

QUIETING THE MIND MEDITATION 101 AND HOMAGE TO BUDDHA AMITABHA!

DHARMA TALKS

*Khenpo
Karten
Rinpoche*



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Quieting the Mind — Meditation 101
and
Homage to Buddha Amitabha!

Two Dharma Talks by
Khenpo Karten Rinpoche

David Molk — translator

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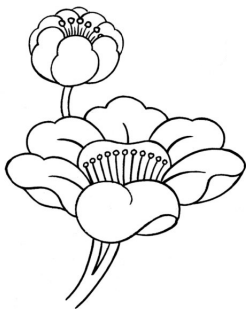
Quieting the Mind

Meditation 101

Khenpo

Karten

Rinpoche





I will be explaining some things today about the mind and meditation. When teaching I usually explain two stages: the preliminary stage and the actual practice. The nature of dharma is meant to act as a remedy to delusion, to afflicted states of mind. I am going to set my motivation now with a bit of recitation and prayers to my spiritual teacher and the lineage of the masters of these teachings. I would like you to set your motivation in a positive direction at the same time.

For the preliminary stage let us set our motivation for the sake of all living beings throughout space. Ideally, think about why we are teaching, why we are attending

**The preliminary stage
is more important than
the main practice.**



to dharma, and to do that with a motivation of universal concern for all living beings.

The ancient Kadampa Masters of Tibet said the preliminary stage was more important than the main practice being done. Even more important than the practice going well, is having a good preparatory stage with pure motivation and a correct attitude. This is also necessary for the practice to go well. Understand, this is where I try to influence you towards mental transformation. You come here thinking I am going to talk about mind. There is nothing solid, there is nothing physical that I can take in my hands and put into your hands. Rather we are talking about mind and awareness and bringing about a transformation to that mind. This is communication about a mental transformation. It is up to each of us to bring about that transformation. We are the

only ones who can change our minds. All living beings have the same wish for happiness and the same wish to be free of suffering as we do. We should invest ourselves in that, to feel how wonderful it would be for their wishes to be fulfilled. For that purpose, listen to these teachings and put into practice these teachings on mind.

In general, when I teach on dharma I teach based on my own experience, in particular in the realm of mind, of practicing and working with awareness and meditation.

This is where I have a little bit of experience. Not much, but some.

In speaking about mind: mind does pervade the body and is based in the body. We can speak about mental feelings and physical feelings. We have to give some attention to the body in talking about how we would still the mind, how we would develop the mind.

I want to explain some basic things about this today. We have to apply ourselves not only to the mental practice, but to the physical practice as well. The main point about the body is for it to be left relaxed and natural. There is a technical term, “The Sevenfold Posture of Vairocana,” a posture with seven aspects. We do not need to get into that now, but you do need to be comfortable. If you are used to sitting in a chair for instance, then sit in a chair.

If we are slumped over, if our spine is crooked, our mind will not stay on a straightforward track. We will not be alert. If the body is straight then the psychic channels in the body will be straight. The energy will flow evenly in those channels, which in turn will have an effect on the mind being evenly balanced and straightforward.

First, for letting the body relax, keeping the body calm and peaceful, it is recommended, especially for beginners, to find an isolated place away from lots of stimulus. If we have a lot of sights and sounds bombarding us it is difficult to develop a peaceful, still state of mind. It is difficult for our body to relax if we are involved in all kinds of busy activities. That is why my students and I sometimes take at least a week every year to go into retreat away from other things, for the purpose of meditation. I will also go into retreat sometimes. The difference between my meditation when I'm in daily contact and activities with people is quite different from when I go into isolation. There is a big difference in the meditation.

Meditation is medicine for the mind. If we have sickness or pain in the body, things can be done. There are operations and so on, but there is no operating on the mind. If we need to treat the mind, this is what meditation is for. India's great bodhisattva, Shantideva, said that physical sickness is relatively easy to cure. You can get some kind



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Shantideva

of diagnosis, get a prescription, take some medicine, and treat it. Afflictions of the mind — ignorance, greed, anger, hatred, and craving — these are deep-seated illnesses, more dangerous and difficult to treat. To find a doctor to



treat that, not just any doctor will do. You need a doctor at least as enlightened as Buddha — someone with that kind of perspective.

So, meditation on mind itself is very important. There are physical and verbal practices as well that can be done in dharma practice such as prostrations and bowing, the vocal recitations of mantras and prayers, as well as the meditation, but out of those three meditation, developing the mind, is most important. So, for meditation on the

meditation is
medicine for the
Mind

mind sit in a relaxed, suitable, balanced position of the body. The idea is to let the mind relax naturally. Let it settle as it is.

Particularly in the Kagyu and Nyingma traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, there is a lot of emphasis on Shamatha meditation, the meditation of mental quiescence, or stilling the mind. Within Shamatha meditation, three facets are pointed out: stillness, movement, and awareness.

