

Mindfulness Meditation Teaching

by Khenpo Samdup

Yesterday, we practiced four levels of mindfulness meditation and I shared short teachings. Before we meditated, our minds were not at peace, but going everywhere. Lots of thoughts were going on. After we practiced, however, everyone changed. I could see that. Did you? That is the result of the meditation. We must know the power of the meditation.

Chanting also must be followed by meditation. When everyone hears chanting, it is powerful. But it is not easy for the mind to get peace. You have to cultivate the prayer and visualize it so that you can feel it yourself. Then it becomes transforming for your mind. Before that, the mind is going on about lots of things. Some people are stressed out. For others, the mind is going everywhere and not with the body. Some people have emotions. Some have too much joy. All kinds of situations are going on individually.

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When you practice meditation and dharma, everything becomes more settled. You can recognize you have become more peaceful. Meditation becomes more peaceful.

Yesterday, first we did mindful meditation followed by the breath. You breathe out. Breathe in. The mind follows the breath. At the same time you breathe in, you recognize your whole body's senses. You recognize your body is breathing. Your mind is present together with your body. Breathing connects your mind and body together. So long as your mind and body come together, then naturally peace comes and you relax.

Usually the mind is not relaxed. The body is relaxed, but the mind goes all over the place. The mind is always busy. So the only method to bring back the mind to relax with the body is meditation. The first step is mindful body meditation. It is easy to do that. Use the support of the breath. The breath supports connecting the mind and body together.

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When you breathe in, you recognize your whole body's senses. Then exhale. Your mind recognizes your breath, at the same time as your body's senses. Some people do the first section different ways. Some people say first breath in. You recognize your whole body's senses. Then breath out to release thoughts and emotions. So that is also possible. If you want to do it that way, release thoughts and emotions only three times. Then don't focus longer than that. So just after three times, you recognize your breathing. Your body and your mind is connecting together. That is the way you have to meditate.

In the four different mindfulness meditations, the breath is supporting each meditation. The reason is that the breath support is very easy to use and breathing brings the mind present. Meditation means, don't follow the past. Don't follow the future. Mind must be present. Only the breath can help that. The reason is you cannot breathe yesterday. You cannot breathe tomorrow. You cannot breathe in the past. You cannot breathe in the future. Your breath is always present.

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When your mind is with the breath, your mind becomes present. When your mind becomes present, that is meditating. That is called meditation. When your mind follows the thoughts, that is not meditation. If your mind follows the future, you are not meditating. Your mind must be present. That is why the mind is the support for meditation.

Actually, we don't have the past. We don't have the future. We always have this present moment. But our minds never stay in the present moment. They follow the past or they follow the future. So you follow the past. You follow the future. You follow the thoughts. When the mind follows the thoughts, we are not relaxed. We are not at peace. Because thoughts bring emotions and emotions bring suffering.

That's why only meditation can stop thoughts and emotions. We have to use the support breath. The support breath is very powerful. You can see. Close eyes and breathe together. Stay five minutes. Mind becomes relaxed. Breath brings mind and body together. That's the reason this is the first mindful body meditation.

It means when you inhale and exhale, you recognize your mind and body connecting together. You recognize all your body's senses. It's one kind of meditation.

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The second one is mindful feeling meditation. It is a little bit harder than mindful body meditation. In mindful feeling meditation, we have to watch our feelings. When you breath in, watch your feelings. You need to recognize what kind of feelings you have. Breathe out. You have to recognize your feelings. Whatever the feeling, you don't have to reject it. You don't have to accept it.

Rejecting feelings means 'I don't like this feeling. I want to get rid of this feeling'. As long as you have those kinds of thoughts, it is a distraction. That is not meditating, so that is a problem. Accepting feelings means 'Oh, I like this feeling. I have a special experience. I like this feeling.' That is accepting feelings. You cannot have that kind of accepting of feelings because that is called attachment. So both accepting and rejecting feelings cannot be accepted. Just recognize when you have feelings.

For this meditation, when you have strong emotions is a good time to do it. First, and most important, is awareness. Without mindful awareness, we can not meditate. We always lose the chance. You always have an opportunity to use these emotions as an object of meditation, but our problem is that we're not mindful. We don't have awareness. Emotion is emotion. Emotion creates suffering. As long as you have mindfulness, when emotion arises, you can use the emotion as an object of meditation. The breath is support. So that is the reason this mindful feeling meditation is very powerful. It is different than mindful body meditation.

