



## Dolpo Tulku Rinpoche Teachings

### The Three Samadhis

Today we are going to talk about the three samadhis: the samadhi of suchness, the all-illuminating samadhi and the causal samadhi.

I would like to begin with **their importance**. Why do we need these three samadhis?

First, is the view of emptiness practiced in the samadhi of suchness transforms our deity meditation into a Buddhist practice. The Omniscient Jigme Lingpa said that non-Buddhists also engage in deity meditation, but since they do not employ the view of emptiness, their path cannot, from a Buddhist perspective, act as an antidote for negative emotions.

Secondly, while the five perfections provide the basis for a sadhana, the three samadhis deliver its framework. The samadhis are the essence of the generation and completion stages, even though we use other terms to describe them during the completion stage and usually emphasize the first two. At times, the third is completely omitted.

To illustrate this, a regular sadhana starts with the Seven Line Prayer or the invocation of the lineage masters. At the end of this supplication or invocation, the gurus dissolve into us. The next step is taking refuge, generating the mind of enlightenment and reciting the 7-branch prayer. Again the visualisation dissolves into us. Then we offer tormas to obstructing spirits with the request that they leave the premises. The next point is blessing the offering, after which the actual sadhana starts, usually with the emptiness mantra, but not always.

At this point we generate the samadhi of suchness. Emptiness is the object and the mind observes the emptiness. This realisation of emptiness is the samadhi of emptiness or suchness. That is the simple explanation. Realising primordial purity would be the term used in Dzogchen vocabulary.

To gain a more thorough understanding, studying texts by Nagarjuna, Chandrakirti's 'Entrance to the Middle Way' or Mipham Rinpoche's 'Beacon of Certainty' is helpful. I like to use sentences like 'the side-less palace' to illustrate emptiness. There is a palace, but it has no sides. This is difficult for us to imagine. When we think of a palace, we immediately want to give it some boundaries. But think of a normal palace - where is each side located? If it is to our right, it will definitely be to the left of others. For

some people it is in front, for others behind. When we investigate, we cannot determine that it possesses any definite side. As Guru Rinpoche said, if we continue to examine, at a certain point we become speechless.

In our daily lives we establish many rules. We determine what is right and what is wrong; what is possible and what is impossible and so on. This is our main problem! We believe our judgements to be inherent qualities of the phenomena we perceive, and this elicits negative emotions. The samadhi of suchness is the direct realisation of how things naturally abide. Nothing is ultimately right or wrong, possible or impossible and so on. Nothing exists ultimately, no matter how strongly we believe it.

An example I use often is my monk's shawl, called a 'zen' in Tibetan. In a shop it is just a piece of cloth. When I wrap it around my neck, people think it is a scarf. If that is their perception, this piece of cloth becomes a true scarf to them. Nothing else. One time I was in Norway where I have Punjabi friends, and I went to their temple with them. My host fashioned a turban out of my zen, on which I got a lot of compliments. For you at this talk, it is a monk's shawl. So, what is it finally? What is its true nature? If for me it is a monk's shawl and an expression of my status as a monk, and someone challenges me on that, I might get very angry and fight for my belief.

To return to the palace, it cannot be found in any particular direction and therefore it has no direction. Mipham Rinpoche said, 'I pray I can recognise this easy, secret nature of mind through the blessings of my Guru.'

The moment we realise emptiness, the intensity of feelings that we have regarding an object or situation immediately decreases, because we understand that the main culprit is our own judgement. If we ease up, we immediately cool down and can appreciate someone else's perspective.

Sometimes the reasoning of 'Not one, not many' is helpful. When we talk about many, this rests on the idea of a single thing. Without truly identifying one, we cannot have many. Also we cannot describe 'one' without having an idea of many. Relative phenomena exist in that way and it's fine, but if we believe this is the ultimate mode of abiding, then we are truly mistaken.

The scriptures say that all phenomena should be regarded as illusory. Why? On a relative level, independently, phenomena seem to exist in the categories of one and many. But if we analyse deeply, we cannot prove that anything is one or many. In Tibetan we call this *nä tsul* and *nang tsul* - the way things are and the way they appear. These seem to be completely opposite, but nonetheless these two levels coexist within each phenomenon. That is the funniest and most interesting thing. That is why the Buddha said all phenomena are illusion.

All our practices, even refuge, bodhicitta and making offerings, are very self-centred. We remain attached to what we do. We must cut this attachment at the root, or else we are only plucking at leaves. That is why we hold these views of emptiness - emptiness of self and of all phenomena. In the moment of recognition, our mind should remain quite stable. That is what we call samadhi.

**The five experiences of samadhi to reach the samadhi of suchness**

First we realise emptiness and then deepen our experience until we gain some familiarity with it. Next we attain stability imbued with flexibility, which we divide into five stages of mental experience.

To illustrate these, we use the example of flowing water. Initially, we have the experience of movement, when the mind is very agitated like water rushing down a mountain as a waterfall. Whoever is familiar with meditation will have had this experience. We try to sit quietly, but thoughts arise incessantly.