This is not to say that a person has three different minds. Rather, it is saying that a person has three different functions occurring in the mind.

‘Stillness’ is when the mind is not thinking of anything at all, completely still, peaceful. From within this stillness there occur thoughts. When these thoughts arise, this is what is called ‘movement.’ Say you are sitting here listening to explanations of the dharma but then your mind goes off thinking of other things. This movement of the mind goes, “Tomorrow is Saturday. I want to go shopping. Maybe tomorrow I want to go see a movie.” Out of stillness, when there is a thought that moves, that arises — that is the second function we are speaking of called ‘movement.’

Then with ‘awareness,’ the function being referred to here is awareness that the mind has moved, realizing

that. When the mind moves, then awareness says, “Oops, this is not where we are going. We are not following the movement of mind. We are coming back to stillness.” So, ‘awareness’ is the awareness that the mind has moved. There is movement and a thought has arisen.

One, abiding in stillness, two, movement, and three, awareness — these three.

We are working toward more stillness. The idea of this meditation is to still the mind; to be aware of the mind in a clear, quiescent state. Don’t be the monkey mind, as when



Sangye Tenzin Rinpoche and Khenpo Karten Rinpoche.

the mind wants to jump around. We need to bring more stability, more duration to the awareness of stillness.

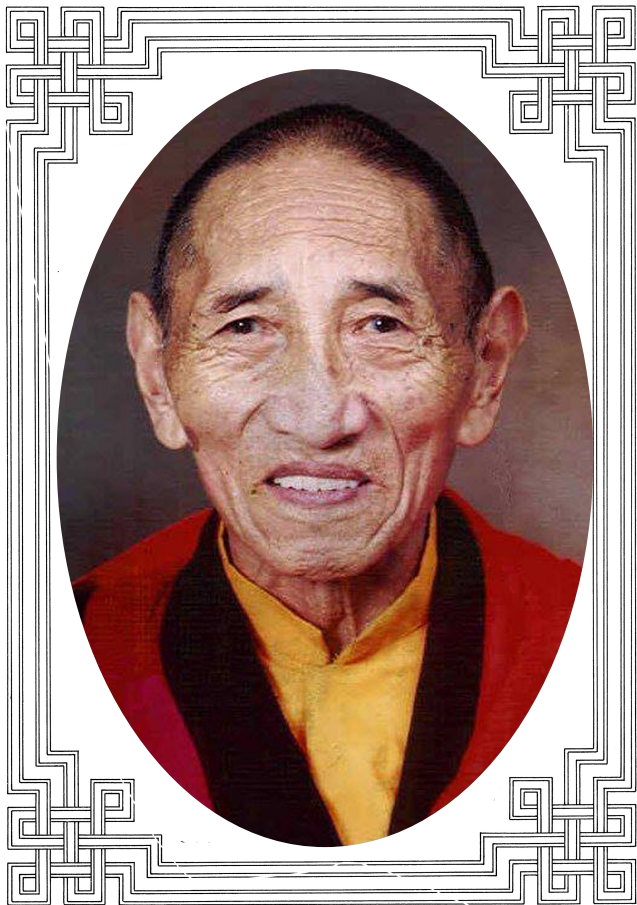
What path are we taking? There are two possible paths here.

I am explaining based on my own experience. When I was 21, I went into a long retreat: three years, three months three days doing meditation.

What was the meditation my guru Sangye Tenzin Rinpoche taught us? The first thing he taught us was meditation using an external object such as a flower, to keep awareness flowing through your visual consciousness, using your eyes in this case, the eye sense consciousness, to keep the mind in a constant view of that object. To keep looking at it and noticing whether your mind strays from that. Keeping your mind focused upon that object, something such as a flower. It does not have to be a flower.

That was one method he taught us: keeping your awareness on an external object. To say something about this meditation, when you do it, sometimes you will have a sense that your mind is abiding in that object, in that flower, for five, ten, fifteen minutes at a time. Even twenty minutes.

For a beginner the best way to practice is in frequent sessions of short duration. The reason for doing it that way



Sangye Tenzin Rinpoche

is because you are looking for a high quality of meditation not interrupted by discursive thoughts, without the mind wandering around. If the mind can rest for even five minutes in a meditation like this on an object, you get a very different experience because there are no thoughts interrupting the flow and the peace of your mind. You will get a very spacious peaceful feeling. Then after some time you notice there is movement in the mind. In dealing with that, we remember the words of the great yogi Milarepa, “There is nothing bad about thoughts — about movement in the mind. If we do bring up the awareness — the awareness that the thought has arisen — then that will bring it right back into stillness. The stillness is like a flat ocean, a waveless ocean. Movement is like a wave rising in the ocean. Then awareness is the wave dissolving back into the still ocean.”