It is really helpful when you are sad or strong anger arises. You can make anger separate from you. You can make these emotions separate from you. You can watch your emotions. That means the emotion is the object of meditation.

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If you can do that, then emotions will not control us. Actually, emotions have controlled us from beginningless time until now. When emotions control us, we are not free from suffering. We are stuck in samsara and we are stuck in suffering. That's why it is called the defect of samsara, right? Now you can use this emotion as an object of meditation. So watch and see emotions. You don't have to do anything other than that. It is a very simple way of practicing, but people always make it complicated.

The meditation I shared yesterday is the most simple one, but maybe too simple. That's why it is very hard to do. It seems too complicated because we put too much effort into doing things. It is totally different from the worldly activities—the opposite of worldly activities. With worldly activities, you must put in effort, or organize, or do them one-by-one. We think 'I'm going to do this meditation right,' so that it becomes too tight. We put too much effort there.

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This meditation is letting go of all the worldly activities. If you let go of worldly activities, then you can go into the meditation. We are already used to worldly activities. Right? Samsaric activities, we have already habituated them. That's why when go back to meditation, it's a little harder to get into that. Actually, by letting go of these worldly activities, being present and the mind being with breath as we relax--that is meditation.

That is the reason, when you inhale, you should watch your feelings. Then exhale and watch your feelings, so that the breath supports your mind's recognition of your feelings. That is called mindful feeling meditation. It is a different aspect. This, too, is a little bit different benefit than mindful body meditation. Mindful body meditation's benefit is to release thoughts. You do that for five minutes, you recognize what you are doing and where you are. You can find yourself. Watch. Usually, your mind is not there. It's very good chanting, but the mind is going somewhere else. So if someone makes a loud sound, you are scared. That means your mind is not there. Mindful body meditation is for recognizing everything and releasing thoughts. Mindful feeling meditation is good for when you have emotions.

If there are no emotions, it is very hard to recognize your feelings. (15:52) Usually, we recognize our gross level feelings. We do not recognize our subtle level feelings. When we don't have gross level feelings, we don't recognize our feelings. A gross level feeling is when strong anger arises. At that time you can see it, right? Sometimes you are O.K. It looks like nothing is going on. But at that time, you don't have gross level emotions going on. Still, everyone has subtle level emotions. We don't see that. High-level meditators can see that, I think. We just focus on gross level emotions.

When you meditate and you cannot find your feelings, you can bring to mind when someone is not nice to you. You can think about that kind of person. Then what kind of feelings do you have at that time? You can watch that feeling, too. You can bring up feelings. Also, if you don't have feelings, the mind can be with the breath and stay. When you meditate and have thoughts, thoughts always bring feelings. So recognize your thoughts while your mind is with your breath meditating. That is mindful feeling meditation.

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The third one we did--mindful consciousness meditation. That is when you breath in, breath out and you just watch your mind. Where is mind going? What kind of thoughts? Where is it located? It is just your awareness. Mindful. Watch your mind—the same as a mother watching her kids. If the kids are in danger someplace, then the mother is focused on watching for that and is aware of what is going on. This is the same thing, like that, you know? Just watch your mind. You don't need to investigate. If you investigate, it becomes analytical Vipassana meditation. You just watch awareness, mindful awareness, what is going on in your mind. That is very good to do. Sometimes you mind is very busy. So many thoughts are going on. Your mind is the same as a crazy monkey mind. At that time, you can watch. When you watch, you recognize your mind and what is going on.

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So the last one--the fourth one--is called mindful phenomena meditation. Yesterday we did that. Everyone liked that, yes? Mindful phenomena meditation is when you meditate you breathe in, breathe out and you recognize your body is compound phenomena. Compound phenomena is impermanent. It is not permanent. You recognize your body is impermanent. For example, if you are having difficulty with your family, when you breathe in and breathe out, recognize that everything is impermanent. Delusional. If you breathe in and breathe out, and you are having difficulty with your job, you think about it is as delusional—impermanent.

