The Meditation Manual of the Dharma Fellowship

Part I: Preparing the Ground for Meditation

A Brief Introduction

Five hundred and thirty-three years prior to the birth of Christ, the great Indian sage named Siddhartha Gautama Sakyamuni, today known worldwide as 'the Buddha,' set forth a sublime doctrine consisting of a threefold spiritual training: namely, virtuous behaviour (sila), meditation practice (samadhi), and the acquisition of inner wisdom (prajna). In its twenty-five century history, Buddhism gradually spread throughout the world, bearing the light of love and compassion, always demonstrating itself to be a humanistic faith, never propagated by forced conversion or the sword, the antithesis of fundamental dogmatism and fanaticism.

Rational as it is intended to be, Buddhism is however much more than an intellectual philosophy. Buddhism is a spiritual system that posits a means of salvation (i.e., personal Enlightenment) with the ultimate aim of making the world a better place for all sentient beings. To study Buddha-dharma is therefore to embark upon a practical course of self-discovery and a rigorous, intensely private exercise in spiritual Awakening.

Over the centuries, hundreds of thousands of men and women, a vast host of spiritual seekers of Truth, sages and saints, have studied, meditated and practiced the Buddha's path.

Going for Refuge and Practicing Virtuous Conduct

In Buddhist tradition, when someone begins to take instruction in meditation, our custom is that they formally "Go for Refuge" and accept what is called the "Five Precepts." The meaning of this act becomes more profound as one proceeds along the Spiritual Path. Simply put, to take Refuge is to turn decisively away from seeking fulfillment in temporal worldly goals and instead aim for spiritual awakening. Going for Refuge initiates a process of turning toward peace, wisdom, goodness and enlightenment, founded on a heartfelt desire to profoundly connect with the transcendental Reality that is the true source of our being.

It is said that one takes refuge in the Three Jewels. These are the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, and this trinity forms the threefold refuge of all Buddhists.

In the relative or worldly sense:

- Buddha: The sage Sakyamuni, who proclaimed to the world the Path to Enlightenment, is known as our primary or original teacher and guide. He is called 'Buddha' because he attained full Enlightenment, or in other words, 'Buddhahood.'

- Dharma: The body of teaching taught by the Buddha, explaining the Path to Enlightenment, is known as the doctrine, the 'practice' or 'religion' of Buddhism.

- Sangha: The spiritual community of all those who study and try to put into practice the Dharma, with the hope of attaining Buddhahood.

In the absolute or transcendental sense:

- The term Buddha refers to the One Reality, the ultimate Truth, primordial Awareness, the supreme source, fully awake intelligence, Enlightened-mind, without beginning, self-

existent, beyond time and space. Awakening to the presence of this reality within oneself is true Enlightenment.

- The term Dharma refers to the divine Order of the universe. It is through the divine or cosmic Order that everything exists and functions. Matter is created, the stars revolve on their courses, living beings breath and move, actions (*karma*) occur according to the law of cause and effect, all due to this divine Order. Living in harmony with that Order is true wisdom.

- The term Sangha refers to the common living community or oneness of all sentient beings. Whatever living beings there are, weak or strong, of great intelligence or little, from the very small to the very large, visible or invisible, dwelling anywhere throughout the universe, without exception they all have consciousness and life in common. Sharing in that oneness-with-all is true compassion.

To take refuge in these three jewels means to affirm them in one's own life as the guides that can assist one on the Spiritual Path.

When we formally "Go for Refuge," following the method as we learned it from our teacher Namgyal Rimpoche, we do so first in the ancient Pali or Sanskrit language, and then in English. We do this both for historical reasons and also to maintain accuracy of interpretation over the centuries. Both the old Pali and the ancient Sanskrit text of "Going for Refuge" is exactly the same and as it was in the Buddha's time:

> *Buddham saranam gacchami.*
> **"To the Buddha for refuge do I go."**
> *Dharmam saranam gacchami.*
> **"To the Dharma for refuge do I go."**
> *Sangham saranam gacchami.*
> **"To the Sangha for refuge do I go."**

It is through the simple act of reciting this formula three times in front of a recognized member of the Sangha, that one declares oneself an adherent of Buddhism. Like the foundation of a temple, Refuge is the basis upon which all other Buddhist practice is built.

Taking the Five Precepts

After Going for Refuge, the next step is to try to follow, as rules of training, the Five Precepts (*panca-sila*). These are called "rules of training' because they are presented as guidelines. They are guidelines to support the spiritual training that we wish to undertake. Their observance ensures a noble life and is considered helpful for making progress on the path to Enlightenment. These are voluntary precepts, chosen to be followed by the Buddhist practitioner. Some Buddhists choose not to take on these rules of training. We would encourage you, however, to consider doing so.

1. *Pranatipata viratih saikshapadam samadeyami.*
   "I undertake the rule of training not to kill living beings."
   This means to support and appreciate the life of all living beings.

2. *Adattadana viratih saikshapadam samadeyami.*
   "I undertake the rule of training to refrain from taking anything that is not given."
   This means to dwell more and more in an attitude of spontaneous generosity.

3. *Kamasu mithyacara viratih saikshapadam samadeyami.*
   "I undertake the rule of training not to commit harmful sexual acts."
   This means, when sexually relating to others, to do so in an intimate, loving manner.

4. *Mirsavada viratih saikshapadam samadeyami.*
   "I undertake the rule of training not to utter any false speech."
   This means to try always to communicate with others in a truthful and compassionate manner.

5. *Sura maireya madyapana viratih saikshapadam samadeyami.*
   "I undertake the rule of training to avoid intoxication, either through abusing alcohol or by taking drugs."
   This means to eat, drink and nurture oneself in a way that supports mental clarity and awakening.

Frequently Asked Questions about Going for Refuge

Is Refuge the same in all traditions and schools of Buddhism?

Yes, all traditions (Burmese, Chinese, Thai, Tibetan, Japanese Zen, etc., etc.) share the same basic Refuge. In the Mahayana tradition, however, the scope of the basic Refuge is widened, and added to by formally taking what is known as the Bodhisattva Vow, which is the pledge to work for the benefit of all beings and the betterment of the world we live in.

Does Going for Refuge bind the person to any special commitments?

Yes, taking Refuge implies a commitment to the Spiritual Path. The main commitment, therefore, is to maintain one's faith and confidence in the Three Jewels. To help one do this, there are two particular sets of rules. The first three rules are prohibitions:

- Having taken refuge in the Buddha, who represents absolute enlightened Awareness, do not seek refuge in "worldly gods" (including, for example, money, power, powerful people, prestige, drugs, pop stars, etc.) or cult figures, since such idols are incapable of freeing one from attachment and suffering.

- Having taken refuge in the Dharma, the essence of which love and compassion, one should try to act in accord with righteousness and wisdom. Nor should one harm or speak out against the truth found in other Religions, since these too are all an expression of Dharma.

- Having taken refuge in the Sangha, which is made up of "spiritual friends", one should always try to treat all sentient beings justly, honestly, and avoid causing harm to them. do not cling to the company of people of bad behaviour, criminals, sex-abusers, gamblers, drunkards and drug-users, or those who otherwise are detrimental to your spiritual life.

The next three rules contain positive instruction:

- Having taken refuge in the Buddha, always treat pictures, paintings and statues of the Buddha, also any part of such an image, broken or otherwise, with respect. This applies to other sacred images, symbols and objects, such as Stupas, as well as those of other religions. (A Buddha-image should always be handled respectfully and with due reverence and never be trodden on, or thoughtlessly treated, or picked up by the head.)

- Having taken refuge in the Dharma, always treat scriptures and sacred texts with respect.

(The scriptures should not be strewn around thoughtlessly or as props for other articles. If you need to place a sacred text on the ground, make sure the ground or floor is clean first. Never place something like your coffee cup down on your prayer book. This respect for the scriptures extends to those of other religions and languages too.)

