

SEMDZIN PRACTICE: GETTING TO KNOW YOUR MIND

A. THE FIRST SERIES, WITH WHICH THE MIND FINDS THE CALM STATE

Let your mind relax. Free and at ease, relax all constraints and demands, all editing and judgement. Breathe calmly and normally with the body in a posture that lets the muscles relax. Enjoy the effortlessness of your mind as it is, as it always has been, as it always will be.

1. Imagine a luminous white A on the tip of your nose. As you breathe out through the nose the A moves away and then returns when you breathe in. Begin with eyes closed and then later try opening them slowly without losing the A. This practice combines concentration with the breath. Relaxed fixation on the object, the A which moves, brings the benefits of the meditation experience (*nyam*) of being effortlessly in the calm state (*zhine*). Relaxed fixation generates no energetic charge and so, without effort, we are in calm presence. Presence and sensation of the body become part of the experience and this calms our response to what arises so that we do not get distracted. Relaxation, fixation and movement all collaborate without separation or conflict.

Do not think about the A and but feel its presence without producing thoughts about it. This leads us beyond reliance on thoughts. This is the integration of calm and insight (*zhine* and *lhagthong*). In this state we are not creating thoughts, which create us as we think them, and so there is nothing to control.

2. Relax fixation on an object (for that fixation will block the flow of thoughts but also increase agitation) and allow thoughts, sensations and feelings to come and go. Then suddenly and loudly shout 'PHAT!' Remain aware in the subsequent state of disorientation (*hedewa*). This experience promotes clarity and emptiness. The PHAT! cuts identification with thoughts.
3. This semdzin is called 'the laughter of wrathful and joyous manifestations'. Sound 'HA' loud and fast in a state of presence. The experience of a state of clarity without thought will arise. HA is linked to movement and represents the wrathful deities. It is wrathful, short and sharp. Concentrating on this sound cuts our thoughts, our confusions. It is useful when we are relaxed and therefore experience thoughts arising – HA can open the space within which distraction occurs. When our agitation and distraction are less intense the HA can be said lightly as we exhale deeply from our mouth.
4. 'The struggle of the asuras.' Sit with feet flat on the floor and knees up at the chest with your arms wrapped around them. Roll the head clockwise with the eyes closed. First move it to the left then to the right, with slow smooth movements without forcing or exaggeration. The body should move only a little.

With practice this can be done for days. It is best done in a quiet place, on a mountain or in a forest. The result is the experience of emptiness, of being without thoughts (the *nyam* of *mitagpa*). In this state thoughts may arise but we are not distracted or conditioned by them. The rotating massages the nerves in the neck. When we stop rotating we may see red, then orange, yellow, blue and finally grey. When grey occurs there are no more thoughts, everything disappears, yet there is presence in emptiness free of thoughts.

5. Sound 'HUNG' slowly and deeply with both lips and nostrils until each breath ends. Continue until you are totally relaxed internally. Keep attention fixed on this experience well being completely relaxed and undisturbed by thoughts. As you slowly relax thoughts will arise so maintain fixation on 'HUNG' so that distraction does not occur. If you are very agitated simply sound HUNG without fixation. If you easily get distracted sound 'HUNG' several times deeply and quite loudly and then gradually reduce the sound. Then thoughts will cease to arise.
 - i. The second type of semdzin with HUNG uses several short HUNGs in a forced manner like a pulsation. This cuts off thoughts and is used after the long HUNG and its relaxation. With this all thoughts dissolve back into their ground (*dharmadhatu*). If you try not to think, your thoughts will increase. If you try to maintain a continuous flow of thoughts, gaps will appear. Just as the waves in the ocean are infinite, allow the alternation of emptiness and clarity.
 - ii. There is another style of HUNG semdzin. Recite 'HUNG' and visualise many HUNGs spreading out with each exhalation.

6. Visualise the red letter RAM at the navel chakra (2 ½ fingers below the navel). Then make the sound 'RAM' and integrate the vibration of the sound with the visualisation. This chakra is the root of all the chakras and channels and so activating it influences them. RAM symbolises fire whose nature is heat and this is the main basis for sensation. The experience of sensation is the aim of this semdzin.
 - i. Another style of this semdzin is to visualise a red ball or a red letter 'RAM' at the navel chakra and while centrally focusing on this, imagine beams of light going out through all our bodily orifices. This is called (*kLong-rBol*, light shining forth from space. Maintain attention on the ball or RAM and integrate the rays with the breath going out on the exhalation and returning on the inhalation.

7. Imagine yourself as a deity and concentrate on a fine form of this deity on the tip of your nose. It moves away on exhalation and returns on inhalation. Repeat this several times and at exhalation remain with the lungs empty for a while, relaxing in the presence of clarity. Then concentrate on infinite forms of the deity coming out of all the pores and orifices of your body as you exhale and then returning as you inhale (*'Phro-'Du*). At the end of each exhalation relax in

the clarity, observe the experience, and integrate presence in the state of awareness. This leads to the experience of great clarity and purity (*gSal-Dag Chen-Po*).