If you have problems, breathe in, breathe out, and recognize they are impermanent. This is impermanence meditation. It is not only for negative things. It can be for something you are really attached to—you really like. If you are really attached to your family, you recognize your relationship is impermanent—a delusion. If you do that often, you become not so attached.

Attachment and love become separate. Usually our love and attachment are together, and that is a cause of suffering. You meditate on your family and you recognize the nature of phenomena. You have more wisdom. You recognize it is impermanent. Then one day you have problems in your family. You are sad, but because you recognize they are impermanent, you can more easily accept that. But you not only accept it, you are not really suffering. You have more wisdom.

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You can use anything. Right now, we are all here together. This also is impermanent. We breathe in. We are here together. We breathe out. This is also impermanent. The weather is beautiful. The birds are singing. The weather is perfect in Florida. All of this you can use in the mindful phenomena meditation. Then when we go back to our homes, we are not attached to here. We are not sad to leave.

We are happy to leave. But we recognize this opportunity, too. That is why you bring this to mind and practice mindfulness phenomena meditation.

If there is someone you don't like, you can meditate that person is impermanent. They are a delusion. Then you don't have hatred towards that person. You don't hate that person. Also, when we have suffering, you can bring to mind impermanence and release that sadness feeling. All of this can go away.

This changes our mindset. It is a special method to bring happiness to our mind. Sooner or later, we have to deal with all of these situations, all the time. As long as we are born in samsara, we have to go through these things, these situations, you know? Families are not always permanent. Your jobs are not always permanent. This weather is not always permanent. Our President is not always permanent. This Congress is not always permanent. These all are just like delusions, right? You watch this Congress fighting each other. You breathe in. Breathe out. All is impermanent.

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Then they won't bother you. Otherwise you are strongly fixated, angry and attached. If you are attached to which party you belong to, then you already have blown your wisdom. You don't have wisdom there. You have hatred to others because there is grasping. You know grasping--strong fixation. At that time, you have to practice this mindful phenomena meditation. Then you see what is going on, but you don't have hatred. You are not really attached to that.

You see all as delusion. Impermanent. It is temporary. Nothing is going on there really. Then your mind is separate from that. Then you have wisdom. You can see. Then when you watch news, it is good. Otherwise don't watch the news, OK? (laughter)

That's why we have to do this mindful phenomena meditation. It actually releases your suffering. Think about it. Someone steals your car. Right away, you are really sad. But if you practice this mindful phenomena meditation, it is like temporary delusions. And maybe it is good thing. Something is going to change. If the car is gone, that is OK. Because this body is also gone one day. So if the car is gone, you think about something bigger than that. Then, if the car is stolen, it is no big deal.

The same thing is true of kids fighting over toys. The adults see that nothing is there. But for the kids, it is so important. You recognize some small things are so important, too. But if you think of the bigger picture, it is no big deal. You can release that, too.

That is why we have to use this meditation. Breathe in. Breathe out. Bring these situations to mind. Think about this. It is an analytical way of meditating. Your breath supports how you practice. It is a gross level of mindfulness meditation. If you go to a more subtle level, it is different. This is basic Four Level Mindfulness Meditation.

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If you go to a more subtle level, it is different than that. This is basic Four Level Mindfulness Meditation. You can go deeper than that. If you go deeper, then that is Mahamudra. Four Level Mindfulness Meditation you bring into the Mahamudra Meditation. Go deeper, deeper. We have to practice the gross level first, yes?

The reason is that our mind is not ready to go into the subtle level. We have to do basic practice. Then we go into the more subtle level. Otherwise, you directly try to go into the subtle level, it is very hard. It is not easy. You need, some experience. Yesterday we meditate and our minds go all over the place with lots of thoughts. It's easy to become distracted. We practice more and more this Four Level Mindfulness Meditation and get less distractions. Less thoughts. Less emotions. Then the mind goes very easily into the meditation.

I think you have that experience yesterday. Do you? I can see your face. I cannot see your mind, but I can see your face. Outer level. Oh yes, it is helpful. Some people can watch other people's minds. That means they're a very high realizer—a really good meditator. Meditators and teachers can be different. Some teachers can talk a good way. Some meditators aren't really good at sharing and talking, but they can be good meditators.