When Milarepa was giving instruction to one student about how to do meditation he said, “Meditate like the ocean.” The student came back with the experience that œ“Meditating like the ocean was fine, but the problem is with thoughts arising.” The student asked what he should do about those thoughts. Milarepa said, “You do not need to do anything about them. You don’t need to fix them or adjust them. Just by looking at them, realizing their nature, they will dissolve, settle back into the ocean.”

Just by looking at thoughts,
realizing their nature,
they will dissolve.

— *Milarepa*

When you are meditating and thoughts arise, don't be upset with that. Don't think of it as something bad. Think of it as something to look right at the very nature of. Look right at the face of it, at the very essence of the thought. When you do, it will instantly be released. It is said that when your awareness is brought to bear on seeing just the simple nature of the thought that has arisen without dealing with it in any other way, that the rising of the thought is simultaneous with its release. It will be released just as soon as you become aware of it.

When you meditate like this for months and years you get experience: experience of concentration, experience of deep absorption, of samadhi.

In meditation, I speak of realization of awareness of emptiness, sunyata, selflessness, and 'experience' being like fire and smoke. The actual realization is like fire and getting some experience of it is like smoke. When we're coming upon a fire we will first see smoke. Oh, there is



smoke; there must be a fire. We can go there and then see the fire. So similar to that, before we have the fire-like realization of selflessness, we have an experience of it. We are getting closer to it, closer to seeing the smoke, but our experiences are of bliss, of clarity, of non-conceptuality. Different kinds of experiences like this approach the actual realization. By getting more and more of these kinds of experiences in meditation, we can then actually have realization.

When a person is new to this practice the flow of thoughts seems to be extremely rapid like the flowing of a waterfall or water flowing down a steep hillside— very swift water flowing down steep slopes. So many thoughts. Nothing but thoughts flowing through our mind.

Sometimes people try meditation and at first they say “Oh I have all these thoughts. More thoughts than I did before I settled down to meditate.” Of course — you never meditated before. That is what happens when you first try to meditate. In such cases it is good to take an external object like a flower and just focus on it, just look at it. In this way, we are practicing mindfulness. Close placement of mindfulness on the body and the mind.

After we have gained some experience of meditation the flow of thought will slow down to a meander, like a

river. Fewer thoughts arise. At that point, you can leave aside looking at an external object and close your eyes. We become more able to meditate with non-conceptuality, with a clear mind, with blissful experience.

So, we need to check to see how many thoughts are arising or not. When the ancient Tibetan Kadampa masters would meditate; they kept a supply of white and dark stones. Anytime they noticed a movement of mind that was particularly negative, afflicted, they would put a dark stone to one side. If they noticed the mind was remaining peaceful, remaining in compassionate states, they would make a pile of white stones on the other side. First there were a lot of the darker stones. Eventually they evened out. Then, eventually came more of the white stones. Meditation finally reaches a state of stillness.

The flow of thoughts stops and the mind becomes peaceful, like the river meeting the ocean. At that point the other two functions — movement and the awareness that brings movement back to stillness — have been absorbed into stillness, and stillness is all that remains. In that state of meditation, time can pass very quickly. You think you are going to meditate for a year and it seems to pass in an instant.

There was a spiritual master who had gone with a group to Lhasa in Tibet. On the way the party stopped



to make some tea. This person's name was Nyêmo Gomringwa, meaning that he was from the area of Tibet named Nyêmo, and that he was someone who did long meditations. Some of the party went off to gather wood, some to get water.

Some built up the stove. This lama went off to gather some wood, which he found in a meadow. There was warm sunlight coming down. It was so pleasant he thought he'd stop and do some meditation. Everyone else brought back the wood and the water and they made tea, ate food, and drank the tea, but the lama never

returned. They looked all over for him but could not find him. Finally they said, “Forget it. We don’t know where he went or what he is doing. We must go on with the pilgrimage.” So they went on to Lhasa.

The pilgrims were in Lhasa for six months doing circumambulations and various holy activities. Eventually they headed back and got back to that same place where they had made tea before. They thought, ‘Well this is where we lost our lama along the way before.’ So they thought they’d look to see if they could find out what had happened.

They found him sitting in the meadow meditating. One of the pilgrims shook the lama and said, “Hey Lama, Lama, Lama. What happened? What’s going on?” The lama opened his eyes and said, “Ah. Has the tea boiled?” Meditating on his mind itself, six months had passed for him in an instant.

Your mind can be completely absorbed like that. One of the paths, as I mentioned, you take an object to meditate upon, and the other path, the other way to meditate, is on the very nature of the mind itself. Eyes closed. Not looking at an external object. Looking in, looking inward at mind itself.