B. The second series by which one overcomes attachment to body and mind

8. Visualise a pink sphere the size of a pea between your eyebrows. This represents the union of the lunar and solar energies. Concentrating on it will give rise to experience linked to prana or energy, such as visions and sensations. These are often linked to the balance of the five elements. Neither of rejecting nor attaching to them, remain present with what arises.

Begin by visualising the central channel, slender as a hair running straight up from perineum to the top of the head. It is blue on the outside and pink on the inside. It gradually gets bigger until it gets as big as your body, your house, the country, and the entire universe. Then it gradually returns to its initial size. Repeat this several times.

Then visualise the two side channels. Each is connected with a nostril, looping up then straight down on either side of the central channel to join it at the navel chakra. With their emergence at the nostrils they connect with all the other doors of the senses.

For women the energy channel (*Kyangma*) is on the right. It is red in colour representing blood, the maternal cause. The method channel (*Roma*) is on the left. It is white representing semen, the paternal cause.

For men the positions are reversed. *Roma* means to taste and is connected to the physical level. It corresponds to method, the father, (*Yab*). *Kyangma* means alone, only one, and is connected to energy, corresponding to wisdom, the mother (*Yum*). The material body, the colour and shape, is represented by the Yab, the male deity. But there is no body without energy. This is the Yum which activates the Yab and is depicted wrapped around him. In tantra wisdom, energy, and is solar is feminine¹. The moon represents the paternal, the method that needs energy in order to develop.

Visualise the three channels, exhale deeply and directly expelling all negativities and obstacles. Then do a sharp inhalation and remaining holding the breath. The breath enters through the two sides channels and is held and forced downwards so that it has to enter the central channel. The karmic breath, representing all our confusion, is exhausted as it dissolves in the central channel, becoming the breath of wisdom, filling the central channel and all the chakras. Remain like

¹ sense?

this, holding the breath without straining. Experience of clarity and emptiness arrives as the turbulence and conflict of the elements subsides.

9. Visualise a white ball on the tip of your nose; as you exhale it moves away returning when you inhale. It moves parallel to the ground, going to increasing distances to lands you have never visited. Remain relaxed and empty on the completed exhalation. This helps to find the calm state. The ball represents the prana force of the breath. The experience which manifests from this clarity free thoughts is vivid presence.
 - i. Another from of this practice is to imagine a radiant rope of lights or a stream of vajras which is being pulled out from the tip of your nose.

10. Visualise a white A at the centre of your body. Making the sound 'A' let rays of light in the five colours (white, red, blue, yellow, green) spread in all directions and throughout the body. This dissolves the physical karmic body, which melts into the manifestation of the body of light. This can occur because the essence of the five elements is light. Relax into presence with this so that you are no longer actively imagining it. This is the presence of clarity which is an experience of the voice, which is energy.
 - i. You can also visualise your body as being clear light in the five colours of a rainbow but clear and sharply defined and transparent like a crystal. By fixing your attention on it without following thoughts, presence will gradually arise within experience.

11. Visualise your mind and energy as a HUNG or another letter or a sphere of light. It moves gradually further away into space, integrates with it and disappears. This can give a very strong experience of emptiness. Keep breathing normally and lightly. Focus attention on presence with the experiencing of the vanishing letter or ball.
 - i. Another method is to gather the whole of your existence, place, house, body into your empty central channel. Now all that is left is emptiness.
 - ii. Or, you can unify your material body with the A so that it is an empty bag, like a little balloon flying in space. Then let it dissolve into its ground emptiness. Maintain presence in that experience. Do not think about it but remain directly present in whatever is occurring.
If you remain in this presence without reasoning or creating something out of it, you reach the stage of contemplation through emptiness.

12. Relax body and mind and direct your attention to whatever sound is present. Simply pay attention to the sound in your ears without thinking about what has caused it or whether it is pleasant or unpleasant. Without seeking to identify the sound or judge it, relax and integrate in the dimension of the sound of existence, or the 'inner' sound, arising from silence. Sound is like the root of the

manifestation of energy. Our potentially manifests through sound, light and rays.

13. Visualise a very small luminous manifestation of a deity such as Samantabhadra or Vajrasattva at the centre of your body inside your heart. Concentrate on it and then gradually relax in the state of presence. This will give you the experience of clarity and light. You can use this practice as you fall asleep to maintaining presence during the sleep. You can also imagine the deity inside a rainbow-coloured sphere the size of a grain of sand.

C. THE THIRD SERIES BY WHICH ONE UNDERSTANDS THE TRUE ACTUALITY OF EXISTENCE

14. The semdzin of the gradual understanding of emptiness

Examine each part of your body looking for the essence of the parts indicated by their name. See how each item can be broken down further right to atoms and beyond. There is thus no essence supporting name. There is nothing to be found. Examine all aspects of self and environment in this way until you find yourself in a state of absolute emptiness without thoughts. Remain relaxed without having to think or reason. This gives the experience of the state of non-dual emptiness, of the dharmata, the true actuality of existence. You see everything as appearance, but you discover that all is emptiness. Emptiness is not an abstract condition separate from the object. What you see is the emptiness (*sNang-sTong*). This is the *nyam* of the sensation of emptiness and appearance.

