

The 4 Bases to Fasten Mindfulness

by the late 14th Shamar Mipham Chögyi Lodrö Rinpoche,

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This kind of training is called: *smṛiti-upasthana* in Sanskrit.

----- Preface by Lama Tendar Olaf Hoeyer -----

The Sanskrit word 'smṛiti' – in Tibetan: 'drenpa' – is normally translated as 'mindfulness' in English. The meaning within the Buddha's *Dharma* is both much wider and more precise. I suggest 'awake presence of simple awareness' though it may not be precise enough. The word 'smṛiti' just means 'to apply memory' - so in a Buddhist context there are two meanings: to remember the **sense** of Buddha's *Dharma* – and **how** to apply memory. To apply 'smṛiti' means to stay present and aware of the mental space around experiences. It is always there and may be appreciated, even you are used to pay attention to your experiences only. This is a small difference to your average use of attention. It is quite easy to do. At the same time, you should notice the movements of the mind – without being moved by these movements – without grasping at, or clinging on to – whatever experience arise in the spaciousness of mind. This is somewhat more difficult to do. So *smṛiti* is not only attentive space awareness, it is also the quality: to let go of grasping at experiences in the space of mind, whether they are attractive, repulsive or with a neutral feeling, the 3 kinds of basic feeling attachment. Smṛiti both means to practise this craft as well as the resultant mastery. But there is more.

The literal meaning of smṛiti is: *presence* and *memory*. What is to be remembered, is the *meaning* of the Buddha's *Dharma*. *Presence* of course, not only means non-clinging attentive space awareness, but also not to be absent or distracted. So if we would use the term 'mindfulness' – we ought to call it: mindfulness p. m. – 'mindful presence and meaning'.

This use of your attention stimulates space awareness, Sanskrit: *alayavijñāna*, the kind of consciousness that perceive space as well as positions and relations of the various perceived sense objects within the spaciousness of mind.

(*Alayavijñāna*, in a certain sense, is also the root awareness, Sanskrit: *mula-vijñāna*, according to *Vasubandhu*. The mind space itself, *alaya*, is not only space, but also a kind of repository or storing space for *samskaras* and karma seeds, Sanskrit: *bijas*, but that is not the subject of this teaching, though a lot

may be said about it.)

The *meaning* of the Buddha's Dharma is perceived by the mind awareness, Sanskrit: *mano-vijñāna*. Smṛiti is thus defined as attentive use of space awareness, *alaya-vijñāna* and non-clinging mind awareness, *mano-vijñāna* in order to tame or transform the emotionally clinging mind, Sanskrit: *klesha-citta* (or the emotional awareness, *kliṣṭha-mano-vijñāna*, the kind of consciousness that perceive emotionality, the *kleshas*). Kleshacitta may transform into 'wisdom mind' – Sanskrit: *jñāna*, when attachment and identification with the kleshas are abandoned, because of insight into minds nature or realisation of the obsessive character of the workings of emotionality. The base for this transformation, is the intuition of emotions. *We do not want to live without such intuitions* – it is the attachments and identifications, that we want to let go of, in order to reach emancipation and enlightenment.

The other sensual kinds of consciousness are focused on the field of application of mindfulness. This is either used in situations, where *lojong*, 'mind-training', is applied, or within formal meditation. As result, you will experience more spaciousness and clarity in your mind, at the same time making focus more easy to execute.

Having *smṛiti* in the moment of consciousness, does not distract from conscious concentration, even though you are also spaciously aware. Please take notice of this, for your theoretical understanding of this subject. There are 8 kinds of consciousness, so any one of them will not – by itself – disturb any other – only some may be more active than some other, depending on the perceived situation. In the darkness for instance, you will not experience colours, so the consciousness of eyesight will thus be less active, while the ear- and body-consciousnesses will have more work to do. *It is our habits, that disturb concentration*. You may have conscious focus of mind and unfocused mind space awareness at the same time, because of the various kinds of consciousness at your disposal.

In *śamatha* meditation, the 6 other kinds of consciousness (meaning: the emotional awareness, *kliṣṭha-mano-vijñāna* and the 5 sensual kinds of awareness) will be occupied with the conscious effort of attentive concentration on the meditational *field* of focus – or on the *object* of concentration. For instance the attentive focus on the breath that you may be familiar with. So, the 6 are busy with conscious focus, while space awareness – that in it's character is entirely without focus, because it perceives space, positions and relations – is aware of the mental space around the focus, and conscious of the focus' position and relation to the other perceived sense objects, including thoughts (Sanskrit: *manas*) and experiences from memory (Sanskrit: *caitasikas*). While these 6 kinds of consciousness work on focus of the meditation, the mind awareness, *mano-vijñāna*, focus on meaning (– and the meaning is: to relax, observe, let go and realise Dharma), and space awareness encompass it all – as well as perceives the wholeness of the conscious moment.