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That's why you don't follow the words. Follow the meaning. Don't follow the person. Follow the Dharma—practice that way. The four different levels, you also must follow. When I was at Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's place—that was a long time ago—I never meditated before. I spent three years at a monastery. What I did learn was ritual things. I did prayers, pujas, chanting. I knew music. We used many ritual things like the horns and followed the rules. When you see the monastery chant together, they all follow the tune together. The words are said properly and all of those ritual things are done together.

But they aren't talking about how to meditate and the mind. This was an outer level of doing things. After three years, Garchen Rinpoche gave me the opportunity to go with him. We spent twenty months together. It is five days journey on the road, so we have a truck. At that time the road was really bad. It was not easy.

Everyone has to stay outside. After four or five days, we reach there and stay one month. We bring a tent and set up the tent. Then Khenpo Munsel sometimes gave teachings, but not often. We got there and he gave this meditation teaching. It is introducing the nature of mind. He gave that teaching and it only takes two hours. I didn't really understand his dialect, but I had strong devotion. Everyone says he is really special. I have strong devotion, but I don't understand clearly what he says.

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So just kind of guessing, I just meditate and meditate. I don't know if it is correct or incorrect. We don't have any idea. There is a monk, Aku Pema, an old monk. He is a meditator. He doesn't teach. Khenpo Munsel recommended we see that monk. We made an appointment. We each had 20 minutes and go in one-by-one. Sometimes he asks two monks to come together, sometimes only one.

He just stays outside. It is very high--very beautiful in the summertime. We go there and I see him one day when I get an appointment. He said sit down. We sit down and meditate. He doesn't say anything, one minute, two minutes...almost fifteen minutes. I try many different things. And he says, OK, that's it, that's it. When he doesn't say anything, that means you are not really into the meditation level. It means you don't recognize the nature of your mind.

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If you recognize--sometimes as a practitioner you can get into it, but it can get lost easily. So that is the first time I meditated.

After I go to Jigme Phuntsok's place, we studied philosophy, Dharma and Madhyamika teachings. Then all of this makes more sense. Before that, I did not know why I had to do this. But after, the logic is proven there. Some meditators just recognize it. The stories go too long. So anyway, sometimes talker means not really meditator, OK? (laughter) Some people don't talk that much, but they can be a good meditator. We don't know. Meditator means not necessarily philosopher, too. Yes, they're not necessarily a philosopher.

Meditators can use philosophy because, actually, it is a part of meditation--analytical meditation. A philosopher who is a meditator, then that person can benefit lots of people. Some meditators who don't study philosophy and are not good talkers, they have good level for themselves, but they cannot benefit others much or share the teachings. So that's what we have to know. So that is the Four Levels of Meditation.

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Today, we are first going to do the Shamata meditation. OK? So Shamata meditation is not much different. It is a little bit more subtle level than the four different mindfulness meditations. Shamata meditation brings peace and relaxation. Shamata is also basic meditation. too. It depends on the individual. We cannot always say it is basic meditation. It depends on the individual, too.

So Shamata meditation actually takes us into Vipassana meditation. Without Shamata meditation, we cannot really meditate on Vipassana. Without Vipassana meditation, it is not really possible to reach

Buddhahood. So that is the reason the first step is the most important. If we don't use the first step meditation and we go to Pointing Out instructions--go directly to nature of mind instruction, Mahamudra--it is really good words, beautiful words, and the words make sense, but you really cannot get much from that practice.

One of the Drikung Kagyu masters (I don't really remember his name. He is one of His Holiness's teachers.) wrote one book, Shamata Meditation. He says his teacher is very special. That teacher gave him Vipassana meditation--really the Mahamudra way. He says he practiced three years, four years. He doesn't really change. So he went back to Shamata meditation --focused with external object and focused with breath. Then he really recognized the benefit of the meditation and he said he had strong basic practice. Then he went back to Mahamudra. Then it was very easy and it became more meaningful with more benefit.

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He said his teacher gave the teaching because a high-level teaching has benefit and is powerful. He practiced it but did not get much from it because his mind wasn't stable. He was not ready for that level. So in Shamata, Vipassana meditation we usually talk about watch the emotions. For beginners, it is very hard to watch the emotions.

To watch the emotions, you really need a stable mind. In the mindfulness meditation, we recognize the feeling in a gross level way. Your mind sees that feeling. In Mahamudra, when thoughts or emotions come, you not only recognize them, you have to watch them. You then see these thoughts and emotions as emptiness. They do not exist.