- Having taken refuge in the Sangha, always show respect for monks and nuns, ordained clergy and teachers, not just for themselves, but for what they represent. (This includes showing respect for the robe and bowl, meditation hall, temples, etc., symbols of the Sangha. When greeting a religious person, it is nice to place the hands together and give a respectful bow. It is considered bad form to shake hands with a monk or nun.)

These are guidelines for showing respect for that which you hold dear, rather than any kind of hard and fast system of rules. Spiritual behaviour should not be conducted superstitiously or fettered by obsessive totem and taboo. The idea is rather to instill an awareness in our self that will help foster our spiritual progress. Nor does holding a rule give one license to judge others. Adversely judging others, or oneself, does not lead to spiritual maturity. As the saying goes, "Judge not, lest ye also be judged."

Does Going for Refuge mean that I have to adopt any particular food or drink restrictions, or wear particular clothing?

No, not at all. Some Buddhists choose to be vegetarian, many are not. The Buddha did not discriminate. Buddhists tend to eat according to the cuisine of the country in which they live. But it is a personal choice. Many Buddhists understand the fifth precept, which prohibits intoxication (*madyapana, drunkenness*) and the taking of drugs (*maireya*), to mean refraining from alcohol (*sura*) altogether. If you wish to do so, that is fine, but many interpret the precept to allow for the consumption of wine and other alcoholic beverages in proper moderation. Buddhists may eat and drink what ever they want, as they see fit. (The rule is stricter for ordained monks and nuns, who do not drink alcohol at all). The same is true for clothing, which is entirely a matter of personal preference.

Does Going for Refuge commit one to a specific Lama, fellowship or school of Buddhism?

No. Going for Refuge is one thing and choosing one's personal spiritual guide and tradition of Buddhist practice is quite another. The connection between oneself and the ordained preceptor who gives Refuge is considered sacred and something to be grateful for, but this connection does not commit one to accept that individual as one's personal Lama (guru) or Spiritual Leader. Nor does Going for Refuge in one Buddhist tradition oblige one to continue in that tradition. You may, as you mature and learn more about the different schools of Buddhism, later decide to switch to another tradition, or even move between them. The diversity of Buddhism in its many different schools and sects are like the wondrous prismatic rays of a single universal pure light, seen as it were through the many facets of the beautiful diamond of Dharma. We should learn to appreciate the whole display.

Does Going for Refuge mean that I must renounce my own religious traditions?

No. Buddhism is all-inclusive. To follow the Dharma does not preclude involvement in other spiritual traditions. Although it may not always work in practice, depending on the person in question or external pressure from the society in which the person lives, theoretically a Hindu, Moslem, Jew or Christian is quite free to follow the Buddhist Path, without any need to renounce their native faith or customs.

Prayers for Meditation

Going to work each day, rushing through traffic, entertaining friends on weekends, never slowing down in either action or conversation, and facing the hectic problems of earning a living and paying the bills, is in many ways the extreme opposite of a contemplative life.

The difficulty is that in the West we really cannot avoid dealing with the stress of worldly activity. Although sitting in meditation may make us feel slightly better and our tension may subside for a little while, that does not really solve the problem. Very rapidly the demands of a busy life nullify all the benefits of quiet sitting. So we have to fashion a spiritual life that both fits into our worldly routine and encourages our inner unfoldment. We need to accompany our practice of meditation with a spiritual routine. We do this by reciting our *Prayers of Meditation*. *Prayers for Meditation* fall into two parts: the *Preparation Prayers* said prior to meditation and the *Post-meditation Prayers* said afterwards. Through chanting these prayers, we create the right attitude of mind. We set the scene, as it were, and we generate a wholesome, positive mental attitude necessary for good meditation practice. These prayers are powerful *affirmations* that support our spiritual life.

At the very least we should begin meditation by reciting "Going for Refuge" and "Generating an Enlightened-mind" motivated by a desire to become Enlightened so as to be able to better the lives of all beings in the world. Likewise, we should conclude meditation practice with what is called *Dedicating the Good* for the benefit of others. It should be really understood that we who follow the sacred lineage of the Ka'gyu are pledged to the service of humanity. We therefore constantly pray that all benefits gained from spiritual practice, from acts of doing good, or from meditation, be not for selfish aims, but be dedicated towards the welfare and betterment of others.

Part II: Developing Calm-abiding

Buddhist meditation comes from a tradition of practice that has stood the test of time.

The beginner should first persevere with great diligence in what is known as Calm-abiding (Skt: *shamatha*, Tib: *zhi-gnas*) Meditation, and only then move on to what is called Insight-practice (Skt: *vipasyana*, Tib: *lhag-thong*).

By cultivating Calm-abiding through the effort of training in concentration of mind, following the unique and wondrous teachings of the Kagyu Masters, it is possible to eventually attain blissful absorption in deep Samadhi. From that vantage point the meditator may experience panoramic consciousness, and gain higher insight into the mind's true nature and function.

Although direct realization of the true nature of mind is the main aim of meditation, there are also many secondary benefits, both mental and physical.

Over time, meditation eliminates the three root causes of unhappiness: attachment, aversion and delusion. With continuous practice, meditation releases the pain of past traumas and the tensions of everyday life, opening the heart to love and the joy of inner wellbeing.

Calm-abiding meditation is also well known for awakening the psychic faculties: telepathy, intuition, clairvoyance, psychic projection and so forth.

On the physical side, meditation has on occasion been known as a factor in the cure bodily disease. In some cases, serious heart problems, virulent cancers and other afflictions have been, in a seemingly miraculous manner, eradicated through the transformative power of meditation practice. (Of course, there is no guarantee that these health benefits will occur. Individuals should not rely on meditation, in place of proper medical attention, as if meditation were some sort of magic cure.)

Meditation also deals with psychological issues. If you are doing genuine meditation, all the traumas and buffets of childhood will come back during your ongoing development, and some of the sudden pains you may experience are a quick workout of this memory bank. Unlike psychotherapy, however, the pains and emotional upheavals of meditation are a momentary event. When psychosomatic flashes come and go, this means that (in Buddhist terminology) the meditator is unraveling his or her karma, and the karmic memory is being unwound backwards so smoothly and transparently that it is not necessary to repeat the full trauma of past experiences.

One thing to know, is when faced with psychological phenomena in meditation, the practitioner should simply persevere at the practice, knowing that progress is being made. As the great teacher Namgyal Rinpoche once said, "Simply remain unmoved–the Buddha sat under the Bodhi-tree and all the temptations of the devil (*mara*) came to him, which is another way of saying the traumas, the psychic garbage and debris. Let it all rage around you but maintain the calm, still nature."

With sharpened awareness and clarity of mind, through concentration and the attainment of inner stillness, the individual may proceed to observe the true nature of mind and gain insight into the universal truths of impermanence, the cause of suffering, and egolessness.

Seeking Guidance

Meditation practice needs personalized direction. In the Orient no one would think of practicing meditation without first going to an experienced teacher for direction. It is essential to receive

authentic instruction if one is going to benefit from meditation practice. One cannot learn meditation from a book or a written set of instructions.
Be warned that in the modern world there are self-proclaimed teachers who advance their own made-up systems of meditation. They think they know what they are doing, but they do not. Such systems have not been tested out over the centuries and may well do more damage than good. Should you wish to learn a valid and known path of self-realization, you should therefore stick to a traditional school.

Furthermore, in traditional schools in the East, to learn meditation, a person has first to visit a monastery (or yogi's hermitage) where the residents are themselves not only practicing meditation, but are fully immersed in the spiritual life. There, in the appropriate milieu of a religious establishment, where meditation is surrounded by daily spiritual routine and other edifying practices, the student is introduced to the discipline within an environment conducive to calm and insight.

