

Essentials for Meditation

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The purpose of meditation is to control our mind. Control comes from practising meditation. Thus, when we practise meditation continuously, the result has to be an increased ability to control our mind.

Today you have already done this by waiting for me, as I am almost twenty minutes late. Those of you who could manage the situation are still here, right? And still, maybe some are nearly losing their patience, some are relaxed, some are relaxed and half nervous and others might even have different emotions. So, how can we deal with this situation? Because I am the one who created the problem, you could shout at me, you could express your annoyance, but the reality is, that it has already happened and we cannot change anything about it. I cannot change it, I can only apologise, that's it. Even though now you might think that this monk is not really punctual. In my country when some people complain "he or she is not punctual", it's not a big deal. In Europe or certain other countries, when a person is considered unpunctual, that's not a big compliment. So in different places, we have different concepts. Where do these concepts come from? They arise through cultural background, religious environment and in different ways and they are created in our brain. When we are born, our brain is free and here "free" means it is a state that is quite close to the reality of phenomena. Then as we grow up we are exposed to the surrounding culture and society. Many things around us have been constructed, like the so-called education system and the definition in society of what is possible and what is not possible, what you can do and what you cannot do, what is good and bad, what is right and wrong. These set-ups have been put in place in religions, cultures, as social concepts and in fields of engineering. So many details are identified by our concepts, rules and regulations. But formerly our mind was free and then we let ourselves be moulded to the concepts, rules and regulations. Now we are strongly habituated to them and our mental ability

depends on those rules and regulations, which are packed tightly and have settled deeply into our minds influencing our thinking. We have become almost like servants to these concepts, or at least believers and followers. So now the challenge is how to deal with this in meditation?

The main purpose of meditation

Meditation's main purpose is to make our mind flexible by taking a step back from these structures so we don't entirely depend on them, but are flexible in our mind. That is the purpose of our meditation practice. However, sometimes our meditation is not so smooth and clear. That's when we need wisdom. Wisdom is like the driver, meditation is like the engine. So meditation and wisdom brought together is like a car that lets us navigate our meditation experience. Meditation with wisdom gives us the eyes to see clearly, whereas meditation without wisdom doesn't see clearly; this could lead to unwanted places and results, like being blind, unsure of where to go. Therefore, applying knowledge and wisdom to meditation is like having eyes to see. With wisdom, meditation is like someone who can see clearly and knows where to go and when to take the next step. Thus, meditation mingled with wisdom creates flexibility in our mind.

Now what type of meditation do we need? Or in other words, "What is my target?" and "Why do I meditate?". For me these are very important questions.

The short answer is: We meditate to decrease our mental sorrow and our physical difficulties. Now let's look at "What are the specific problems in our life?" and "How are these problems created?". 1) Problems come from our negative emotions. 2) Problems also arise in relation to our health and how to maintain our health. And 3) Problems arise from having to manage our financial situation. So these three areas are very crucial from my point of view.

Benefits of meditation

Telling you from my heart, I will try to express my life experience. Many in our sangha here know that today I have done so many things since the morning until this evening. As a normal person I would not be in shape to guide another meditation session. But really, I feel relaxed. Even though I also spent time

travelling in a car today, which sometimes gives me a certain pain. At that moment I do slow breathing exercises, and after fifteen minutes I'm able to relax very much. Worry cannot change anything; it only wears you out and makes you more tired. That's why I like to say that meditation is like a very nice cup of coffee. When you get tired and you drink this 'meditation coffee', it makes you relax. What I want to say is, since six thirty this morning until now I have been teaching, been to pujas, have given private meetings to almost twenty people telling me about all their big worries, nothing funny and no jokes. During those times I use the meditation of compassion. All this helps. I am not just making myself very important, but right now I am not tired, I can lead this practice, so I believe all this comes from meditation. Therefore we need to be clear about our target and why we are doing meditation practice.

For the emotional level as well, meditation is very, very helpful. Sometimes when you get angry, what type of meditation should you do? Or when you get jealous, how should you meditate? This is very important. I will try to explain why.

