don't judge, not to get lost in the wrong conclusions, and always to stay present in your mind. If the pain or fear become overpowering, then the cleansing breath can help well (as described before). Generally, we can focus on our breath: we observe where it enters our body, how it flows through us, whether it is shallow or deep, how it feels when it enters our nose. This is breathing meditation. At first we can use breath in this way and fear and pain become less. Then we can switch over to take pain or fear as our meditation object. In that way we have moved a little bit further in the direction of relaxation. Then can directly look at pain or fear and determine: How do I experience this fear or this pain? Such a direct look makes the things dissolve and the clarity of our mind keeps increasing. In this way one can make very interesting experiences like those of clarity and happiness, if we research this fear. There is no fear any more as soon as look directly at it. Our problems disappear. So much about post-meditation. This topic is very important, as the post-meditation takes up most of our time. The formal sitting meditation accounts for just 1 to 2 hours of a day at a maximum. With the additional post-meditation we will be relaxed and "cool" for all our life.

It is not possible for us to change others, we can only change ourselves. That is what we can do with meditation. We cannot say the country is stupid, e.g. Bhutan is a terrible country, they have so many problems, life is like hell there, I want to go to Germany. In Germany there are the same problems, therefore I want to go to France, etc. The exterior does not have to change, it is our view that changes. With a different attitude all our problems will disappear.

A story: A Japanese man wanted to find the ideal wife. Once he found a very beautiful woman. Unfortunately she wasn't intel-

ligent enough. Then he search the whole country and he found one who was beautiful and a bit intelligent, yet she was still not the one he was really looking for. Then he met a woman who combined everything in her, she was the real dream wife. Unfortunately he was not the right husband for her ... haha.

Once again: Meditation means to refer to oneself and to affect changes in oneself, to tame one's own mind. Then everything will become easier.

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Question:

Is meditation about he ego analytic meditation or Shamata meditation?

Answer:

*One cannot directly meditate on taming the ego/I. Therefore we begin with the indirect path of the Shamatha meditation and calm our mind. Then we add the Vipassana meditation which is, at first, analytical, reflecting. This is the preparing Vipassana practice. The real Vipassana meditation is the knowledge about the non-solidity of things. We stay there and clarity will result. This new or regained clarity will be stored in the "alaya". The more we store there, the less space is there for ego thinking. The more judging and thinking of 'that is I that is mine' diminishes, the less I-grasping will be there and the fewer problems are there for us.*

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