Essentials for Good Practice

There are five things that are necessary for doing meditation practice:

1. Faith in the practice.

2. An authorized, experienced teacher. A meditator should seek private audience with the teacher on a fairly regular basis. The teacher's job does not only consist in teaching one how to meditate, but the teacher is also there to draw the pupil on to greater efforts and push the pupil to face the psychological resistance and denial that can also be part of meditation experience. A good teacher should also be a moral guide.

3. Routine. It is very good to sit with a meditation group on a regular basis, at least once or twice a week. The routine and the mutual support of a common *sangha* are enormously helpful for the beginner. If the *sangha* has a meditation hall, it helps to sit in the same place each time. Routine and similarity of associations habituate one to the practice. Later, as you grow more advanced in the practice, it is also good to start to practice *eremetical* meditation, alone in nature.

4. Loose, light clothing. It is not a bad idea to use a light shawl (white is the traditional colour for lay Buddhists) to wrap round oneself during meditation practice. Such a shawl helps to enclose oneself mentally, to draw one inward, and shut the world out.

5. A suitable firm cushion. The best would seem to be the Japanese *zabuton* and *zafu* combination, which have become quite well known in the West. The height of the *zafu* depends on how well a person can sit in the traditional posture. It is essential that one is comfortable when sitting in meditation.

Avoid poor environments for meditation. Stuffy, dirty, untidy or noisy places, or places with many associations and distractions, make learning to meditate much more difficult for beginners. Refrain from using artificial scents. Also it would be better if you did not use artificial light or candles; rather, keep to natural light as far as possible. The more bare the space the better; clear the room of everything that is non-essential to the practice, clear away the clutter. A clean, neutral place, well-aired and open, should be chosen, and if possible, a pleasant outdoor site, where one can be "alone in nature," such as a hillside with wide spacious views, is considered most ideal. You will discover that meditating outdoors in nature helps to settle the mind and generate inner peace.

The beginner should also avoid long sittings. It is better to just meditate well, in a good posture, for a few minutes than to become drowsy and pained over a longer period of time. The idea is to

build your meditation sessions on positive associations. If, after say ten minutes, there is pain and displeasure, one can relax and let the body adjust – perhaps stretch or fidget a little. Then one may return mindfully to the practice for another ten or fifteen minutes. Over time you will find your sittings becoming longer. You will then enjoy sitting for twenty, thirty, or forty minute sessions. It is important to follow the natural rhythm, to be natural in the body and mind.

It is extremely important to prepare yourself before each sitting. Decide before you begin the session what exactly you wish to explore during the time you shall spend in meditation. In this way you can determine the unfoldment of your meditation, or use your meditation to tackle some problem that has been arising. You also should clarify your motive for wanting to meditate; do you, in fact, know why you are meditating?

At the end of each meditation it is good to you spend a minute or two in reviewing the session that has occurred. Review work is every bit as important as preparation. Every session brings its breakthroughs; look for these in your review and acknowledge them. Acknowledge even the little events, the flutterings in the centres, the moments of peace that occurred, however minor you think these may have been. It is quite a good thing to keep a meditation diary.

Your basic attitude towards meditation should be somewhat similar to that of a research scientist in the field: serious, calm, disciplined, rigorous and objective, but with the inner excitement of an approaching discovery. We describe this as an attitude of exploration supported by a sense of pleasant anticipation. Don't allow your meditation to become boring. Always approach the practice with a positive attitude.

The method that we shall briefly describe here is referred to as concentration developed through unwavering attention on the breathing. This practice is not difficult to learn.

Using the Breath to Enter Into Meditation

Anaprana-smrti, or literally "remembrance of inhalation-exhalation," is one meditation method suitable for everybody. The earliest text describing this meditation is Sutra 118 from the *Madhyama Nikaya* of the Pali Canon, which purports to be a discourse directly spoken by the Buddha himself. Even the most advanced methods of meditation (e.g., Kundalini-yoga, Mahamudra, etc.) taught in the Ka'gyu tradition depend for a basis upon the technique of *Anaprana-smrti*. As the Buddha himself said:

> *"Mindfulness of breathing, O Bhikkshus, developed and repeatedly practiced, is of great fruit, of great benefit; mindfulness of breathing, developed and repeatedly practiced, perfects the four foundations of mindfulness; the four foundations of mindfulness, developed and repeatedly practiced, perfects the seven enlightenment factors; the seven enlightenment factors, developed and repeatedly practiced, perfects clear-vision and Liberation."*

It was by means of attention on the rise and fall of the breath that Buddha Sakyamuni found a way to enter deep meditation and thereby he attained realization. One should therefore establish great faith in the validity of this method of meditation.

Although mindfulness of breathing can be practiced both while standing, walking or lying down, the basic posture best suited for learning the practice is while sitting.

Sitting Meditation

For the purpose of sitting one should attempt the sevenfold Buddha-posture described as follows:

1. Back: Maintain a straight spine. The spine should be as straight as possible – like an arrow or a pile of coins. If the spine is curved, energy will be expended unwisely and eventually the legs, back or neck will begin to ache. A straight, relaxed position will prevent back pains from developing.

2. Legs: The legs should be either fully crossed over each other in what is called the Vajra-posture, or they can be half crossed over in what is known as the Siddha-posture, but if either of those is too difficult, they can be crossed under each other in the so called tailor posture. To support the tailor posture you will need a thick cushion. If one is prevented from crossing the legs due to physical limitation or age, then a stool or a chair is permissible, although not advisable. Do not sit in a chair unless you absolutely have to. As our Lama Namgyal Rimpoche used to say, in the traditional meditation posture it is easier to see what needs correcting. You can ask yourself, "Where is the tension and why is it in this part of the body?' Then pose the question, "How can this be remedied?' You will also soon discover that the traditional posture is the most stable and centered.

3. Hands: Let the hands assume the "equanimity gesture" in which the writing hand is made to rest on the palm of the other, thumbs just touching, level with the navel. The arms are said to be in the "vulture wing position" with elbows bent, held slightly away from the sides of the body. Alternatively one can rest the palms, face down, on the knees, with thumb and index fingers together. In both cases, what is important is that the shoulders remain relaxed.

4. Chin: Keep the head level, straight and balanced. The neck should be straight, relaxed, chin in, so as to avoid any strain that can lead to headaches. Also, to avoid headaches, check that you are not straining the eyes or back of the neck.

5. Gaze: Though beginners tend to find it easier to meditate with the eyes closed, it is better to train oneself to sit with open eyes from the outset. Closed eyes encourage daydreaming and distraction. Keep the eyes slightly open (or in other words, heavily lidded) and relaxed, with the gaze looking downward if practicing Calm-abiding. This downward-looking gaze inclines at about a forty-five degree angle, toward a spot about four feet in front of one. There is no harm in sometimes allowing the eyes to simply close, but on the whole it is considered better to have them partially open. There is less chance of disorientation that way. If one is doing Insight-practice then the gaze should look straight ahead, towards the horizon. In both cases, even though the eyes are open, one is not specifically looking at anything. It is important to keep the gaze steady. Relaxation is important, the eyes should not be strained and it is normal to blink so as to irrigate the pupils. Of course, the eyes may be closed, if and when doing visualization work.

6. Tongue: Maintain the tongue at ease, gently touching the upper teeth and palate.

7. Jaw: Check that the jaw is relaxed. If the jaw is clenched, the rest of the body will be tense. Relax the jaw. The jaw should be slightly apart, the teeth not clenched, but the lips closed.

One breathes through the nose. Breathe a little slower than normal, more like a person who is asleep. Breathe in gently, feeling the abdomen expand. Briefly hold the breath. Then breathe out gently, feeling the abdomen contract. [1]

From time to time, have the teacher "check" your posture. Posture will improve as one settles into deeper meditation. Take care to avoid bad posture, i.e., do not lean to the left, the right, the front or the back. Due to physical imbalance, some people feel that they are sitting perfectly straight,

when actually they are not.[2] Good posture may require some effort and even some pain at first, but it is a truly worthwhile investment of one's time.