We turn inward to meditate on mind itself, even though it doesn’t have any particular shape or color —

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no white or black color, no round or square shape — just turning the awareness directly, inwardly to the mind.

The most important kind of instruction for this meditation is to not fix anything.

Don't adjust it. Don't remedy it. Do not think there is anything wrong, incorrect, or improper going on. There is nothing to be remedied, nothing to be fixed. Simply look at the very essence, the very nature, the very face of what is arising in the mind. Don't try to do anything with it. Just observe it. Recognize it.

It is said, "The un-repaired mind is clear, just like water left to sit." If the silt is allowed to settle to the bottom, muddy water becomes very clear. Don't stir up the mind. Saying "Ooh, this is wrong. I've got to fix it. I've got to do something about it." Rather just observe its very nature. Let it settle. Just like muddy water, when the silt settles to the bottom, it becomes clear. As you do that you will notice, thoughts become slower, like water running down the mountain into a more slowly flowing river, then reaching the ocean.

This is not necessarily just a Buddhist explanation. We are simply talking about mind, awareness, and thought. This is the kind of thing anybody could work with. It does not necessarily have to be Buddhist. When

Buddhists do this kind of mediation, they will take a form of Buddha and visualize it at their own heart. They will focus on a Buddha at their own heart as their object of meditation.

Two different kinds of thoughts can arise obstructing meditation: sinking and excitement. Sinking refers to a sluggish, dull kind of awareness. For instance, if you had a good meal and it is nice and warm in the afternoon and you're trying to meditate you start falling off to sleep, becoming foggy and dull in your awareness. This is sinking. The thing to do if sinking occurs is to take off a bit of clothing, to get a little cooler. Stretch a little bit. Look up into the sky to shake off that kind of sinking awareness.

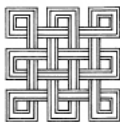
Maybe sometimes coffee is good for you. (Laughter. Rinpoche points to his teacup.) This is not coffee. This is just water.

David Molk raises his mug saying, "This is coffee." (More laughter.)

The other kind of obstruction in meditation is excitement. This tends to occur in the early morning, when your body is rather cool. The mind is excited to think lots of different thoughts. The remedy in that case is the opposite. Wrap your self a bit more.

Settle the mind down and relax it a bit. It would be good to eat yogurt in such instances. In Tibetan lore, it is said that eating a little yogurt makes you sleepy.

So there are these are two different ways meditation can be pursued, two ways to work with it, which ever is more comfortable and convenient for you.



Does any one have any questions they would like to ask at this time?

Questioner: When you use the word ‘mind’ most of us think of the mind as up here (hands waving above the head) outside the body. But I think what you are talking about as ‘mind’ is actually in the heart inside the body. Could you address that?

Rinpoche: I don’t know about this idea of mind existing outside the body. That seems a little strange to me. Awareness operates through the sense faculties: visual, auditory, tactile, consciousness, being aware of visible

forms, sounds, smells, taste, touch, and so on. Scientists tend to say that the mind is located in the brain, that mind arises in dependence on the brain. I'm not saying that mind is something solid in your heart — but I would say that consciousness of the body and the sense faculties, consciousness, of necessity, does pervade the body. It is there in the body, because we can sense things.

Questioner: I didn't understand what you meant by the third stage delusions and liberation.

Rinpoche: The third stage is actually talking about a quite high level of realization, where delusions are instantly released upon recognition. It's the kind of realization that great mahasiddhas like Tilopa, Pandit Naropa, Marpa, Milarepa, the great meditators and masters had, where they can use objects of the senses, objects of delusion, they can drink alcohol for instance, and not be affected by it at all — not have any kind of delusion arise. All of those deluded things are instantly released for them. It is a high level of tantric practice. Not yet for you. Okay?

Questioner: In meditation on the nature or essence of the mind is it a matter of being present for whatever arises in the moment, or is there a way to be aware of awareness itself without getting caught up in what awareness is aware of?

Rinpoche: As I mentioned, there are different ways of dealing with thoughts, different ways of getting rid of the thoughts as they arise. At the first stage a person says, “This is bad, I’ve got to get away from that thought, get it out of my head. At the second stage, there is dealing with thoughts, working with them. Combating them. Challenging them.

The third stage is when thoughts are released upon their appearing.

What I am saying is please don’t work with thoughts like at the first stage, thinking that thoughts are bad, trying to fight them off or get rid of them. It is a matter of simply watching what comes up in the mind every moment. Thoughts are there, yes, but just be aware of them, don’t fight them. This method of simply recognizing their nature, simply looking at them, looking at their very nature, their very essence as they arise, will take us into a non-conceptual state of meditation, in which we are simply looking at awareness itself, free of thought. Like snow falling on hot pavement, as soon as it hits the pavement it melts, dissolves. That is what happens at the final stage. We are looking at the nature of the thought that arises, but it takes us right into the nature of non-conceptual awareness itself.