Usually when we first attempt to meditate, we are tired from our busy lives, both mentally and physically. Meditating at this point is a relief and a way of relaxing. Our mind is so exhausted it just collapses into a state of quietness. But once it has regenerated sufficiently, thoughts will pop up again. We can liken this to children who play wildly and then immediately fall asleep. The moment they are refreshed, they will start running around again. This is the state we are referring to, when we make the waterfall analogy. The first few days after entering retreat, we feel relaxed and peaceful. We may think enlightenment is just a few days away! The moment our mind regains some strength, however, it wakes up all fresh again. That is a very interesting moment, because in retreat we do not have many objects around us. No wifi, no tv. Nothing. The mind starts to dig into the past or to contemplate the future. So many thoughts arise! In one moment we get angry, later we are frustrated and so on. Normally we don't think meditation could frustrate us, but it will. We experience our mind moving like a waterfall. When our mind is violently stirred up, we often try to force ourselves to concentrate on our meditation. We try and try to cut through the stream of thoughts and pacify them. But every time we really cut through one thought, a new one appears. Some people become so agitated that they lose their mental balance. What we need to do is to simply let the thoughts be, so they can transform by themselves. Then we rest in awareness. We can enter into meditation more easily when we take the perspective of an observer, just letting the mind be.

When the water reaches flat ground, it slows down like a river, but still moves with considerable speed. This second experience is called the 'attainment,' when our thoughts still run wild, but we begin to have some degree of control. The crucial point here is to be aware that the mind is changing. Do not try to force your mind to focus on an object. Just maintain your awareness and let your thoughts change by themselves. This is a very relaxing way of controlling your mind. We need only to observe. We do not need to do anything. Whatever occurs in our mind is the object of our awareness. A thought dissolving by itself we call self-liberation, 'the thought liberates by itself.' If we try to control our mind we can end up quite depressed. Stabilizing the mind can take quite a while. For some people it is a matter of weeks, but for others it takes years. Don't lose courage. A time will come when the mind is more disciplined and runs a more direct course.

The third experience, 'familiarity,' is like water flowing gently in a large river. There is not much sound and not many bubbles, but the river continues to move. At that point we have reached a more steady awareness within our meditation.

The fourth experience, 'stability,' is like water entering the ocean, when it becomes quite still except for some waves rippling at the surface. The mind quiets down, but thoughts and emotions still move it superficially.

The final stage, the experience of 'perfection,' is like a deeper level of the ocean, which is unmoved by outer influences and remains calm at all times. This is complete mastery of the mind, where external forces cannot destabilise it. This experience combined with a realisation of emptiness is called the samadhi of suchness.

The term samadhi, *ting nge dzin* in Tibetan, can be translated into English as 'meditative concentration'. But it does not mean just focusing on one object without any feeling of joy. Samadhi is not like the horn of a cow - rigid and immutable. Actually, samadhi should be flexible, adaptable, wide, open, light, refreshing, joyful and clear. We all possess a certain degree of concentration, but the samadhi of suchness is very advanced and the last of these five experiences. This might make us wonder what we can do since we have not yet reached this level. Don't worry. We have a practice to train in, so we can eventually achieve samadhi. There is a difference between the experience of the samadhi of suchness and its practice. Were we to say that we practice the samadhi of suchness, we would be claiming to be very high practitioners!

Now we get to the **all-illuminating samadhi**. A simple description is boundless compassion. The question is how to be compassionate. The reasons are plentiful. Normally our compassion is based on temporary occurrences. If we see a hungry person, we might have compassion for them at that time. But after they are fed and their hunger is gone, our compassion disappears. Sometimes we observe people suffering because they are not aware that all phenomena, including themselves, are empty and therefore impermanent, but naturally pure. These people often suffer from a very negative view on everything they encounter, which renders them perpetually frustrated and irritable. To acknowledge their suffering is a deeper level of compassion and reasoning.

This term 'illuminating' means to pervade, to reach everywhere without any boundaries. When we are practicing the samadhi of suchness and a thought comes, like a wave on the ocean it is automatically infused with compassion. The compassion transforms it into the causal samadhi.

We can engage ourselves in a variety of practices to generate compassion: exchanging ourselves for others, contemplating the Four Immeasurables or the seven causes for bodhicitta. This state of mind does not normally come naturally, so we must train ourselves. Once we have gone through the five experiences and reached the samadhi of suchness, our compassion is spontaneously present.

The **causal samadhi** refers to the seed syllable, like DRUM for example, which becomes the seed syllables of the five elements and then either turns into the seed syllables of the palace or the seed syllables of deities, like HUNG for Guru Rinpoche, DRI for Manjushri and so on, depending on the sadhana. The most important point concerning the causal samadhi is the seed syllable of the deity from which deity arises in its complete form. We can imagine this to be like an apple seed, from which the trunk of the tree, the branches, leaves, flowers and eventually the apples develop. At present when as practitioners in training we visualise the seed syllable, we can usually focus on one aspect only. Either we can recall the colour clearly, but not the shape, or we visualise the shape, but the colour is unsteady. Sometimes our visualisation dissolves completely and then suddenly reappears. It changes constantly. However, when we have mastered the five experiences and our meditation is stable like an unwavering ocean, the visualisation of the seed syllable is also firm.

When we have mastered these three samadhis, we also have mastered the generation stage and are at the threshold of the perfection stage.

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