In Mindfulness of Breathing the attention is fixed on the slight rising (expansion) and falling (contraction) of the abdomen that accompanies breathing. When fully relaxed, the breathing becomes slower and deeper. Persistent effort is then applied to enable the mind to follow the inhalation-exhalation to the exclusion of all else.

The attention on the rise and fall of the breath in the region of the abdomen, levels of Calm-abiding are gradually developed, and this is accomplished by keeping the mind unwaveringly fixed on its object alone. When the mind wanders, we must gently bring it back.

Inhale through the nostrils normally, without strain, and without force. When the inhalation is complete, gently hold the breath for a brief moment. But be natural about this. Before any strain develops, gently exhale. An inhalation, retention and exhalation is known as one cycle of breathing.

Beginners can learn to meditate while counting each cycle of breath. Count from one to ten, and then begin to count from one again.

The beginner will find that very quickly the mind starts to wander. A signal that the mind is wandering occurs when it is realized that one has lost count. You then have to start over again, counting from one to ten. If thoughts intrude, gently push them away. Keep attention fixed on the cycle of breathing.

When finally counting from one to ten seems relatively easy, then attempt a meditation session where you count from one to one-hundred cycles of breath. If at some point the mind wanders and you forget what number of breath you are counting, then start again from the beginning. And again and again, until you feel that you can hold the mind to its object.

Having mastered the exercise of staying with the cycles of breathing in this manner, the beginner should then stop counting and instead proceed with mental "naming'. The latter consists of mentally saying "rising" on the inhalation, "holding" during the retention, and "falling" during the exhalation. Understand that one's attention is kept on the rise and fall of the abdomen, more or less on a point within the abdomen region about four digits below the navel.

If the mind wanders due to distraction, it is possible to mentally say "wandering" and then bring the attention back to the cycle of breath. If itching or pain is so distractive as not to allow the concentration to continue, then one can mentally say "itching, itching," or "pain, pain," and keeping the attention on that, use the very distraction itself as a focus of attention. Mental "naming" is a subtle way of keeping the mind on the object of meditation.

Tireless persistence in noting, naming, and pressing on is all that is required. It is the same with the multitude of thoughts that come unbidden into the mind while you are trying to do the exercise. You have to establish who is master, and so far as possible, never let oneself willingly be sidetracked into daydreams or other thinking. Each time the mind strays or the attention finds itself attracted to something (such as a particular noise, thought, light, or a bodily sensation) other than the breathing itself, a mental note should be made of the fact. The mind may then be gently but firmly brought back to the object of meditation.

Once that a distraction has been detected and dealt with, then you should return to the regular exercise of noting the rise, retention and fall of the breath. "Rise," "hold," "fall," are the three thoughts that can be repeated, over and over again, with each cycle of breath. In this way you are *training the mind* to the exclusion of all else, in much the same way as an athlete trains his

body.

At first there will be many distractions because the mind has been used to wandering without any restraint whatsoever. However the practitioner should not lose heart on this account. Everyone has the same problem with distraction at the beginning and even the greatest Yogis have had to go through the same training in one form or another. You will discover that after repeated sessions of practice the mind can no longer play truant because it is always found out each time that it wanders. It therefore begins to settle down and gradually becomes habituated to concentration. Once that happens, a certain degree of clarity and calm begins to arise, which signals that the mind is actually starting to "abide" in its own state.

Many sessions of meditation using the techniques of "counting" and "naming" should occur before one is ready to progress further. But then, after the beginner has made progress, he or she may be ready to move on to bare witnessing. At this point one does not count the cycles of breaths, nor name them, but merely remains aware of them. Witness them. If a distraction – an itch, a train of thought, a visual image – occurs, just remain in witnessing mode. Remaining aware of the cycle of breath, in a steady manner with little or no distraction, is a form of bare witnessing that grows ever deeper as one continues.

The shift from the "counting" stage, to the "naming" stage, and then to the "bare witness" stage can sometimes be difficult. Long practice in one stage habituates the mind to that practice. As one shifts to bare witnessing, the mind will repeatedly go back to subtle "counting" or "naming." Effort has to be applied to stop this habitual tendency. This effort is the same as that applied to stop the arising of distraction. It should not be an overly forceful effort—rather, just a gentle reminder to return to the exercise at hand.

Calm-abiding meditation, followed according to the way it is described above, will gradually still the mind. With stillness, clarity will dawn. With clarity, the light of mastery, purity and harmony is established in consciousness.

In Calm-abiding practice there are said to be nine stages—ever deepening degrees of developing calm and peace—which eventually lead to one-pointedness of mind, full absorption and Samadhi.

Samadhi is an ecstatic state of truly expanded consciousness, in which the meditator experiences divine light and bliss. Various levels and types of Samadhi have been attained by experienced meditators, resulting in supernal states of consciousness that transcend the individual self. Such states take the seeker of Truth into the realm of the ultimate.

Part III: Mindfulness, the Fundamental Basis of Insight Meditation

Having first built a firm foundation of Calm-abiding, the more that one then introduces "mindfulness" into one's meditation, the more will the meditation be transformed into Insight-practice (*vipasyana*), and it is by means of the latter that Enlightenment dawns. Do not assume that one is ready to develop Insight-practice too soon. It is best to keep the work of concentration going until one is certain of real attainment, or at least until one has acquired a still, calm and truly lucid state of mind.

Here the guidance of a qualified teacher becomes valuable. With such guidance, one can learn how to raise the question, "What is the nature of mind?" Raising this and similar questions that seek to guide the student toward a direct exploration of the nature of mind, pertains to the specialized "oral instructions" for which the Ka'gyu masters are uniquely famous. Insight-practice is predicated on enquiry. Such practice is born of constant questioning and self-observation.

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness (*smriti, remembering*) is the cornerstone of the process of self-realization. Mindfulness is the antidote for the normal state of blindness and sleep that possesses ordinary consciousness.

When one goes about doing the things that are performed each day, the consciousness acts in such a way, that it is absorbed in whatever is going on. The mind is occupied, externally, by the sounds, sights, smells and tastes, etc., that impinge upon it. Likewise, the mind is occupied, internally, by the thoughts, feelings and impulses arising within the psyche. This pre-occupation or "entanglement" with events (*dharmas, phenomena*), whether outer or inner, physical or mental, other than itself, means that the mind is completely engrossed in ongoing activity (*karma*).

To really understand this, one must come to see the realization that human beings live and act in a somnambulistic state. For one to be conscious of oneself, in any given situation, one first has to remember (*smriti*) that one is present. But if one tries to remember oneself for even a short length of time, it rapidly becomes evident that the effort is near impossible to sustain.

For example, lets say that, even as you read these words, you attempt to remember yourself, as the reader; as the one who is conscious of the words being read. You try to be conscious of being, of existing, while involved in the act of reading. Allowing yourself to become absorbed in the act of reading, you nevertheless try to remain aware of yourself as the reader. How long can you sustain that self-awareness?

It doesn't take very much time—especially if a certain word or passage really catches your attention—before you find that you have forgotten to be self-aware, even while trying very hard to remember yourself, and instead have become absorbed in the content and ideas of what you are reading.

In a broad sense, this illustrates the strange lack of awareness that is peculiar to one's normal state of consciousness throughout the day. It is true, you can retain self-awareness for a little while, but in a moment or so, it is gone. This shows you, that you constantly forgot yourself. And in this state of accepted forgetfulness you live your life.

The largely automatic nature of human behaviour derives from not being truly conscious, or not being mindful in all that is occurring and taking place. What do we mean by "automatic"? Breathing, for example, is an automatic function. We accept that, and it is fine. But what is really hard to accept, is the fact that our psychological behaviour and even our "thinking", "feeling", and

"acting" is largely automatic also.