Questioner: Are there breathing techniques, or fasting, or diet that are beneficial for meditation?

Rinpoche: The guideline I would use is to eat a suitable amount of food. Not too little.

Not too much. There are problems that arise in meditation: If you overeat, you tend to get a sinking, dull feeling, whereas if you don't eat enough you tend to be excited and have a lot more thoughts arising. So, eat a moderate amount of food. And then drink some water.

One bit of good advice is not to eat dinner. There is benefit in skipping dinner. Monks in the Theravada tradition, like in Sri Lanka, keep this tradition. When Buddha was alive this was his rule: you did not eat an evening meal. When you don't it makes a big difference for your meditation in the morning compared to if you had a heavy meal the night before.



Theravada monks receiving breakfast.



Buddha Amitabha, Norbulingka Institute, Sidhpur, India.

Homage to Buddha Amitabha!

Today, on the occasion of our practicing the Accomplishment of Sukhavati, I'd like to give a brief explanation in everyday language that is easy to understand of what to contemplate from the preliminary setting of bodhicitta motivation up to the final making of the dedication prayer; so everyone listen well. If you don't listen well you won't apprehend what I'm saying, and if you don't apprehend it, you won't understand the meaning, and if you don't understand the meaning you won't know what to meditate on.

For this reason Buddha said, 'O son of the lineage, Listen well, keep it mind, and I will explain.' If we don't listen well, we will be polluted by the three faults of a

vessel and Dharma will not be able to benefit our mind. The three faults of a vessel are, if you don't listen, it is like the vessel is upside down. If you don't remember it is like the vessel has sprung a leak. If it is mixed with delusion it is like the vessel has poison in it.

Even if you are sitting in a Dharma teaching if you do not listen with single pointed focus, if a vessel is upside down, no matter how much liquid you pour into it, it won't go inside the vessel. Otherwise, even if you listen with attention, if you don't remember, it is like liquid not remaining in a vessel no matter how much is poured into it.

Finally, even if you listen well and remember the teachings, if your mind is polluted by the influence of delusions such as pride, competitiveness, jealousy, and so on, it is like good food that has been defiled by poison. In such a case, even Dharma itself does not subdue your mind by acting as the antidote to the delusion, but, rather, assists the growth of delusions, which is extremely unfortunate. We need to recognize that Dharma is an unexcelled way to gain control of our mind. If delusion is not subdued through our practice of Dharma, our pride, competitiveness, jealousy, and so forth will just become stronger and stronger. As Dagpo Rinpoche said, "If

Dharma is an unexcelled way
to gain control of the mind.

Dharma is not practiced Dharmically, Dharma becomes a cause of returning to lower realms of existence!”

We must be very careful that this does not happen!

In any case, if you are sitting in a Dharma teaching, without letting your mind go to the supermarket, keep your mind inside your body and don't let it be influenced by delusions. Listen to the Dharma with single pointed focus, like a deer listening to the sound of a violin.

Furthermore, when we listen to Dharma we should have four reliances:

- Don't rely upon the person
but upon their teaching.
- Don't rely upon the words
but upon their meaning.
- Don't rely upon provisional meanings
but upon definitive meaning.
- Don't rely upon ordinary consciousness
but upon transcendent wisdom.

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Don't rely upon the words

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Don't rely upon provisional meanings

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Don't rely upon ordinary consciousness

— but upon transcendent wisdom.

Thus, regardless of whether the guru who is teaching is an ordinary person, a monk, or a tantric practitioner, we must think about their teaching itself.

Then, we should not be pleased by their words if they are interesting, poetic, and straightforward, but displeased if their speech seems faulty to us; rather, we must think about the meaning of the words they speak.

As the Kadampa masters said, “The supreme guru is the adversary of our faults. Their supreme instruction goes directly to our faults.”

Then, as for the meaning itself, we should contemplate not the meaning that Buddha taught provisionally in order for trainees to attain the temporary benefit of high rebirth, but, rather, the definitive meaning that Buddha taught in order for beings to attain buddhahood.

Then, with regard to the awareness, which engages that meaning, we must not use ordinary consciousness that is associated with delusion and afflicted states of mind, but rather, non-conceptual transcendent wisdom that is free of delusion.

In brief, when we receive Dharma teaching we should listen without losing three recognitions: the recognition that we ourselves are like a sick person, that Dharma is the medicine, and that the teaching guru is the doctor. Furthermore, we should understand that the dharma being taught is something to remedy and transform our impure, deluded, afflicted states of mind.

In general, the word ‘Dharma’, in Sanskrit, when translated into Tibetan, means to hold or to protect. Dharma holds us back and protects us from falling into the abyss of the three realms of samsara and eventually brings us to the safety of a buddha’s state of omniscience. Dharma is not principally verbal or physical practice, but a practice of developing our mind; this is very important.