That means like these thoughts, emotions are released. They are liberated. That is a very high-level way to do that. Beginners, when the mind is not stable, cannot really watch the thoughts or emotions. Second level is recognizing them, right? Third level is watching them. You see, we go step-by-step.

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That is the reason Shamata meditation never says watch the thoughts. It is more for beginners. Shamata says stay tight. You look to see whether thoughts arise or not. When thoughts arise, recognize right away and go back into the meditation. Do not play with the thoughts. Don't watch the thoughts. In really high-level meditation, you watch the thoughts. See what is going on. You kind of play with the thoughts.

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The thoughts are really separate from you. You are not really stuck within the thoughts. We are beginners. We are really stuck with the thoughts. That is why we cannot play with the thoughts. The first level is to try to stop the thoughts. If you cannot do that, then recognize the thoughts. Then go back right away to meditate. That is Shamata meditation.

When we do Shamata meditation, the mind is sharp. We cannot really relax. In Vipassana meditation, we are more relaxed. The mind has more peaceful feelings. You can be more relaxed. Shamata is first level, like the river rushing down from the mountains. Our mind is like that. The river is not really slowed down. Right? Then it goes into the bigger river, it slows down. Then it goes into the ocean, the river is not really moving.

The beginners mind is like water falling from the mountains. Then for practitioners, the river goes into the bigger rivers. Then for the realizer, the river is in the ocean. At that time, all beings have the same nature of mind. When the river is in the ocean, you cannot see this is the Mississippi River, this is the Ohio River, right? You cannot say this is the Colorado River. They are all in the ocean and not separate. They become all the same.

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At that time, you can see that all beings are the same nature. Right now, we cannot see that. You are the Ohio River. Some are like the Colorado River and the other famous rivers in the United States.

That means each one has a different mindstream, until we are realized. Some people say we all have the same nature of mind. All beings are the same. That is ok at some level, but sometimes it is too early to say that. We need a little bit of patience to say that. We have to wait. You cannot say everything is the same. At some levels, everything is the same. At some levels everything is not the same. That is why we have relative truth and absolute truth. There are two truths.

When you are stuck in relative truth and talk about absolute truth, it does not make sense. When you are in the relative truth and talk about the absolute truth: "Oh, I don't have to follow the karma cause and effect. All is the same thing and there is no difference. All religions are the same. All Dharma teachers are the same." In the relative truth, that is not really seen. You are just saying that, right?

One day when you see the absolute truth, then everything really is the same and not that much different. We have to know there are different levels.

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Now we are talking about Shamata meditation. Shamata has three different levels. Shamata follows step-by-step. Mindfulness meditation follows four different levels. Each has different aspects. We need to practice these four different levels to release our suffering and problems. We deal with different situations and four mindfulness meditations help in different ways. The same thing with Shamata meditation which is followed by three different levels. It depends on the individual. That means for some, it is really easy to focus on an object. For some it is easy to focus on the breath. Some don't need to use the breath. The last one is using no object. There are three different levels.

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The first one is using the object. It's recommended that the object is not a white color or bright color because it is not good for your eyes. You have to know that. A small object is good. If you meditate every day in the same spot, use the same object. Meditators say always use the same object. But we cannot do that. We are traveling. We change all the time. You cannot always use the same object. But the object should not be a white or bright color if you meditate for a long time. For a short time, it is ok.

When you sit down, you get something and focus on that. Then your mind is resting with that object. When you practice more often, your mind becomes more stable. That object is support for your meditation. One day, you won't need that support. That means we are a beginner meditator and not independent. We are dependent. We need something for support. This object is really helpful for resting your mind. If you practice frequently, you can focus on anything.

When you get used to it, you can sit down and your mind will rest with that object right away. If you have five minutes, you can meditate five minutes. If you have ten minutes, you can focus ten minutes. If you have twenty or thirty minutes or an hour, you can meditate if you are used to it. However, if you become too tight, your eyes will feel pain. This will hurt your eyes. Slowly it will affect your eyes. That is the reason your eyes are opened very softly. It almost looks like your eyes are closed, but you have to see the object. You can see the object, but it looks like your eyes are almost closed.