Our personality is something that gradually grows and forms, and as we so much can see by observing those around us, this personality learns to react/act in a set manner, both in relation to others and to the world in general. A person has an observable way of behaving in any given situation, and as that person gets older, these *reaction patterns* become ever more ingrained. Not only does personality define behaviour, it also defines how a person thinks, how they feel, and what their desires are. We can no more change who we are, our personality, than we can stop our breathing or stop our thinking. In this sense, consciousness may be said to be largely automatic, with our lives lived out in a strangely somnambulistic state of activity.

These are vitally significant realizations, because to be free, one has to be truly conscious.

Mindfulness is a case of being conscious, of being self-aware, of remembering oneself, while fully involved in all that is going on, both within and without. This means, not losing oneself in what is going on. Not forgetting. Being truly present.

The practice of mindfulness is a non-automatic activity. This is why it is so very difficult to maintain for any length of time.

The path begins with self-observation:

Self-observation is a preliminary exercise to actual mindfulness. It means to simply see and watch what is going on: how do we function, what are we aware of, how do we react with what is happening, and how do we identify with our thoughts, feelings and impulses, from moment to moment.

Normally, the first thing that people do when they start self-observing, is try to change their behaviour. The aim of studying oneself, however, is to see *how* one behaves. Not to change it, but to observe it! An attempt to manipulate or change one's behaviour, as it occurs, robs the exercise of its purpose.

It is particularly the case, that when negative reactions arise—such as anger, scorn, dislike, and so forth—one does not like to admit to having such behaviours. The temptation to modify or change what one sees in oneself, or to deny the very existence of such emotions, is normally irresistible.

In Buddhist terminology we refer to these negative thoughts, emotions and impulses as "defilements" (*klesa*) or "afflictions" (*asrava*), because they are much like stains on white cloth, discolouring or staining the clarity of our psyche. These defilements or stains are "constrictions" (*nivaranas*) that arise in the psyche.

How frequently do defilements arise in our system?

Defilements arise in the human psyche almost all the time, in steady succession, throughout the day!

The type of mental features that we are referring to as defilements are aversion, hate, anger, desire, want, confusion, conflict, fear, arrogance, defensive skepticism, enmity, concealment or denial, spite, envy, avarice, parsimony, dissimulation, insincerity, lying, aggression, vanity, ego-inflation, lack of conscience, lack of self-respect,or having no respect for others, restlessness, nervous excitation, faithlessness, cowardliness, criticism (of self, of others, of things), desultoriness, inattention, depression, lack of focus, and so on and so forth. It's a deplorable list,

isn't it?

The fact is, one or more of these negative "defilements" occur on a regular basis from one hour to the next. It is therefore important to look for the occurrence, to observe it, note it, and become conscious of it.

So in the exercise of self-observation one must take a serious, sincere look at oneself. This means, observing just how one's thoughts, feelings and impulses behave, moment to moment.

The Problem of Ego-grasping:

An aspect of the sleep that human's find themselves embroiled in, is the propensity of consciousness to *identify* with mentation. Mentation is the flow of thoughts, feelings, impulses that arise in the psyche, along with and in response to the physical sensations (sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and tactile perceptions) that impinge upon the sensory organs. This means that when a certain thought, feeling or impulse arises, the consciousness observing that, automatically identifies with the thought, feeling or impulse, and claims to own it. This we call ego-grasping (*atma-graha*). Ego-grasping is when consciousness "grasps" at a thought, and says "I think", or grasps at a passing feeling, and says "I feel such and such", and so on.

The problem is particularly pernicious when consciousness identifies with an impulse. This is something that it continuously does in a very unconscious way. For when consciousness identifies with an arising impulse, consciousness suggests to itself that the choice being made is its own choice, determined by "free will", which it is not.

The momentous discovery of the Buddha, is that there is no "self" or "ego" per se, in the human psyche; no master-self that consciously determines the choices we make. The sense of "self" that is experienced, is in fact an illusion. This truth, for the ordinary person, is impossible to accept. All apparent experience tells us otherwise.

Je Tsong-kha-pa, the great reformer of Buddhism in Tibet and the founder of the Gelugpa Order, in his chapter on Vipasyana in the "Stages of the Path" (*Lam-rim*), says:

> *"First, it is necessary for the mind to get weary of Samsara [i.e., worldly life] by pondering its unsatisfactoriness. This arouses a longing for transcendence. Then, by understanding that as long as one has not averted the cause of Samsara, one cannot escape it, one questions what the root of Samsara is, so that one can cut that root off at the source. Thus, having arrived through the power of one's investigations at the certainty that the root thereof is the reifying view of a "self" (satkayadristi), born out of ignorance (avidya), one must bring forth a truly authentic yearning to eliminate one's erroneous view of reality, once and for all… This, the ending of this sense of ego, is then accomplished directly through Insight-practice."*

The truth of the matter is, our sense of "self" is a delusion of "ego-grasping". It derives from falsely identifying with the ongoing stream of mentation, as it occurs.

This has been recently proven in a series of psychological tests made some years ago by Dr. Benjamin Libet of the University of California.

Neurophysiological research carried out by Dr. Libet first demonstrated that a weak electrical pulse to the skin must generate about half a second of electrical activity in the brain for it to reach consciousness. Then, in experiments conducted jointly with neurosurgeon Bertram Feinstein, Libet discovered the same response when he stimulated the brain directly with a gentle electrical current. "If we let the stimulus run for a half-second, the person felt it as a sensation…", Libet

discovered. "But if we ran it only four-tenths of second, he didn't feel a thing." What was learnt from these experiments was that the brain requires a processing delay of about half a second for us to become conscious of anything.

Now, what does this tell us about "choice-making"?

Feinstein and Libet went a step further in their experiments, and studied the action of sprinters at the starting line of a race. What they discovered was that, when the starting gun went off, the sprinters were out of the starting block in less than one-tenth of a second. Studies of brain activity showed that these sprinters were in motion before becoming conscious of the gun going off. That is, the impulse to run motivated them into action, prior to being conscious of making the choice to run.

This experiment revealed that the sprinters were responding unconsciously to the starting signal. In other words, the response to the starting gun and the decision to propel the body forward, occurred in the psyche prior to being known to the consciousness.

So, the choice was not a *conscious* choice.

The sprinter's recollection of what happened, their *conscious experience* of what happened, was of course quite different. From the sprinter's own recollection of what was happening, it was evident that the sprinter clearly believed that he only initiated activity when he became conscious of hearing the starting gun. "But the whole thing is back-tracked in time," as Libet explains, "so that it feels as though he heard the gun before he started.".

This means, we can confirm that brain activity associated with an *impulse* to act begins about half a second before one is conscious of the intention. Consciousness does not initiate choice. Choice is formed before the individual becomes conscious of it. This has astounding ramifications, since our whole sense of "self' and "free will' is based on the obvious feeling that it is the "conscious ego' that determines our choices.

One's sense of "I" is a sense of a *self that is conscious*; a "self" that can decide what to think, what to feel, what to do. "I decide to reach for a glass of water when thirsty,"; you say. And likewise, even when thirsty, you believe that you can decide not to reach for the water. This lets you believe that you are master of your thirst, your desires. To have a "self' means, so you believe, to consciously own your decisions.

But consciousness does not make choices. What consciousness does do is identify with the choice having been made by the system as a functioning whole, as and when the choice becomes conscious. Thus we say, "I choose…,"; when in fact the choice was *already made* for us.