As said in *Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*: “An instant of mental clarity results in rebirth as Brahma and so forth. Physical and verbal actions, being lesser, do not yield such results.”

All recitation and austerities that are undertaken, even if pursued for great lengths of time, if done with a distracted, wandering mind, are therefore said to be meaningless. If one does not know this secret instruction about mind, even Dharma of supreme meaning, done with the wish for happiness and to destroy suffering, only leads to suffering and tormented wandering.

Before beginning the actual body of a practice, it is a very important precept to adjust your motivation. Buddha said in Sutra, “Specific intentions create virtue and non-virtue, not the size of the reflection-like actions induced by those intentions.”

Thus, as said, it is following upon whether motivation is positive or negative that actions performed by the body and speech become virtuous or non-virtuous, not by the actions themselves; they are not most important factor. Therefore, before beginning the main body of a practice it is extremely important to adjust your motivation. The current practice we are doing, the Accomplishment of Sukhavati is a Mahayana practice and furthermore, an extremely sacred and profound practice of Secret Mantra Tantrayana.

Even though it is Mahayana and very profound however, if the practitioners themselves lack the bodhicitta motivation the practice being done cannot become that of the Mahayana. If the practitioner has the bodhicitta motivation of Mahayana, however, even if a practice they are doing is a Hinayana practice, like iron transformed into gold with an alchemical elixir, the practice can become a Mahayana practice. Otherwise, if the practitioner is influenced by impure motivation such as competitiveness or jealousy, the practice will not even be beneficial; it could become very harmful! Like medicine transformed into poison, or a god brought down to the level of a demon. We must adjust our motivation this way: ‘All sentient being was happiness and don’t want suffering just like myself! Although beings want happiness, however, they don’t know how to practice holy Dharma which is the real cause of happiness. Although they don’t want suffering they run toward suffering throughout the day and night. As said in the *Guide*:

Though wanting happiness,
because of confusion,
they destroy their own happiness
like an enemy!

Though having the wish
to free themselves from suffering
they run toward nothing but suffering!

It is as Shantideva has described. Think, I'll practice Dharma today in order that sentient beings may attain not just temporary happiness, but ultimate happiness. Then, with our mind guided by a genuine feeling of unbearable great compassion for beings, we should engage in the main practice.

Today our main practice is The Accomplishment of Sukhavati. The special indispensable support and aid to accomplishing Sukhavati through this sadhana is the four causes for birth in Sukhavati.

The first cause is bringing the pure land of Sukhavati to mind. The second cause is gathering immeasurable roots of virtue. The third cause is generating bodhicitta. The fourth cause is making prayers and dedications. If we practice the Accomplishment of Sukhavati with these four causes complete, as Buddha Amitabha said, the practitioner will take birth in Buddha Amitabha's Pure Land at the time of death or during the 'bardo* the intermediate state. Buddha Amitabha made the prayer that if a practitioner would not take birth in his Pure Land by having fulfilled these conditions then he, himself, Buddha Amitabha, would not

Though wanting happiness,
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they destroy their own happiness
like an enemy!
Though having the wish
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they run toward nothing but suffering!
— *Śhantideva*

attain enlightenment. The fact is, however, that Buddha Amitabha did attain enlightenment,

When we do the recitation of the main body of this practice, we should do it with full concentration of our body, speech, and mind. We can consider ourselves very fortunate to be able to practice the Accomplishment of Sukhavati in our regular Monday evening practice. During this short time, the hour that we do the practice we should do it carefully and conscientiously. At the level of our forehead about a cubit's length in front of us, at best, if possible, visualize the entire Principal and entourage

of Buddha Amitabha's Pure Land. If we can not visualize that extensively, we should simply think that Buddha Amitabha and his two entourage of Avalokitesvara and Vajrapani are actually present in the space before us with faith and devotion.

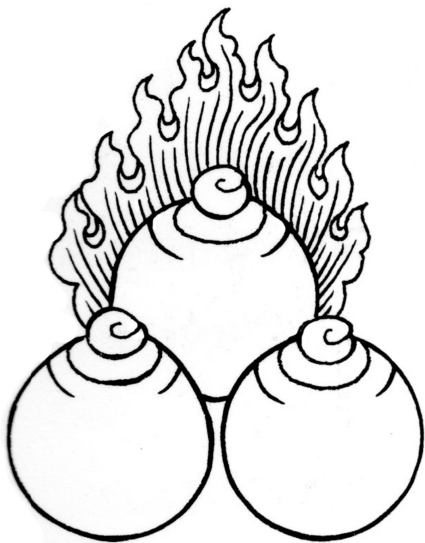
When we recite the mantra visualize white nectar the color of milk pouring from Buddha Amitabha's body dissolving into the crown of our head. Like sunlight drying up dew on the grass, visualize that it purifies all physical sickness, spirit hindrance, negativity and obscuration and especially all obstructions to our attainment of enlightenment. Furthermore, if we are sick we should do this visualization of nectar dissolving into us repeatedly, again and again. This has tremendous benefit.