For example, applying one type of instruction like: meditating by just not thinking "I am angry. I'm jealous. I have so much desire" thereby decreasing our mental activity, as in "don't meditate and don't think about anything." This would be a very simplistic kind of instruction. A more effective meditation instruction is to meditate on joy and rejoicing when you are jealous. Thus if you want to decrease the fire of the emotion, what should you do? You pour water on it, that is to say, you increase the opposite emotion as an antidote. Also when you try to control your anger by avoiding that particular person and by breathing and focussing on calming yourself down, you can stop your anger. But the moment you see that person again your anger will re-ignite. So what can you do instead? Don't try to hide from that person, but rather without getting angry, talk to them and look at them. Instead of being angry, you try to get closer to them, to have more compassion for them. Applying the opposite emotion is a better kind of meditation practice.

When and where to meditate

It is also important to remember where to use our meditation practice. In a Café, a resort or a meditation centre we are already relaxed, because we are treated well and are receiving teachings. Under those kinds of circumstances we don't need many meditation methods, because nobody is making us angry or jealous, everybody is a new face, everybody is nice to each other, saying pleasant things, everything is wonderful. In those places we can be happy without applying meditation. The challenge comes when dealing with our neighbour, a family member and especially when we are at our place of work. I think we spend thirty to forty percent of our life at our workplace and that's where we should apply meditation.

How to deal with anger

In order to deal with our anger we should meditate on being compassionate, remembering that love and compassion comes from empathy. We develop empathy by understanding the other's point of view, having compassion for hardships in their lives, even when we are wrongly accused. Having patience in case they have family problems, which might affect their mood and the timing, certainly there is a reason for their rash behaviour.

Here is one simple thing I always love to share: try to remember that no one gets angry and tells someone off happily. I know that for sure, there is no one. When people say things in anger, there must be a problem, something must be going on in their mind, unknowingly or knowingly. That always helps me relax. It doesn't matter who you are, nobody happily says bad things, nobody, not even my own worst enemy. Seriously, I don't even have the mental object to say that somebody is my enemy. But nobody is perfect and people may not always like who you are. But even then, they will never happily say something bad to you or try to put you through difficult situations. So please remember: "No one happily gets angry." That is one of my meditations.

And there isn't only one type of meditation. Please be honest with yourself, if you tend towards stinginess, practice generosity, if you are very aggressive, please

meditate on compassion and so on. That's very important. In general I want to mention that just thinking about these things is not enough. Every mental attitude has an opposite action. If you are a compassionate person don't get swayed when listening to something that makes you more and more angry, but apply the antidote. It's like in those movies where the hero or heroine is a little bit lazy, not really fighting and then giving up. Until someone comes around telling them they have to get up and fight, then they finally become the full-fledged hero or heroine. That kind of story line reflects our mental state. Therefore, putting the different types of meditation to use, applying them in everyday life, is the important work.

The practice of Dzogpachenpo

Now I want to speak about a higher level. This practice is about the path of Dzogpachenpo. The Dzogpachenpo practice is considered a 'super multivitamin', a medicine, a single cure-all medicine. It can be applied to every mental affliction. DZOG here means complete, CHENPO means great, and that, which is complete and great, refers to the nature of our mind. Our ordinary mind is like an octopus with many tentacles, full of concepts that we've created. As I have said many times before, with thoughts of right, wrong and okay, not okay, we build up all our concepts in many different ways. This, however, is the basis and source of all negativity - our positive and negative emotions. When we look at our practice of dealing with anger by generating compassion through meditation and compare that with the Dzogpachenpo practice, we realise that we are not yet touching the source of the negative emotions. Let me give you an example: We may know one person with whom we easily get angry, and another for whom we have a lot of compassion. Though we can work on our negativity by generating deep compassion, thus decreasing our anger, yet both compassion and anger are based on something, let's say on a mental idea. The mind has created certain reasons for either seeing a person as bad, and thus we get angry, or seeing a person as good, so we feel love and compassion for them. Both concepts come from the basic belief that there is an object we are looking at, and because there is an object, we have the choice to develop either compassion or anger. The Dzogpachenpo view states that there is no such object. There simply is no object. This is called KADAG

in the Dzogpachenpo. KA means ‘from the beginning’ or ‘primordial’, DAG means ‘free’. It is *primordially free* from mental creation.

Applying the view to three types of objects

Now let’s apply this view to three types of objects: *sound* is the object of hearing, *form* is the object of seeing, and for the mind it is a *mental object*.