Very softly, gently open your eyes. The tongue touches behind the teeth. Breathe softly from the mouth if you can. You also have to create and habituate that. Your mind slowly becomes more stable. It becomes used to that—relaxed. If your mind is more relaxed, you have less emotions and thoughts—and less suffering.

Sometimes we have lots of things going on when we wake up in the morning. You have to do so many things, you stress out. Then you use the mindfulness meditations, Shamata, and your mind becomes more relaxed, more stable. And you can release the anxiety. You are stressed out, but your mind becomes more stable. Then you have more wisdom. Wisdom means you can see that I have to do this, but I don't have to do that. Sometimes we really don't have to do something, but the mind is always creating. You always have to do, do, do, right? You cannot stop. Meditate this Shamata mindfulness meditation and you recognize there are many things you don't have to do.

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OK, I don't have to do this. Also, you can see clearly how to do that. That kind of meditation is really helpful. If I meditate before teachings, it is really helpful. If I don't meditate, sometimes my mind is not really there. I make mistakes. Or what I really wanted to say is not finished and I jump to the next topic. So, the teaching is broken. That kind of thing happens all the time if I don't meditate.

If I meditate, it is better. I completely finish the first topic, then go into the next one. This morning I didn't meditate, so that is why I am jumping around right now, ok? (laughter) Actually, I wanted to share this teaching this evening, but the time for it came this morning. There was no choice. So I am jumping between this mindfulness meditation and Shamata.

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The main point is that I am talking about Shamata meditation with object. When your mind is resting with an object and not analyzing, just resting. If you are just beginning, do short sessions, many times. Beginners don't realize when thoughts come. Meditating five minutes is ok. But if you do more than five minutes, your thoughts take you away.

Yesterday after break, we talked about some topics covering the whole world situation. First, we started with a very tiny thing. Meditating is the same way. Tiny thoughts become so important. Then we cultivate emotions, but you don't recognize that your body is still meditating. Actually, your mind is not there. It is cultivating emotions. That is the reason that you first meditate a short time. Then you can increase the time. Begin with five minutes, then go up to ten minutes, fifteen minutes, twenty minutes. You have to know yourself.

Also, it depends on each day. Each day is different. Some days you can meditate longer. Some days, five minutes is too long. Sometimes one hour is too short, yes? Last night, one hour was too short. This morning a half-hour was too much for us. We have already, experienced that.

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We have to know our own situation and follow our own individual situation. We cannot say meditate five minutes or one hour. You have to recognize yourself. The time to finish is when you get to the right spot. The right spot means you have a really good feeling. Then just take a break or pause your meditation. You can take tea or something. That helps you keep the feeling in your mind. You want to go back and meditate again. The wrong direction is pausing when you don't have a good feeling and you stop there all the time. Then you don't want to go back to meditate.

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We can see that in our worldly activities. If you are happy with something, you always want to go there. If you have a good experience someplace, you want to go there, or eat there. If you get very good food at a restaurant, you want to go back again. If you have a good conversation with someone like a doctor, you want to go see them. People always give recommendations. However, recommendations are always followed by their emotions.

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I don't follow recommendations. I don't need others' emotions. I have enough of my own emotions. (laughter) You have to get your own experience. Also, one time is not enough. You always have to try three times. In Buddhism, it's always three times. The second time is ok, but the third time you can get an experience. Then you can make a decision. At first, don't make a decision. Second time, there is more awareness. Third time, you can make a decision. Then, you can make a recommendation, ok?

Now, all recommendations about restaurants and so on are based on the first time. You go and the food is all right. Then, you go back a second time and you're upset. So, the third time is better if you are going to give some kind of recommendation.

Shamata meditation is easy to do, but we have to practice it often. Then it really benefits us. When you have meditated only a short time, you have to do it frequently. Sometimes someone who has just practiced a short time shares their experience. That is too fast. They may immediately relax. Then the next time it doesn't happen and they say meditation doesn't benefit them. That is too fast.

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At this time, people are not really patient. They are always thinking I need something right now. They don't have the patience to follow a long goal. Meditation is a long goal. It can be permanent. Sometimes, if you take medicine to recover immediately, it acts like poison. Meditation is the same way. You don't get something right away. You have to practice often. Then you can change and transform. You can see that. There are so many meditators. They are calm, relaxed, at peace. Whatever the outer circumstances, they do not lose their happiness and are at peace.