To realise Dharma may mean to discover minds nature, how experience is happening, the character of experiences, relative and absolute *Bodhicitta* or all of these subjects together, depending on the actual practise, Sanskrit: *sadhana*. Each *sadhana* have instructions about, *how* to realise Dharma.

So the attentive consciousness of meaningful non-clinging presence and space, *smṛiti*, will work in harmony with the attentive one-pointed focus, that is cultivated in the application of *śamatha* – without diminishing this concentration. Some kinds of awareness will be more active than some other in any given moment, but

concentration is either perfect or less so. *It does not concern space awareness*, but only the 7 other kinds of consciousness. Shamatha in its character of a mental exercise – beside its physical aspects – is this combined use of awareness: focus of the mind, holding on to the meaning of the meditation and spaciousness of consciousness.

Then, what is the use of all this? *Samsara*, the so-called conditioned world, means to move around in circles. *Buddha Sakyamuni* recommend to us as the perfect remedy, to stop in our tracks and not move. Practically speaking, this is done by shamatha meditation, where the attention hold on to one point or a field, and stays there. Then you will stop moving around in circles. Then you may better discover, where you are.

The next discipline is therefore called insight meditation, Sanskrit: *vipashyana*. You take a closer look on, where exactly you are, and how precisely you do come to be, where you are. Hereby, you will be able to rise above samsara.

Please note, that words written in [square brackets] are additions by me, Lama Tendar Olaf Hoeyer in order to enhance the meaning of Rinpoche's speech. Just disregard these comments, if you only want to learn Rinpoche's teaching. That is why these brackets are used, so you may easily skip them and easily identify them.

Here follows Rinpoche's talk:

Introduction

This teaching focuses on the four objects of mindfulness. These four objects – or foundations for developing awareness – are a very important subject, whatever our approach to Buddhism is: whether we are practitioners of the common teachings of Buddhism, the *Shravakayana*, or the great vehicle – Mahayana, the way of the *Bodhisatvas*. It is equally important in the teachings of Vajrayana.

The four objects of mindfulness are the body, sensations, mind, and phenomena. What is the meaning of *object of mindfulness*? (*drenpa nyewar shakpa*, in Tibetan) – [It actually means: [implicitly: the field of] *application of mindfulness*.] It concerns the observation of the specific characteristics of the body, sensations, mind, and phenomena, to recognize their true nature, their reality, and to keep this in one's mind. It means to maintain awareness of, what the body, sensations, mind, and phenomena truly are.

The Body as Field of Mindfulness

Let us look at the application of mindfulness to the body. Our general idea is that the body is somehow pure, it is a source of pleasure, that it is somehow permanent, and that it is the *Self or related to the Self*. We [habitually] identify with it. The idea that we [instinctively] have about, what

our body is, does not correspond with the reality of our body. We have been grasping [at] the body as being something, which it is not. We [instinctively] take the body to be pure, permanent, to be a base for happiness, to be the Self, where in fact it is impossible for the body to be these things, because they do not correspond with its fundamental characteristics. So we use this practice [Sanskrit: *sadhana*] to look at the real characteristics of, what the body is. We look at it very carefully, and by using the practice, we see that the body is not pure, that it is actually the basis for suffering and not pleasure, [also] it is ephemeral, not permanent. It is not a Self, we cannot identify with it, because there is nothing solid [- there are just sensations -] to identify with, there is no ultimate existence within the body.

By observing the true characteristics of the body, looking at its true nature, it is possible for us to break apart, and pierce through, our [instinctive] misunderstanding about, what the body is, and thereby break the grasping, that keeps us turning in *samsara* [the relative world of sentient beings], since we will have recognized the illusory nature of the object [the body], that we have been grasping [at], in terms of characteristics that it does not actually have.

There are two aspects to this observation of the body. The first one is to eliminate our *attachment* to the body. In order to do this, we look at the body as being quite unattractive –

[- do not do this, if you constantly feel like that at all times already. Instead, go see your therapist. This instruction is for people with a strong attachment to their own bodily perfection, beauty and attractiveness. People, who really cherish their actual incarnation in a body. If you do not like your body, you should contemplate, that this is also a sort of attachment. You would then rather have a completely other and more perfect body, than your actual vehicle of incarnation. You should recognise the impossible and obsessive character of this desire. It is certainly possible for you to experience your body without both kinds of attachment – as well as without indifference – *with a curious, open, sensible and sensitive mind*. The point to realise is, that you do not know, what your body is. You therefore have a very good reason to be curious, open, sensible and sensitive about your body.