According to the psychologist B.F. Skinner, creator of the theory of Behaviourism, "a person is not an originating agent; he is a locus, a point at which many genetic and environmental conditions come together in a joint effort."[3]

Similarly, when the Bhikshu Moliya Phagguna asked the Buddha, "Who is it who experiences sense-stimuli? Who senses?,"; he received the following reply:

> *"This question, the way it is asked, is not appropriate… I did not say, 'He experiences stimuli.' Had I so spoken, then the question as to 'who' experiences stimuli might be appropriate. But I did not speak thus. The question becomes appropriate if it were phrased as follows: 'From what precondition arises stimuli impinging on the sense-organs?' Then the correct answer would be, 'From the six sense-sources as precondition, there arises stimuli; from this stimuli as [a following] precondition, arises felt-experience.' And so on."*

The environment, internalized, is early on converted into psychic experience, and action into ideas, drives and impulses. The psyche is thereby replaced by an imagined "self". But this "self" or "ego" is, to quote once more from Skinner, "at best a repertoire of behaviour imparted by an organized set of contingencies." Truly, when an actual self is looked for, as an independent self-determining centre or "object", no such principle can be found. An event, whether internal or external, acting as a stimulus, is transmitted through the appropriate organ, whence it gives rise to feeling, which then is capable of prompting a conative act.

Thus, according to the Buddha, all experience is a concatenation of events:

> "When this is, then that becomes; from the arising of this, that arises; when this is not becoming, then that does not become; from the ceasing of this, that ceases."

Everything that arises depends on preconditions. This machine-like process, in the way everything works, is simply how a human being functions. Every experience, including each thought, emotion and choice, is part and parcel of a catena of events in a complex interplay that fundamentally is without beginning or end. Because the mind identifies with these events as they arise in consciousness, we experience a sense of self, and an important part of that sense of self includes the illusion of having chosen the said events ourselves.

How the Psychic Catena functions:

According to Buddhist psychology, every stimulus from the world around us makes its way to consciousness via two doors, in succession. Thus, in the case of a visible object that is "seen", we know that light-waves from the object in question enters the eye-organ and this stimulus (*sparsa*) is then transmitted through that sense-door to the brain. But before it can enter consciousness, it must also be transmitted through what is called the mind-door. How does this work?

The psychic catena (*cittavithi*) functions as follows: First, we begin with the normal state of the receptive psyche, which is passive, or what we might describe as "latent". This state, which is ready to receive the stimulus of an event, is called (1) *Bhavanga*, which is a term describing the basic condition of the psyche in its latent mode. This is an unconscious, neutral state of mind, that becomes "disturbed" by the reception of a stimulus. When disturbed, for one thought-moment (*citta-ksana*[4]), the Bhavanga state is said to (2) vibrate (*calana*). Due to this vibration, for a second thought-moment, the Bhavanga state becomes (3) arrested in its normal passive flow. *Arrestation* occurs only if the stimulus is of sufficient strength. Even a strong but continuously repeated stimulus can lose its power to arrest the Bhavanga-momentum.

The three Bhavanga states (original, vibrating, and arrested) are described as *bhavanga-srota*, the "being-continuum", that forms the underlying stream of events in a sentient being.

When the third Bhavanga moment comes to an end, a series of *preconscious* events unfold. For one moment the respective (4) sense-door cathects with the stimulus, which means that the object is sufficiently strong or unique to demand attention. In the following moment a respective (5) sense-perception arises. This too lasts for the duration of a moment, then passes away. However, the sense-perception (*vipaka-citta*) is (6) received and then (7) examined or categorized in the mind. Examination is followed by what is called (8) determination. In a nutshell, this means that the stimulus is received and compared with known, recorded data in the mind, and then automatically "defined". This split second "determination" becomes the moment of actual conation.

Conation means "choice making". But we are not talking here about a conscious choice making. We are talking about a mechanical or programmed choice making, a choice made in the mind prior to the decision becoming conscious, and this is what is called conation. This conation is a

determination arrived at, based on a host of prior data.

As a result of "determination", two things can happen: either the determination allows the apperception to rise to consciousness, or it does not. If it does not do so, we say that the apperception (i.e., whether a thought, feeling or impulse) is repressed.[5] If the apperception is not *repressed*, we say that it is projected (*javana*) into consciousness.

Rapid projection (*javana*) takes seven whole thought-moments (9-15). During these seven thought-moments, consciousness is said to undergo perception of the stimulus.

After the projection moments (normally seven in all, but at the instant of death only five) have transpired, two moments of (16-17) recording occur. This completes the catena.

Thus, in what really is an infinitesimal period of time, seventeen thought-moments occur in series for any psychic event to take place. (The numbers, in brackets above, detail these 17 moments). This series is what is known as a psychic catena (*cittavithi*). For everything that is experienced in consciousness, there must be such a psychic catena. And as we can see, most of the catena occurs beneath the level of what we call *consciousness*.

Recently a statement by the psychologist Dr. Erdelyi would seem to coincides rather well with what Buddhism has been saying all along, namely: "The mistake may be in thinking that 'knowing' is an either-or affair. Perception might be a complex of processes, and the conscious phase of it might be the very terminal point".[6] This is very true indeed. What is surprising is that only now does it appear that scientists in the West are beginning to realize this.

From this, we recognize that consciousness is a function. We cannot attribute to such a consciousness what is imagined to be an "ego"—in the sense of a permanent, independent, decision making self, residing in, but distinct from the body-mind complex. "To consider that mental consciousness constitutes an ego," said the Buddha, "is entirely wrong."

As the Buddha explained:

> *"For an arising and a passing away is seen there; and seeing the arising and passing away of these things, one would come to the conclusion that one's ego arises and passes away."*

What is but a concatenation of events cannot be described as a permanent, independent conscious "decision-making" Self. Therefore the Buddha advised that the arising and cessation of events (*dharmas*) be watched without identification, without ego-grasping, until true realization dawns. Thus, instead of claiming, "I think, I feel, or I make such and such a choice," the seeker of Truth should note only that thoughts arise and cease, feelings arise and cease, and impulses arise and cease.

Non-acquisition means not claiming that "these thoughts are mine,"; etc., or that "this is my decision". Instead the person should review the fact that:

> "This is not mine, this I am not, there is no ego here."

Walking Meditation

Walking meditation is done walking up and down either out of doors or, if in a meditation hall, then around the room. A stretch of about 30 to 40 paces is about right. Too long a stretch is undesirable because, as the practitioner will discover, the act of turning is an important aspect of the exercise. Too short a stretch does not allow calmness to be sustained.

While walking, the attention should be kept on the movement of each foot as it is lifted, swung forward, and put down. Here, each separate action of walking is accompanied by mentally naming: "up," "forward," "down," or whatever other words might be preferred. The main condition is that, during each successive step, the attention must not be allowed to wander from the activity of the feet. For this reason the hands, with the writing hand held by the other, are clasped over the heart, and the eyes remain cast somewhat downwards.

In keeping the attention on the foot movement, two distinct mental processes must be noted. The first is the intention arising in the mind. The second is the impulse to the body and feet to carry the intention out. The reason for separating the intention to move from the movement itself is so as to break the apparent continuity of the conation process and make one conscious of the two quite distinct mental events required to carry out any physical impulse. For the mind to watch these mental processes, movement has to be done very slowly and deliberately.

Note the intention to lift the foot, followed by "lifting." Then the intention to swing the foot forward, and with the movement, the mental naming, "swing." The intention to put the foot down, and with the movement, again the naming, "down." "Intending lift," "lifting." "Intending swing," "swing." "Intending down," "down." And so on.

Then after some thirty paces or so, "intending stopping," "stop." "Intending lift and swivel." "Lifting, swiveling." "Intending down," "down." Slowly one turns. How many separate movements are involved in the turning? And then one is off again, walking forwards. Thus one proceeds, up the path and down the path, turning about at each end. Throughout the exercises the aim is not to be distracted by thoughts ¬– to remain ever mindful, alert.