Of course, they also have problems in samsara, too. As long as they have this body, it is the same situation as other beings. But their inner mind is totally different. They have more peace. Outer level circumstances don't distract their mind. Think about the Dalai Lama and the many problems he has faced. If you get outer level circumstances like that, it is easy to go crazy. People can commit suicide, right? But the Dalai Lama is a practitioner and he is at peace.

You can see Garchen Rinpoche. He is a meditator. He is a practitioner. I was with him every day and he saw a hundred people. They always have problems. They say 'Oh, my family has a problem. My job is a problem.' 'Someone is dead. Please do a dedication prayer.' It is always like that. Everything is negative

and they report suffering. Always hearing that could cause anxiety. Of course, it is depressing. But he doesn't have depression because of the power of Dharma's benefit--the power of Dharma. We can see it directly, right? Meditators have suffering but it is not the same as other beings' suffering. Compared to other people, it is totally different. Meditators can go to jail, right? But it is in the jail, that meditators become totally different. Jail is a retreat. Garchen Rinpoche shared stories that it was a retreat. For ten or twenty years, it was like that.

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We have to know that the benefit of meditation is a long goal—or you'll think I have to get the benefit right now, right away. When you practice meditation, you need patience. It takes time. You cannot criticize right away. Don't follow your emotions and criticize these things. If you want to say something you must have wisdom, but most people just follow the emotion and criticize. Sometimes people criticize their spiritual teachers or doctors and people who help others--who volunteer to do things. Sometimes a person who benefits eighty people is criticized by a person who only benefits ten people. People who criticize have emotions.

If people say something negative about someone, don't share it. Otherwise, you are supporting the emotions in each other. People like to share because it is emotion. 'Oh this is true. He did so bad.' Actually, you don't really know anything. This is subtle level, what he did, right? That's why you don't share things. Otherwise you disturb other people's minds. Sometimes emotions become the majority and the winner over truth. Who ever has the majority, they are the winner. With emotions, they don't pause. They don't see. It's true.

1:06:51

Some people do positive things. The majority supports that. If you want to follow emotions, that is your choice, but I recommend you don't follow emotions. Shamata meditation is really a help for that, too. Don't follow the emotions. Do Shamata meditation. Practice your mindfulness instead of telling things to others. I already said that sometimes the person who benefits eighty people is criticized by the person benefitting ten. Then the world supports that view and a more negative path.

(1:07:48)

Then those who benefit others are lost and cannot continue to benefit others. That kind of situation is happening. Degeneration is like that. Emotion controls us and sentient beings. This time is called a Degeneration Time. In the 28th Sadhana, Buddha appeared in this Degeneration Time for us. It is because of his compassion. He is a guide for us. If we think of the Buddha's qualities, his wisdom, his compassion then strong devotion comes. It changes your feeling. Then your practice becomes more effective. The prayer really helps us.

Devotion that comes to our hearts doesn't benefit the Buddha. It really benefits us. Sometimes in the Western Culture, we think 'Oh, I have devotion to him. I am lower than him.' We always are thinking about equal rights. That's a big mistake if you think that you really can't benefit anything yourself.

When we do prostrations to the Buddha, who benefits? The one who does the prostrations gets the benefit. They release our emotions—specifically our pride. When we praise Buddha, who gets the benefit? We get the benefit. We release our jealousy. Why do we say praise to the Buddha and be so nice? This prayer has meaning.

These things can be against culture, you know. The main point is people misunderstand. Some say they don't want to go to the Dharma Center. 'They are doing weird things—prostrations—I don't want to do that.'

(1:10:02) They follow their culture. Especially in Western cultures, they talk about equal rights. That is a different kind of equal rights. Their equal rights is like you push down someone else—that is not equal rights.

In this teaching, those who create this sadhana have wisdom and compassion, and know how to benefit other beings. Other beings have different kinds of emotions. How do they release their emotions? They need a solution, an antidote for their emotions. That is the reason this sadhana was created.

You can mentally offer things. They don't say, 'Buddha give me something. I need something.' You can see right away they benefit us. You can mentally visualize many offerings. Then you can create accumulation of merit. They don't say you must have physical things to bring to Buddha. You can recognize right away that this is a special method. That is the reason you practice Shamata more. You recognize the main purpose of this practice, too.