15. The semdzin of the direct understanding of emptiness

Whatever you see, do not enter into judgement; do not separate and analyse as in the previous semdzin. Simply remain without judgement² in the presence of the vision of what appears. This gives the sensation of emptiness. Mind and vision/appearance cannot be distinguished. You cannot separate the subject and the object. This gives rise to the knowledge that everything is unreal. Then we know that even if things appear, they are unreal, just as reflections appear in the mirror. Therefore there is no need to eliminate them mentally by reasoning. The substance of all 'reality' is emptiness; appearances are like a mirage or a dream.

It is important to be present with the experience, to integrate it and to go beyond mere intellectual knowledge, which lacks the power to transform or integrate the dualistic condition in which we live. By being present, whatever comes is neither judged nor interpreted and so is neither adopted nor rejected. It is allowed to remain in its true actuality without being negated or affirmed. By this we remain in the centre of whatever we experience, so that whatever appears doesn't belong to us and we don't belong to whatever appears. We are in the midst of all arising sensations and visions yet do not react to them in

² I moved 'without judgement'. BT

terms of judgements, habits and so on. This is the *nyam* of effortless. We are not making effort to know about the objects nor are we applying thoughts to establish their identity. We are directly experiencing their empty nature.

16. The semdzin of impermanence.

Everything is connected and moves forwards in time, changing and being changed. Be present in the process of change and experience the unreality of manifestation: nothing stops or remains and nothing is substantial. Maintain presence in vision that is beyond of judgement. Impermanence places all things beyond judgement because there is nothing fixed or reliable for judgements to adhere to. Definitions do not create actual substances, they merely create confusion. There are no substantial entities that endure through time. Whatever is revealed through our senses is an unreal manifestation which continues uninterruptedly. Thought creates the experience of specific entities, so avoid interpretation and judgement. Maintaining presence in the flow of manifestation, allow reification to dissolve.

If you do this practice enough you will have the sensation of feeling that you are at the centre of everything you see, but at the same time you do not belong to anyone or anything because you have not entered into judgement. However, everything is present: sound, vision and so on. If you continue in this way a *nyam* will arise beyond apprehension by the mind (*gZa'-gTad Dang Bral-Ba*). You will feel at the centre of the surrounding vision, the experience of state beyond concepts.

17. Whatever characteristic of the five elements is present, relax in it without distraction. When you come in contact with one of the five elements there must be instant recognition, so maintain attention as if you were doing fixation on an object. With this you will find yourself in presence and you will find no attachment for anything that arises because you understand its condition as part of your qualities. Through this semdzin the experience can arise that everything is like a dream and you can have sensations similar to those in dreams. On first recognising the element do not block its impressions but keep that initial impression as the object of attention. In that way we experience the elements in their appearance, their function, the sensation they produce in us, and their character. Do not elaborate this by thinking about it, just stay present with the element as it manifests.

18. This semdzin is to be present in the instant just after a thought has manifested. Thoughts arise and pass very quickly. Immediately after a thought has arisen try to have the recognition of the thought and remain present in this state without creating, reasoning, or justifying. The presence stops the timeline of the continuity of thoughts and there is a gap without thoughts. The same applies to the senses. For example, the eye consciousness gains the first impression which it communicates to the mind which then enters into judgement. So we need to

be in presence as soon as the eye consciousness links with the mind, and thus we remain in recognition without judging. 'Recognition in the instant' means that thoughts do not distract us. This is called being free of thoughts (*Mi-rTog-Pa*) that generate the seeming continuity of the connection that everything is real, substantial, enduring.

The raw moment is cooked by thought. Stay present in the raw naked moment. Looking at something arises due to the rapid linking which creates the illusion of actual continuity of substance. This is distraction and leads to the linking of moments, an aggregation which gives the impression of an apparent continuity of entities.

19. The semdzin of union

When objects appear it is important to be present with the senses before the mind starts to process the experience. Being present in this moment brings the manifestation of clarity. To maintain this presence in the space prior to mental activity is called 'the contemplation of clarity'. With this all manifestation is self-liberated. Being present in the moment before thought is the state of non-duality – there is experience, but not that of the subject for an object.

Union also refers to sex your contact and the pleasurable sensation it generates. Sensation is useful because it is concrete, not abstract, yet if you look for it you cannot find it – this denotes emptiness beyond explanation. Any physical sensation can be used in this way.

20. Imagine a HUNG or a sphere travelling in space. You can use sound or not. Imagine you are travelling in space without any support. Integrate all experience into space. All phenomena are of the same nature as space and therefore require no support. Integrate all experience into space and therefore there is nothing requiring support. Integrate in empty space and enter the state of contemplation.