In Dzogpachenpo, the moment the appearance arises, we remember that *all appearance is the form of Buddha*. What does it mean, to be the form of Buddha? We’ll see that in a moment. Next, the Dzogpachenpo teachings say to just be a watcher of the appearance without making any judgement whatsoever. We remain just watching. Even when the mind starts a wave of concepts, we don’t try to control and we don’t try to stop it. By just watching, this mental concept will disappear by itself. We will witness this. And that’s the form of Buddha.

The form of Buddha here is not like the typical multi-coloured and detailed depiction of a deity with four arms or a thousand arms. These images are created to subtly convey a message to the mind. However, in reality it’s about looking at naked appearance without any kind of layer of mental creations. Just looking at phenomena, not trying to change them by thinking something like: “Today I’m making judgements: this is okay, this is not okay, this is a nice garden, this is wrong, this is right.” Just let it all go, just relax. This way of looking we call “direct”. It means just look, be present, be a watcher. Where is reality? How can one judge this as big or small, this has the right size and this doesn’t? Who can judge that this is a nice colour, or this isn’t a nice colour? Nobody can, the thing is free. Though we can put our concept on it, that doesn’t mean the thing is fixed by what we think about it. It’s not. It’s free. And now it’s like a powerful looking-glass, the object is changing, the size is changing, the colour is changing. What can we believe, which one is true, which one isn’t? We don’t know. When we look at our hand it seems perfect, the right size and everything. But when I take off my glasses, my hand changes, it gets a little bit bigger and not so clear. So I don’t know which appearance is true. And a funny thing happens, when I pull on my eyelid, everything looks double. Which one is the truth? Try it out, things appear double. So which is the right way, which is the wrong way? The problem is, I firmly

believe the version with my glasses to be the right one because the optometrist gave me the right pair of glasses to see in the right way. That's how I created a reason for believing this is right and that is wrong. That's how our ordinary mind works. But when we look at appearance just as it is, all phenomena become the form of Buddha.

The same mental layering and judging applies to sounds. Living in the city we complain about the noise around us but we can relax in the forest or countryside. Living in a village people get tired of listening to just animal and bird sounds and when they come to the city, they become more relaxed. So we never know which sound is good and which is bad. Another example is the sound of words: those who don't like Islam also don't even like hearing the word "Allah". For Muslims however when they hear the word "Allah", they feel at peace and have spiritual feelings. Or when people take their children to church service where they sing for and pray to God, it brings tears to their eyes. All the tiredness from working hard all week just falls off during worship and they are able to relax and feel very peaceful inside. These are just some examples of the benefits of different sounds, so who is to say which one is good and which one is bad? Therefore, in Dzogchen practice all sound is looked at nakedly, free from bad and good. This also applies to other situations like when your loved one, your partner or your best friend gives you a compliment. When you are in a good mood, you take it happily as a compliment, but when you are not in a good mood, the same words from the same person, in the same room, in the same situation might hurt your feelings. These examples show how we project ideas on a sound or on words. But in reality all sound is free from our judgement. In Buddhist terms, in the Dzogpachenpo, all sound is called *the sound of Buddha*, or in other words, Buddha's sound is free from arising or decreasing.

Now let's look at *objects of the mind*. Whenever we have negative emotions, like jealousy, anger and so on, don't follow them, don't judge and don't change your concept, just leave it there. It will change by itself and disappear. We don't have to change our emotions. Anger would never stay with you, even if you wanted it to stay! When we get angry, we ponder and have many thoughts, so in that way, anger may stay a little longer. But for one year? No, anger will never stay with you for

that long. However much we try to keep up the anger, it will disappear by itself. This can be applied to all negative emotions: we leave them as they are, as they appear, without trying to change and without following them, just being a watcher and looking at them. This we call RIGPA RANGDROL - RIGPA means the 'nature of mind', RANGDROL means 'natural liberation'. RIGPA or the natural mind itself is free from negative emotions, because they are naturally self-liberating. Therefore, the watcher observes how emotions are continuously changing again and again. Don't waver, continue to watch without exerting any control, let phenomena be liberated and disappear. The moment your mind disappears, being free from emotions, that is RIGPA.

How do we bring all this together?