Remember, however, that we do not practice Dharma just for the sake of common attainments such as these, health, long life, and so on, but, rather, for the reason stated in our prayer to the lineage gurus:

We beg You, grant blessings and siddhis,

To attain our innate Buddhahood!

This is our actual desired objective. The reason enlightenment is not easy to attain is that we are obstructed by many hindering obscurations and negativity. To dispel



these obstructions the root of blessings is the Guru, the root of attainments is the Yidam, and the root of clearing obstructions is the Dakini and Dharma Protectors; we should rely on these Three Roots.

Now I'll give a brief explanation of the Three Roots for those who are new to the subject.

The Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, are well known to be the Refuge in Buddhism in general.

Because Tibetan Buddhism includes Secret Mantra, or Tantra, the Three Roots are also a source of Refuge and very important.

The first is the Guru, the Lama. In Sanskrit Guru has a meaning of ‘heavy’. Heavy with what? Heavy with realized qualities of the holy Dharma, The Tibetan ‘Lama’, means something that is higher, something highly exalted. It has the same significance as being ‘heavy’. In general, the Lama is someone who shows what is to be adopted and what is to be abandoned, someone who teaches you Dharma. A root Guru should be someone who confers initiation, gives you oral instructions, and introduces you to the nature of your mind. It is said in the tantric scriptures:

“Before what is called the ‘Guru’
not even the term ‘Buddha’ is heard
The thousand Buddhas of this eon
All arose in reliance upon Gurus.”

Thus, the Guru is extremely important. Looking at myself, I don’t know that I have any good quality other than one: I never had a single perception of my root Guru as ordinary, as anything other than an actual Buddha. Most of my prayer recitations also involve Guru practice.

Second is the Yidam. The word Yidam conveys the meaning of a Deity from which your mind is never separated for even an instant. There are many different Yidams, outer, inner, secret, but here the Yidam we are practicing is Buddha Amitabha.

Generally speaking, a Yidam is identified for a trainee when they are conferred initiation by the Lama. At that time the disciple strews a flower onto the mandala and depending upon which direction of the mandate it falls, the Lama tells the disciple what their Yidam

Deity is, gives them their Yidam. Our fundamental or base Yidam is the essence of buddha, great bliss dharmakaya, present in our minds right now. The path yidam is Buddha Amitabha in our present practice, red in color, the Dharmakaya Buddha.

Without relying upon the compassion and blessings of the path yidam we will not be able to see the base yidam, the nature of great bliss dharmakaya. Having attainments of the path yidam depends upon the power of our conviction, determination, and devotion.

Types of attainment are two: common and supreme. Common attainments refer to such things as the temporary well being of longevity, health, youthfulness, whereas supreme attainment is, again, from the prayer to the lineage:

We pray, grant blessing and attainments

Bless us to realize our innate buddhahood!

Many may think that attaining buddhahood means changing into another body, your body changing into a body like those depicted on the thangka scroll paintings, hanging there lifelessly insensate, but that is definitely a mistaken idea. Enlightenment is, again, in dependence upon such factors as the compassion and blessings of the path yidam, manifesting the base yidam, which has been primordially present in your own mind, by realizing the meaning of shunyata, enlightenment is attained. It is a similar meaning being expressed when the base yidam is occasionally called the actual yidam, that which is symbolized, while the path yidam is the metaphoric, the symbolic yidam. When our Dzogchen recitation says, “Buddha is nowhere else, settle right where you are,” it is the base yidam that is being referred to.

Third is the Dakinis and Dharmapalas. They are the indispensable facilitators of blessings and the two attainments, the aids to realizing shunyata. Blessings and attainments come through no other avenue than the Guru and Yidam. There are many hindrances, outer, inner, and secret, which obstruct receiving blessings and attainments.



Buddha Amitabha

It is the Dakinis and Dharmapalas who help us clear those obstructions, Buddha Amitabha has Dakinis and Dharmapalas such as the Yab-Yum attendants and field protectors. Buddha Amitabha commanded them, “Until they attain enlightenment, help prevent outer, inner, and secret obstacles to practitioners of my teachings, the profound accomplishment of Sukhavatai practice! Perform activities that help them!” Ever since that time these Dharmapalas have assisted with attainments and performed various kinds of activities. Principal of these, however, are the Guru and Yidam. If practice of the Guru and Yidam is done well the Dakinis and Dharmapalas will naturally surround you like bees attracted to flowers.

