

## 6. How to Meditate on Vipassana

The second part of this teaching is an explanation of vipassana (Tib. Lhag mthong).

In Buddhism it is taught that we need to learn from a realized master, and this points to the importance of seeking teachings. It is through listening to many teachings and reflecting on their meaning that we derive the pure view we will be integrating in our vipassana meditation. It is the lack of sufficient knowledge of the teachings that presents an impediment to vipassana, literally, “seeing beyond.” Vipassana, or seeing beyond, means looking deeply into the suchness-nature.

There are two aspects to vipassana: analytical, or discursive meditation, and nonconceptual meditation, or resting the mind.

Discursive meditation has two subcategories: meditating on the selflessness of the person and meditating on the selflessness of phenomena. The yogin or yogini probes the selflessness of the person as follows:

The “person” is just this continuum of our aggregates, including our mind, or rather this sense of a thinker, a person who is feeling and emoting, this movement of mind.

Fixating and clinging to the person as being a permanent, singular entity, as being “me” or “I,” is what is known as the self of the person, or “subjective mind.” From the construction of a self comes the emotional poisons. From the emotional poisons comes karma. From karma comes suffering.

Therefore, the root of all suffering and all negativity is the self, or the subjective mind. In other words, it comes down to an erroneous mental state. The self is what we call the body, the constitutional elements, and the sense fields. But the person is not the essence of the aggregates and the like. This is because the aggregates and constitutional elements are impermanent and are a combination of many parts. The person is seen as permanent and as a singular entity, a concept which we impute onto something else. However, this person cannot really be said to exist as what we think it to be or as anything else. This is because the person is not any other thing or entity. It is, therefore, like this: The unquestioned assumption of “me” and “mine” is nothing but a delusion. We should investigate in this way.

In the same way, we should try to understand concepts and emotions, which are the expressions of the inner subject, of mind. Look directly at the concept or emotion itself. Try to see if it has a form or a shape.

Deeply and carefully look to see where the emotion came from, where it can be located, and where it goes. First, in this present awareness you have mind, and suddenly out of this mind a thought or an emotion arises. Try to see the following: Did it come from mind or something outside of mind? Is it one with the mind, or is it separate from the mind? If you conclude that thoughts or emotions are to mind as sunbeams are to the sun, it is a fallacy, because the sun and its rays shine simultaneously. If you conclude that mind and thoughts, mind and emotions, are one, how are they one? Is it that mind appears as a thought? Is that how they are one? Or is it that thoughts are merged with mind? If you conclude that mind and thoughts are not one, try to investigate. Try to examine how they are different, and so forth.

Now, try to see where the forms that appear to you come from. Do they come from the mind? If they come from the mind, then it would follow that forms should always follow you wherever you go. That is thus a fallacy. On the other hand, if they do not come from mind, forms should also continue to appear and be perceived by your corpse even after you die. Examine in this way, and apply a similar existential analysis to sound, smell, taste, touch, and the rest.

Next, do not look at thoughts, emotions, or any of the appearances of the six sense objects. Instead, just look directly and nakedly at the very essence of mind itself. Is there a vividness, a presence? Is there this emptiness? Is it more of a clarity or more of an emptiness?

Which seems to be more predominant? Or is it an inseparability of clarity and emptiness? It is important to really probe, really examine in this way. By investigating and examining in this way, the great meditator will eventually reach the point where he or she will not get trapped in the web of doubt or skepticism and will make great strides in his or her practice. This is the reason why we should examine in this way.

Second, for the selflessness of phenomena, meditate in this way: Phenomena refers to the outer phenomena and to the inner subject—mind. That being so, it is the grasping and fixation to a subject-object duality of inner subject and world “out there” that is known as the self of phenomena. Everything that falls into the sphere of the self-nature of phenomena is, according to ultimate truth, nothing outside of or apart from mind. This can be shown when you try to deconstruct any phenomenon down to the subtlest atomic level. Each time you deconstruct it into parts, when you examine the subtlest level of phenomena to find an inherent essence, you can never find any essential nature. From time without beginning, however, though forms and such are not truly real, we have grasped onto them as though they were, whereas forms and other phenomena only appear as if in a dream. To childlike

beings, mind itself is appearing as forms and the like, as if these were outside of mind. In reality, however, forms and the like are not anything other than mind's projection. Examine in this way. Forms and everything else are unreal, and since mind is not separate from this, it also is unreal.

Forms and the like appear as many different things, yet they are essentially not one entity nor are they many entities. Since mind is not separate from or outside of forms and the like, mind, too, in essence is not a singular entity, nor is it manifold. In this way, when we use wisdom to look deeply into the essential nature of mind, in its ultimate nature mind cannot be found internally nor can it be found externally. It cannot be pinpointed anywhere else either. There also is no past mind, no present mind, and no future mind that can be pinpointed either. In its arisings, mind does not come from anywhere. In its cessations, mind does not go anywhere. When looking for mind, there is nothing to be located, nothing to show, no form to it at all.

Just look directly into the true essence of this mind — this vividly present awareness. What exactly is it that is there? Is it body or is it mind? If there is a mind, if mind exists, there must be something there, right? What is it like? Does it have a form, a shape, a color, and such? Where in your body does it reside? Is it outside, inside, or in between?

Mind's beginning, middle, or end cannot be seen, cannot be identified. Thus, when you are investigating with wisdom, and you do not see any real essential nature of all phenomena, do not get caught up in the conceptualization of this not seeing by thinking, "Is form permanent or impermanent? Is it empty or not empty? Is it defiled or undefiled?" and so forth. Avoid conceptualization of feelings, perception, and the rest as well.