To observe the body without attachment and identification is quite difficult, though. Generally, this is so, because we are simply not used to do it. That does not mean, we cannot make a habit of it. It is just not easy to overcome an instinctive concept and habit, Sanskrit: *samskara*, exactly because we are not used to do so. We lack that sort of habit, while we have loads of instinctive inborn ones, that urge us to identify and emotionally cling on to our body. Please note, when Buddha Sakyamuni gave these instructions to the early Sangha, there were several monks, who developed a strong loathing towards their bodies. And there were some, who simply killed themselves for this reason of distorted view. So the Buddha got busy explaining this instruction as an antidote for attachment to the body, but not as a path to Nirvana. Once you have rid yourself of this kind of attachment, you should not apply this antidote. It is a solution to a particular problem. Just like when you are sick and take some medicine for the disease, you will hopefully get cured. Once cured, it would be foolish to continue taking the medicine.

The meaning of this instruction is not for you to hate your body - quite the opposite, actually. You should appreciate your body as an opportunity for liberation and enlightenment, while simultaneously you understand how perishable, fragile, composite and connected to suffering your body is.

Shamar Rinpoche does not explain the precise instruction how to discover the unattractive character of the body, because he already did explain this subject previously at Dhagpo. Ask your Dharma-teacher for details.]

The second aspect involves examining the characteristics of the body and seeing the emptiness [Sanskrit: *sunyata*] of the body, such that we naturally give up our attachment to the body as an entity with an inherent [absolute] existence, as having [independent] substance.

[Your actual body – as you know and experience it – is a selective set of sensations. Everything else in connection with the body are emotions, deductions and abstractions. When you for instance feel, that you are inside your body, this is a deduction – not a sensation as such. Emotions, deductions and abstractions unfold in the fourth skandha – not in the first. [Read the paper: *The 5 Skandhas*.]

These bodily sensations suggest substantiality, but they are really just sensations, experiences of the mind. *These experiences are not made of atoms, but are mind stuff*. We cannot know, what the body is – besides an experience in the mind. Even when we look at biological substances under a microscope, the only really substantial matter we have, is an experience in the mind. *So, substantiality is not the essence of such sensations, even sensations appear physical*.

The essence is the mind experiencing sensation, but the mind has no essence itself, because of its space nature, Sanskrit: *alaya*. On the other hand, space provide the base for everything else, exactly because it has no essence, that otherwise might prevent everything from happening. A self-existing essence would leave no room for anything else. There must be *sunyata*, emptiness, as base for everything relative to unfold. Without space – or room for experience – no experience could appear in the mind. Space in its character is non-impeding emptiness, Sanskrit: *sunyata*.

So, the emptiness of the body is both the relativity of it, as well as the space nature of the mind, that perceive these experiences.]

Training in Calm Abiding (Sanskrit: *shamatha*, Tibetan: *shiné*)

In order to be able to do any sort of practice, it is important to calm and settle our mind [first]. All practice begins with the meditation of shamatha, or *shiné* in Tibetan. There are many different methods and ways to put this into practice. The goal is to calm the agitation of the mind. The agitation – or [for that matter] dullness of the mind – consists of anything, that keeps the mind from being sharp, clear and calm.

[Two contributing conditions disturb the peace of mind. Agitation and dullness. Read about it in Shamar Rinpoche's paper: *7 Points of Meditation*.]

There are quite a lot of different instructions, that have been given by masters of the past, whether they are Arhats or Bodhisattvas on the [Bodhicitta] path. *They all stressed the importance of the method based on contemplating the cycles of breath, following the breath, or settling the mind on the breath*. All of these are really fundamental instructions for practice, that are present in all the types of Buddhism. Settling the mind on the breathing cycles leads us to the result of shamatha, which is the stability that we are looking for [to obtain as a skill].

Concerning the body as an object [or field for application] of mindfulness, and more specifically the observation of the reality of the body, the essence of the practice consists of observing, that we [instinctively] see our bodies as being ourselves, as the basis of pleasure or permanence, but in fact, none of this is true. There is no ultimate intrinsic reality to our autonomous physical dimension. We can practice this meditation, where we scan the different parts of the body, as already explained earlier: “I see the skin, the flesh and the bones, all scattered.”