First we let the emotions come, then we create the antidote, or maybe we don't manage to create the antidote. We try to manage our emotions in different ways and in the process we are creating many more things. On a certain level that's helpful. But if it remains just an automatic response, it isn't as transformative. Don't misunderstand me! The antidotes of rejoicing and compassion in case of jealousy and anger respectively are good and helpful. All the antidotes for negative emotions are beneficial. Yet with the Dzogpachenpo view, we add wisdom to the practice. This will help make our compassion, generosity, rejoicing and love grow and increase on the relative level. Compassion and other positive qualities will grow and expand with a mind that is free from grasping - this is the real point of meditation.

That is all I can share with you. I don't have any more than that. I've shared it with you respectfully and without stinginess. Now it's up to you to know it through experience, by practising, okay?

How to sit during meditation

Prepare all the facilities like the right cushion, a blanket, comfortable clothes, etc. Turn off all distractions like your smartphone or computer. Now manage your physical body. This is very important, because if you don't manage your physical body well you cannot relax properly and you may get some pain in certain areas.

Begin by placing the heel of your right foot close to your inner left thigh and the left leg on top with the heel of the left foot against the inner right thigh. If you cannot do that then place the left leg in front of the right. Pay special attention to your hips because when you are wearing very tight jeans your buttocks will get tucked in tightly, thus not leaving any room to relax the hips. The buttocks should be in a relaxed position. You can achieve this by pulling the left and right buttock up and out. Your flesh will act like a cushion and support and help you sit with ease. If this still isn't enough you can put a small cushion under your bottom. Then straighten your spine in a relaxed way and keep your body very relaxed. These two things you should keep in mind. The texts describe the seven point posture of Vairochana. But while all that is ok, two things - straight and flexible - are essential. So let's make the body flexible and straight, get comfortable in this posture and relax and then relax some more.

Regarding your gaze there is sometimes the misconception that one should look at one's nose. However, that's not the case but rather look alongside your nose down to the ground. This will naturally relax your eyeballs and block out too many distractions. If you are very new to meditation you can also close your eyes, but in general it's better to keep them open.

Now rest in the present and scan your body from top to bottom bringing your attention to all the body parts one by one starting from your crown down to your feet. As you successively bring your attention to each body part, feel the relaxation, feel the lightness in your body. Whenever an emotion comes, let it come, don't try to stop it, effortlessly let it come and just be a watcher. Be a watcher of your own concept. Keep the effortless sensation, keep the mindfulness. It's enough to just recognise that you have a concept and just be a watcher. Then witness the concept disappear by itself. Whatever sound you hear, it's enough to just recognise there is a sound, it's good enough to recognise that you are already judging something and then be the watcher of the concept or judgement. It will disappear. Be aware the moment you are creating a concept and realise that you are creating something, then just be a watcher. Ask "Where does it exist?" and mainly let your mind become free from the object. I am sure when you are

mentally free from wanting to move your shoulder, and you are not mixing your mind with the problem, it will disappear. Test it.

To come out of meditation slowly start moving your fingers, toes, stretch your body, take a deep inbreath and outbreath and open your eyes.

This twenty minute meditation has been very relaxing for me after just having taught in English, which is the most difficult thing for me. I'm used to teaching in Tibetan, where I don't have to think about what and how I want to say something. But still, after a while my mouth and words became more fluid. When I teach in English, I have to think about both the meaning and the sentence. So after a while it feels difficult, but after meditating I feel very relaxed. Okay, that's it.

Now let's dedicate our merit. Please, share this, let's call it knowledge that I have been sharing with you, or share a so-called spiritual experience, which some people may have had. And we now share this happiness for all sentient beings out of love and compassion. Please keep in mind, if we don't share this merit now at this time, this year, right now, we may never have such a good time to share something again. And in this entire life, I haven't experienced a particular situation exactly like this and thus want to share my happiness out of empathy for all sentient beings. Let's share what we've experienced, share it with love and compassion. This love and compassion, it will come from understanding living beings. Don't make it your own kind of love and compassion, don't depend on external reasons like "I have compassion for him and her, because they are my parents." That's an extra reason, or because they are my best friends, extra reason, or they are my partner, extra reason, or they are my pet, extra reason. Just take your love and compassion outside of these reasons and feel deeply for living beings. Look at yourself as a living being and see that you want to feel happiness and you don't want to feel suffering. It's the same for everyone! So develop this knowledge and empathy and automatically you will value all living beings. That's unconditional love. Out of unconditional love, share your happiness for all sentient beings and let's recite the compassion mantra **OM MANI PADME HUNG!**

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