Like that, use your wisdom to deconstruct. Whatever the object of the investigation, when the yogin or yogini comes to the point in which no essential nature of the object can be apprehended in the ultimate nature, that is the time to enter into nonconceptual samadhi. After you have used your wisdom and intellect to look deeply into the true essential nature of any object of focus, such as form and so forth, then you enter into meditative stability. What is meant here by meditative stability is not abiding in form or anything. Meditative stability is not abiding in this world or anywhere between this world and the next. Since there is no point of reference that can be identified as form or anything else, this is the meditative stability beyond reference point. This is why it is known as the meditative stability of sublime wisdom.

The second category is known as resting meditation. Having thus thoroughly examined the selflessness of the person and the selflessness of phenomena until there is nothing

else to look at, one naturally enters a state beyond concept and beyond analysis, a state of oneness beyond expression, without any fabrication. Thus, meditate in crisp clarity, resting in the suchness-nature itself.

Abiding in this state, remain in the continuity of mind without distraction.

When you are new to the meditation, as you look nakedly at mind, not seeing anything real in nature, you will have the experience of being in this state of entity-lessness. Just let your awareness rest naturally in this state; relax your awareness there. In this clarity of awareness, where there is no object of meditation, no point of reference, with nothing to attach onto as unborn, nothing to suppress, and nothing to do, nothing to latch onto as either empty or not empty, just rest your mind. Once you have gotten a little more adept at the practice, whatever arises and whatever appears, you will only need to look directly into it; you will not need to put any special effort into resting your mind beyond this.

When you gain greater accomplishment in the practice, you will be free from any grasping at meditation or object on which to meditate, and therefore you will be free from any contrived or effortful meditation.

The true essence, the ultimate meaning of all the myriad collections of Dharma teachings in existence, is just this: original mind, unmodified.

There is no higher practice than sustaining this: Whatever arises, let it arise without grasping onto it. The grasping at a duality of self and other is the root of samsara. It need not be said that grasping at the negative side, like the three poisons,<sup>11</sup> is problematic, as this is clear, but even grasping at the positive side, such as grasping to view, meditation, and conduct, becomes an impediment to liberation. Therefore, no matter what arises, do not grasp onto anything. This is the supreme path. This is how to do it.

Relying on this method is beneficial in dispelling confusion. Whenever your mind wanders off in distraction, such as when desire arises, pacify this distraction and quickly bring your mind back.

Whenever you notice mind to be unhappy, seeing the qualities of samadhi, cultivate happiness.

When you start to get sleepy and you notice mind to be getting sluggish and unclear, focus your attention on a happy positive object as described above and pacify the lethargy of mind, focusing extremely intensely on the meditation. If you are resting

mind evenly and you push too hard or put in too much effort, that also will become a cause of mental distraction.

If you are sinking into lethargy and you do not push or apply effort, that will become a cause of sinking even deeper into lethargy, and you will not have any vipassana. Your mind will become as if blind. Therefore, if your mind sinks into lethargy, apply effort. If your mind is resting evenly, do not apply effort.

Meditating on vipassana, your wisdom will become predominant, and your shamata practice may suffer like a butter lamp in the wind, falling prey to distraction. At that time, switch your focus to shamata practice. When your shamata predominates, then meditate to cultivate wisdom. When you gain equal capacity at both, then you will abide without fabrication in the bliss of body and mind.

If you do not experience the bliss of body and mind, at that point reflect that all world realms are illusory, like a dream, a mirage. Think to yourself, "All these sentient beings have not realized profound truth and so they remain totally afflicted by confusion in samsara. I will do whatever I can to ensure they realize the true nature, Dharmata." Thinking in this way, give rise to great compassion and bodhichitta.

When we talk about emptiness imbued with all perfect qualities, what do we mean? We mean emptiness inseparable with generosity, ethical discipline, patience, diligence, and meditation. We also mean emptiness inseparable with wisdom. In this way, the primordial wisdom of omniscience, the supreme emptiness imbued with all qualities, is brought to full realization through the skillful means of generosity and so forth. Omniscient wisdom is perfected through skillful means; it does not arise only from wisdom. The path of the bodhisattvas is therefore asserted to be imbued with both wisdom and skillful means. This is how the transcendent nirvana is attained, that is, nirvana that does not get stuck in either extreme.

By the power of wisdom, bodhisattvas do not fall into samsara, and by the power of skillful means, they do not fall into the absorption of nirvana. That is why when we are actually meditating in transcendental wisdom, or resting mind evenly in meditative absorption, we are not engaged actively in a skillful means practice such as generosity and so forth.<sup>12</sup> However, this wisdom comes about because of relying upon skillful means in the beginning and at the conclusion. When we are resting our minds naturally in meditation, if we place our minds on a visualization or focal object of great compassion by directing our attention to sentient beings, that itself is relying upon skillful means. That is why wisdom and skillful means are relied on simultaneously.

In this way, after one has meditated for a long period of time on compassion and bodhichitta and become more adept in this, gradually one's mind stream will become ripened, and the transcendent wisdom-awareness free from conceptual limitations will be realized clearly. Such a bodhisattva will become a true child of the Buddha and will stand apart from all worldly beings. A bodhisattva abides in the realization of Dharmata, the absolute nature of reality, and in the recognition of Dharmadhatu, the basic space of all phenomena. Gradually, as the bodhisattva ascends through the higher bhūmis and purifies the mind, he or she eventually awakens to unsurpassable, true, and perfect enlightenment.