As with sitting, hardly a minute passes when one does not have to check some train of thought that starts up unbidden and frequently unnoticed. Gently but firmly the mind must be constantly brought back to the meditation object. If you find yourself having a "thought-conversation" about what one is doing, that is a distraction. Likewise one must guard against any onset of boredom and tedium on the one hand, or strain and tension on the other. The exercise, therefore, is not in any sense an easy one. But by keeping up the drill, repeated attempts gradually bring the elephant of mind under control.

According to the instructions of the Buddha, one should be mindful of the activities of walking while walking, of standing while standing, sitting while sitting, and even of lying while lying down. This means that one should be mindful of every bodily activity as it occurs. But while noting every bodily activity, one also has to be mindful of the mental activities that are happening too. When a feeling arises, one should note it. When a sensation arises, note it. Only in this manner, and under all different conditions, can the true nature of the mind-body complex be found out.

It should also be recognized that normally, when someone is walking, while one foot is being put down the other leg begins to lift in expectation of the next step. During walking meditation this should not be allowed to occur. The next step should begin only after the first has finished. This allows the Yogin sufficient separation to follow each movement with complete mindful observation.

Just as in the case of sitting meditation, after considerable time spent in the "naming" stage, it is necessary to move on to bare "witnessing." This means that one retains awareness of the walking,

but without naming the specific movements. Do not jump to this too soon. First make certain that consciousness has attained some degree of actual Calm-abiding, and then progress to the point where it is possible to be vividly aware of each and every movement, but without any thought or name arising in the mind. Just witness activity with utter calmness. Mindfulness will develop into an overall clarity of the consciousness, and as this becomes quite natural, one's previous lack of lucidity will be remembered with something like a shock.

The Fourfold Practice of Mindfulness

Specifically, mindfulness is the direct means to change the way that the consciousness behaves, to awaken us from sleep; it is the sole way to bring about spiritual liberation. "This is the one way, O Bhikshus," said the Buddha, "leading to complete catharsis,[7] to the overcoming of sorrow and depression, to the cessation of suffering and anxiety, to entering into the true Spiritual Path, and to the realization of Nirvana: namely the fourfold Practice of Mindfulness."

The fourfold Practice of Mindfulness may be practiced as a sitting meditation and as a walking meditation.

In taking up the Insight-practice of "mindfulness while in sitting meditation," one should change the focus of the gaze. Previously, in Calm-abiding meditation, one has been meditating with the gaze focused downward, along the angle of the nose. This has been helpful in bringing about concentration and inward calm, which is intended to lead to the Samadhi-state, as explained in Part II of the Dharma Fellowship Meditation Manual. Now, however, the gaze should be raised to the far horizon. The sevenfold Buddha-posture explained in the Dharma Fellowship Meditation Manual is the same for Insight-practice as for the more basic exercise of Calm-abiding, except for this feature, namely that the gaze is raised and focused straight ahead. One thus, so to speak, draws back onto centre, in oneself.

It is said that when the Lord Buddha was residing with the people of Kuru, at a market town called Kamasadamma, he taught this practice of Mindfulness as a special method to an advanced group of followers. This group consisted of fully ordained monks, and consequently, the individuals to whom the Buddha's discourse (sutra) is addressed, are all referred to as "Bhikshus". They had been practicing meditation for some time. It was to this group of advanced students that the Buddha taught what is called the "fourfold Practice of Mindfulness"[8] and we possess a record of his discourse in the Smrityupasthana Sutra.

What is the fourfold Practice of Mindfulness? In the sutra the four steps of this practice are taught in detail and in a precise order. They consist of:

Mindfulness of the Body
Mindfulness of the Feelings
Mindfulness of the Psyche
Mindfulness of Phenomena

As one by now will understand, the practice begins with Calm-abiding meditation but then progresses into Insight-practice through special observation of the body, feelings, thinking and perception, and phenomena. We shall quote the words of the Buddha, in describing these four sets of practice.

First, how to practice Mindfulness of the Body:

> *"Herein, Bhikshus, a Bhikshu should abide [in meditation,] attentive on the body as the body; energized, clearly aware and mindful, having put aside worldly needs and depression.*

"And how, O Bhikshus, does a Bhikshu abide attentive on the body as the body?

"Herein, a Bhikshu should go to the forest, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty spot, and sitting down with the legs crossed, with his body erect, he should arouse remembrance in front, namely by observing the breath. Thus, with mindfulness he breathes in, and with mindfulness he breathes out. He observes, 'I breathe in long', and is conscious when breathing in long; or observes, 'I breathe out long,' and is conscious when breathing out long; or observes, 'I breathe in short,' and is conscious when breathing in short; or observes, 'I breathe out short,' and is conscious when breathing out short.

"Then, 'sensing the whole body, the breath is breathed in,' observing thus, he trains himself. "Experiencing the whole body, the breath is breathed out,' observing thus, he trains himself. 'Calming the body, the breath is breathed in,' and 'Calming the body, the breath is breathed out,' observing thus, he trains himself.

"Thus he abides attentive on the body as the body internally, or he abides attentive on the body as the body externally, or he abides attentive on the body internally and externally. He abides attentive on the origination of phenomena in relation to the body, or he abides attentive on the dissolution of phenomena in relation to the body, or he abides attentive on the origination and dissolution of phenomena in relation to the body.

"Or indeed, his mindfulness is based on the mere recognition: "The body is,' to the bare extent necessary for knowledge and remembrance, and he abides independent and clings to naught in this world.

"Thus, O Bhikshus, should a Bhikshu abide attentive on the body as the body.

"And further, O Bhikshus, when he is walking, a Bhikshu should observe: "walking'; when he is standing, he should observe: "standing'; when he is sitting, he should observe: "sitting" when he is lying down, he should observe: "lying down". Just as his body is disposed, so he should observe it…"

Second, how to practice Mindfulness of the Feelings:

Caught up in strong body-sensation and feelings is the way that consciousness becomes entangled and captured by events. The sensations and emotions are more powerful than the thoughts. They grab us, and we entirely forget ourselves.

So we need to become mindful of our feelings very carefully and wisely, because of the greater hold they can have over us.

Mindfulness of feelings was described by the Lord Buddha as follows:

"And how, O Bhikshus, does a Bhikshu abide attentive on the feelings as feelings?

"Herein, O Bhikshus, a Bhikshu when experiencing a pleasant feeling, observes: 'This is a pleasant feeling' when experiencing a painful feeling, he observes: 'This is a painful feeling' when experiencing a neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling, he observes: 'This is a neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling…' Thus he abides attentive on the feelings as feelings internally, or he abides attentive on the feelings as feelings externally, or he abides attentive on the feelings both internally and externally. He

abides attentive on the origination of phenomena in relation to the feelings, or he abides attentive on the dissolution of phenomena in relation to the feelings, or he abides attentive on the origination and dissolution of phenomena in relation to the feelings.

"Or his mindfulness is based on the mere recognition: 'Feeling is' to the bare extent necessary for knowledge and remembrance, and he abides independent and clings to naught in this world.

"Thus, O Bhikshus, should a Bhikshu abide attentive on the feelings as the feelings."

Third, how to practice Mindfulness of the Psyche:

In developing attention on the psyche, one's state of mind, one must focus on the volitions (*cetana, conation or will*) and instinctual impulses (*samskara*) that arise in the mind. One must watch the basic drives: how they arise, how they impel us into activity. Where does an impulse come from? At exactly what initial point can a conation be observed?

Impulses are stronger than sensation and emotion. Our instinctual drives frequently are responsible for determining how we think and feel—they can even determine our beliefs and fundamental outlook on life itself. We are all slaves to desire.

As mindfulness deepens, it becomes essential to observe the state of the mind when possessed by attachment (*lobha*), aversion (*dvesa*) and confusion (*moha*). Attachment means wanting something, desiring something, or reaching out for something. It is an expansive movement. Aversion, on the other hand, is not wanting something, repelling something, or holding something at bay. It is a contractive movement. If the instinctual impulse of the being does not know whether to reach out or pull back from a particular stimulation, then it is caught in a state of confusion.