This concludes my brief explanation of the Three Roots for beginners unfamiliar with the terms. Here we are approaching the practice of Amitabha. As we approach Buddha Amitabha, sometimes we want to beseech Buddha Amitabha. When beseeching Buddha Amitabha we need no other prayer than his mantra:

OM AMI DE WAHRI

With this mantra we are calling to Buddha Amitabha and beseeching him by name. OM is the beginning,

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leads the way, in many mantras; it is understood to be an auspicious syllable. Amideva is the Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit Amitabha. When we are beseeching and calling out to Buddha Amitabha by name it is very important to do it with melody. As Guru Rinpoche said,

“Recite mantra like a child crying out to its mother with the sweet tones of lutes and flutes making requests throughout the six periods of day and night.”

When we do the recitation of mantra we should recite it like a child crying out for their mother. There is a reason for reciting the mantra with a chanted melody. To take the example, if a mother’s only child went outside and encountered danger such as from a wild animal, the child would cry out and the mother becomes immediately very concerned about what is happening. In general, even if we are not crying out to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, they are watching out for us throughout the day and night; this is a special quality of enlightened beings. Yet we need to make the appeal for their assistance for something that is even more important than to become free of some temporary danger.

When we practice the completion stage we again make strong appeals to Buddha Amitabha visualize Buddha Amitabha as before now smiting at us with delight



*Recite mantra like a child
crying out to its mother.*

— Guru Rinpoche

saying, “Oh son or daughter of the lineage, as you have requested, I will bless and take care of you from now on until your attainment of full enlightenment.” Rejoice when Buddha Amitabha says this. At the same time visualize that Buddha Amitabha in the nature of all the Three Jewels and Three Roots transforms into an orb of red light and dissolves into the crown of your head with blessings and attainments. Harmful physical actions such as of killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct, all negativity, faults, and obscuration of the body are completely purified and cleansed. Your body transforms into that of Buddha Amitabha.

Then the orb of light passes down from your crown chakra to dissolve into your throat. All non-virtue, faults, and obscurations of speech such as with lies, divisive speech, harsh speech, and meaningless talk is completely purified and cleansed and your speech becomes the nature of Buddha Amitabha’s speech.

Then the orb of light passes down from your throat chakra and dissolves into your heart chakra. All negativity created through the mind through covetousness, malice, and distorted philosophies is completely purified and cleansed and your mind is transformed into the nirmanakaya, the truth body, the mind of Buddha Amitabha.

Thus your impure body, speech, and mind are all transformed into the nature of Buddha Amitabha's body, speech, and mind. Finally the meditated Deity and yourself, the meditator, disappear into vast expanse. Settle into equipoise on whatever appears without alteration, free of projections. As we say in our *Prayer to Induce Dzogchen View*:

Don't wander, don't wander, extend mindfulness
On the path of distraction lurk demonic bandits
Attachment and aversion are the demons
So look at the illusory nature, free from duality.
Primordially pure, unfabricated,
 your own mind manifesting,
Buddha is nowhere else, settle right where you are.
Not seeking elsewhere, settle in the natural state
Without meditation, spontaneously accomplished,
 enlightenment is attained.

Thus, meditate without distraction. Finally, we should make a dedication of all virtue such as that which we have created through our practice of the Accomplishment of Sukhavati so that all living beings be freed from the sufferings of samsara and the worse realms of cyclic existence. Dedication causes the roots of virtue we have

Prayer to Induce the Dzogchen View:

Don't wander, don't wander. Extend mindfulness.
On the path of distraction lurk demonic bandits.
Attachment and aversion are the demons,
So look at the illusory nature, released from duality.
Primordially pure, unfabricated,
 ones own mind manifesting,
Buddha is nowhere else! Settle right where you are.
Not seeking it elsewhere, settle in the natural state.
Without meditation, spontaneously accomplished,
 enlightenment is attained.

created to increase exponentially. If we do not make dedication, roots of virtue will be destroyed by anger and other delusions. In order to preserve roots of virtue from destruction it is extremely important to make dedication prayers, so please do.

This completes these instructions given today in connection with the Accomplishment of Sukhavati practice. — *Tashi Deleks!*



Khenpo Karten Rinpoche
with His Holiness
the 14th Dalai Lama.

Please join us for our regular weekly Amitabha practice with Khenpo Karten Rinpoche every Monday, 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm at Manjushri Dharma Center, at 724 Forest Ave. in Pacific Grove.

Please arrive early for some quiet meditation before we begin.

All are welcome to join us; feel free to bring a friend to our Sangha.



Meditation sessions with Rinpoche on
Wednesdays (7-8 pm) and Saturdays (10-11 am)
at our lovely new center at
724 Forest Ave. in Pacific Grove.