The first level I am sharing is focusing with object. How long you can stay focused depends. Follow your situation. Longer, or shorter, anytime. Most important is when a thought comes, go back to the object. Mind resting with object is the first one.

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The second one, you focus with breath. Focus with breath is not the same as mindful meditation focus with object. It's different. Very similar, but it's different. So if I say 'Breath in. Mind be with your breath as you breathe in. Then breathe out.' That is not Shamata. That is mindful meditation.

You have to do the first step at the mindful level to go into the Shamata meditation breathing. Shamatha meditation focuses on a more subtle level than that. It looks like you are not really breathing. But your mind recognizes you are breathing. When you are meditating and I watch you, it does not look like you are breathing. You look like a statue. But really, your inner level is focused with your breathing. So that is called Shamata focused with the breath.

If you go into that level, first you need mindful meditation breathing. Then you focus and go deeper. Then you go to a more subtle level. This meditation goes into the focus with the breath. When you are into that subtle level of breathing, it is a totally different level of feeling. Sometimes people say they are focused on Shamata meditation, but Shamata means you are really focused on the subtle level of your breath. When you get there, your mind is so relaxed and at peace.

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You really have your own experience and you really can't share it with others. That level is very hard to get into. If you focus a little bit on breathing and I say Shamata, you say 'Oh yeah, I know Shamata.' People are saying that all the time. It looks like he's a practitioner. He knows all the teachings. What he really did was read a book. (Demonstrates short breathing meditation.) Then they say, 'I know Shamata. I know the teachings. I don't have to practice.' They say those kind of things, but actually they are not really into Shamata. Do you understand?

Right now in Western countries, many people say I meditate Shamata. If you really look, maybe it is five percent. If one-hundred people say they are practicing Shamata, if you really look, maybe it is five

percent. I don't think it is any more than that. They say 'I know Shamata. I already practiced Shamata.' OK, good luck. Congratulations for you. What did you change?

Actually, nothing really changed for that person. They don't go to teachings. They don't go to the Dharma Center because of their pride. Because they say 'I know Shamata.' You say you are going to teach Shamata at the Dharma Center in an advertisement. And they say, 'Oh yeah, I know Shamata. I know it already. I don't have to go. I can share it with others.' They say, 'I want to share with others.' They're not thinking about their own level, right?

That's the problem with Westerners. They want to share right away. But they really don't know and recognize if they have that practice. They read the book and then they want to share. Teach. The reason is they are not really into the practice. This level is very subtle—very different than mindful meditation focus with breath. To get into that subtle level, you have to go step-by-step—deeper, deeper and deeper. You cannot just sit down and do focus with breath Shamata meditation. The first step is mindful meditation—maybe go into focus with object. Then go into the breath.

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That's why meditation has different levels or stages. If you finish that, then you don't have to use any object. Not using any object becomes an independent meditation. Why do I say independent? Because you don't need a support. You don't need to use something as a support. Even without support, your mind becomes stable. Just sit down. Your mind is relaxed. Peace is present there. That is called last session Shamata. In Tibetan, Shamatha is called Shine. Shi means peace, and Ne means abiding.

So be peaceful, relaxed and present. What happens to people who are Mahamudra meditators who only practice Mahamudra and really are practicing Shine? They think, 'I am meditating Mahamudra. I'm peaceful, relaxed and the mind is present.' Then they think, 'Oh, I am meditating Mahamudra. I am looking at the nature of mind.' They think that is Mahamudra meditation, but really they are into Shine. Mahamudra is not really there.

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Then you meditate and you are really into Vipassana meditation. Then you can go into Mahamudra. It will be easy to get into Mahamudra. So many people are confused. They think that Shine is Mahamudra. But really, that is not Mahamudra. It is Shamata level meditation.

But if you have that practice and someone really teaches you Mahamudra—then you go into Mahamudra very easily. Sometimes you get all these teachings and meditate. Meditators are stuck there and think 'I am at the highest level meditation.' But if you are in the highest level Shamata, you have peace and are relaxed. You don't have thoughts. You don't have emotions. You are in a good spot there. But that meditation can't take you to Buddhahood. You have to go beyond that. That is the reason we have Vipassana meditation—not only Shamatha. Now we have to practice.