Consequently in developing mindfulness of the psyche, just as it is, we must begin by observing what state the mind is in.

"And how, O Bhikshus, does a Bhikshu abide attentive on the mind as the mind?

"Herein, O Bhikshus, a Bhikshu observes the mind possessed by attachment, as with attachment; the mind without attachment, as without attachment; the mind possessed by aversion, as with aversion; the mind without aversion, as without aversion; the mind possessed by delusion, as with delusion.

"He should observe a diminution of consciousness, as a diminution of consciousness; a distracted state of consciousness, as a distracted state; an expanded state of consciousness, as an expanded state; a state of consciousness that yet has a higher state, as a state that yet has a higher state; a higher state of consciousness, as a higher state; a serene state of consciousness, as a serene state; an agitated state of consciousness, as an agitated state; a liberated state of consciousness, as a liberated state; a limited state of consciousness, as a limited state.

"Thus he abides attentive on the mind as the mind internally, or he abides attentive on the mind as the mind externally, or he abides attentive on the mind both internally and externally. He abides attentive on the origination of phenomena in relation to the mind, or he abides attentive on the dissolution of phenomena in relation to the mind, or he abides attentive on the origination and dissolution of phenomena in relation to the mind.

"Or his mindfulness is based on the mere recognition: 'Mind is' to the bare extent necessary for knowledge and remembrance, and he abides independent and clings to naught in this world.

"Thus, O Bhikshus, should a Bhikshu abide attentive on the mind as the mind."

Fourth, how to practice Mindfulness of Phenomena:

The Buddha's instruction then moves on to the observation of phenomena. It is extremely important to realize that one does not "give up" the earlier forms of attention, when turning to the observation of phenomena. No indeed! First one develops clear mindfulness of the body, its breathing and movements. Then, while maintaining one's awareness of the body in the body, the next stage consists of developing mindfulness of feelings (both internal emotion and external felt sensation). Then one adds the further dimension of the mind and its states.

After body, feeling and mind are well encompassed by this practice of mindfulness, then, and only then, should one—not forgetting the former—take in the whole of phenomena, just as it arises. This means having mindfulness of body, feelings, mind and phenomena altogether. This is true mindfulness, since one is "self-aware" and "other-aware" *simultaneously*. And that is where the exercise becomes really meaningful.

To practice mindfulness of phenomena, the Buddha recommends observing internal phenomena first. He starts therefore with the five hindrances, then progresses to the six sense-sources (i.e., light, sound, scent, tastes, tangibles and mental stimuli), and finally to phenomena as pure concept.

Conclusion

The Lord Buddha concluded his great discourse on mindfulness with the words:

"Verily, O Bhikshus, should any person maintain this fourfold practice of Mindfulness, in the manner taught here, for a period of seven years, then by him, one of two definite results may be expected: either Realization in this life, or if some form of attachment is still present, then Realization at the moment of death. O Bhikshus, let alone seven years: should a person maintain this fourfold practice of Mindfulness, in the manner taught here, for a period of six years… for five years… for four years… for three years… two years… or even just for one year, then by him, one of two results may well be expected: either Realization in that given length of time, or if some attachment is yet present, Realization at the moment of death….

"For this reason it was said by me: 'This is the one way, O Bhikshus, leading to complete catharsis, to the overcoming of sorrow and depression, to the cessation of suffering and anxiety, to entering into the true Spiritual Path, and to the realization of Nirvana: namely the fourfold Practice of Mindfulness."

The practice of mindfulness develops integration. The new unity that is then born as a result of all the disparate parts of the human being coming into integrated harmony is experienced as clarity of consciousness.

How this happens is as follows: When any function is observed, it becomes less automatic. When the "whole being" is brought within the compass of mindfulness, then transcendental insight is born. Once that the complexes start to work together in harmony, then a person creates within himself or herself higher a new state of self-reflexive consciousness. This results in Enlightenment, the full realization of the true nature of the mind.

Such is the path taught by the Lord Buddha.

Mangalam. Sarva-mangalam!

Footnotes

1. There are many different breathing techniques used in Buddhist meditation. They are extremely beneficial if applied correctly, but very dangerous when wrongly or naively used. It is risky, to say the least, to just pick up techniques from books, unless the exercises come from a well tested, long established tradition. Some methods, such as Kumbhaka-breathing and hyperventilation, if wrongly applied, can result in serious psychological or health problems. The fundamental rule always, when it comes to meditation techniques, is to stick to the instruction of the tried and true tradition of an authoritative school.

2. Our meditation texts describe the various sensations, problems and experiences caused by each wrong posture. For instance, meditating with the head tilted backwards can produce some pleasant, spacious sensations at first, but leads to neurotic mental states later.

3. Skinner, *About Behaviourism*, NY, 1974.

4. A thought-moment is a miniscule fraction of a second consisting of (at most) four representative functions: (i) Utpada, arising; (ii) Sthiti, duration; (iii) Jara, decay; (iv) and Bhanga, cessing. Some schools of Buddhist thought equate sthiti with jara, making only three functions – nascent, static and cessant—for any single moment. Evidently some authorities, according to Shwe Zan Aung in his introduction to the Compendium of Philosophy, went so far as to deny the validity of a static phase altogether, concluding that a Ksana ("moment") merely arises and passes away without duration. These arguments can safely be left to the philosophers for discussion, since such particulars do not alter underlying psychological experience. It should be noted that the term "thought-moment" (*citta-ksana*) and "moment" (*ksana*) has two different meanings, in that the former relates to mental time, or the shortest length of time it takes to be conscious of anything, while the latter generally refers to the shortest interval of time (i.e., Planck time, 10–43 of a second) recognized in physics.

The duration of a so called "thought-moment" was determined as follows: There are approximately twenty-five thought-moments in one *Tatksana*. Now, a day of twenty-four hours is, according to Buddhist chronology, divided into six *Kala*, each *Kala* into five *Muhurta*, each *Muhurta* into thirty *Lavas*, and each *Lava* into sixty *Tatksana*. Therefore a single Tatksana has a duration 1.6 sec in time. This would make one cittaksana, or "thought-moment,' equal to .064 of a second, and a single sthiti-ksana of a cittaksana one fourth (or one third, depending on the argument described above) of that.

5. Karma becomes operant due to *Javana*. This has significant bearing on repression (*aprapti*), for in the latter case there is no *karma*. Repression is a mechanism that does not allow karma ("causal action") and its consequences (*vipaka*) to occur. *Karma* only arises from *Javana*. In any given event if the "mental judgement" (*manaskara*) function is founded on a wholesome source, then the *Javana* will be wholesome. If on the other hand it is founded on an unwholesome source, the *Javana* shall be unwholesome. Therefore what naively is described as good or bad *Karma*, actually derives from the nature of the unfolding apperception. In the case of a Saint (*arhat*), the *Javana* is said to be neither one nor the other, but instead is merely *Kriya*, functional.

6. See Kevin McKean, *In Search of the Unconscious Mind*, an article that appeared in Discover Magazine, Feb. 1985.

7. Catharsis (*visuddha*) means purification of the mind. This refers to psychological catharsis of the defilements. Note: "By the Great Sage it was not said that it is bodily taints that make men impure, nor by baptism of the body do men become pure. The Great Sage said that it is through mental taints that men are made impure. Thus through purification of the mind, alone can they become pure." Jesus said the same: "You clean the outside… but inside, you are full of greed and self-indulgence." (Matth. 23:25).

8. *Catvari smrityupasthana*, fourfold Mindfulness-practice.

Permalink to this manual:
http://www.dharmafellowship.org/library/essays/meditation-manual-part1.htm

For more information, please visit:
http://www.dharmafellowship.org/