[Rinpoche refers to a traditional example: you should imagine your body split up into all its constituent parts, laid out on the ground each part by itself next to the other parts. Is this heap of flesh, blood, sinews and bones *your body*? Rinpoche taught this subject at an earlier occasion in Dhagpo.]

We lead this analysis, and we dissect the body, and we understand, that here is not one thing, that we can call a body; it has no substantial existence.

[The body is not just the sum of its single parts. So it is not substantial as such, even when we consider the body parts to be so. It is a concept of interaction or incarnation, dependent on mind, that perceive it, which is the psychological view. The body does not exist without the 12 links of mutually dependent origination, which is the philosophical view. So the *causes* – and resultant appearance – of the body are the 12 links, while the mind or consciousness is the *condition*.]

There is nothing, that we can grasp as one ‘body’ in the ultimate sense of the term.

[Because the body is a composite interaction, that only exists as result of a certain lively interplay between *causes, conditions and contributing conditions*. So, the body is a *relation* – it has no independent existence. Its essence is the mind, that perceive it – not its physical molecules. The mind though, has no essence because of its space nature, Sanskrit: *alaya*.]

There is also an auxiliary practice, which is the practice of the visualization of the unattractiveness or ugliness of the body, especially if we are very attached to our bodies, or someone else’ physical [appearance]. If we are feeling a lot of lust or desire, we can do a meditation, where we visualize the disgusting aspects of the body and bring those very closely to mind.

[Hereby the desire fades away or the lust evaporates. Buddha Sakyamuni instructed his monks and nuns to do so, but this practice may – in certain situations – be helpful to lay persons as well. A Dharma-teacher can explain the details of this instruction to you.]

Sensations as Field of Mindfulness

Essentially, we could say, that there are two kinds of sensations: physical sensations and mental sensations. Of course, when we talk about physical sensations, it is always mental sensations, but the contrary is not true.

[All sensations, physical and mental, are experiences of the mind. They are only different in character, but not in their nature. They are all mind by nature. For instance in your dreams, you also experience sensations of an ‘external’ world. This may appear just as real as the world, that you know and recognise, when you wake up. Whether you are dreaming or awake, you experience sensations. When your sensual ability contact a sense object, a ‘form’ – Sanskrit: *rupa* – is created in the mind. The term ‘rupa’ should be understood as ‘appearance’ rather than ‘sense object’, even we are talking about a ‘perceived sense object’. This ‘perception’ is exactly different from the ‘actual’ sense object, that give rise to the perception. One might say, that the ‘real’ sense object is never experienced by the mind. How real is it then? It seems, that ‘reality’ actually means ‘relativity’. Some Pandits call this ‘rupa’ a *mental representation* of the sense object. Anyway, the ‘form’, ‘figure’ or ‘appearance’ that is experienced, is not the same as the sense object,

that tricked the experience.]

These experiences take place in the mind. If there is a pleasant or unpleasant physical sensation, it is experienced in the mind, but the same does not hold for the mental sensations, as they are not necessarily connected to physical sensations.

[Mental sensations are: thoughts, emotions and experiences from memory – in Sanskrit: *manas*, *kleshas* and *caitasikas*. They are under one heading defined as *caitasikas*, manifest or actually active *samskaras*. *Caitasikas* are spontaneous mental reactions to the mental impressions, Sanskrit: *jñeyas*, and interpretations of these impressions, Sanskrit: *vijñaptis*. While sensation [Sanskrit: *sparsa*] happen in the first skandha, the mental impression and interpretation is appearing with the third skandha, which causes the mental reaction of the fourth skandha. This whole composite experience then appear to awareness within the fifth skandha. After this process is completed, the whole course of events is then instantly repeated. In the next course of creating experience by the 5 skandhas, the previous mental reaction now appear in the first skandha, and then it runs through the rest of the skandhas as before and so on. Thereby the mental reactions of the first course of creating experience by the skandhas, become mental sensations in the next course. In the second course, the mental sensations are then subject to new mental reactions in the fourth skandha and so on, whereby the original *caitasikas* change or are perceived differently – some times much differently, at other times only a little bit.

Please note, that one might think, that mental sensations will not appear before the third skandha – because of their mental character. It is not like that, though. In the first skandha, there is the mental sensual ability [Sanskrit: *indriya*, sensual ability], that perceive the mental sense objects. So, ‘form’, ‘figure’ or ‘appearance’ – Sanskrit: *rupa* – the result of sensation in the first skandha – also implies the mental sensations.

[There are 22 *indriyas*, defining various capacities, that you have, such as life-force, sex, some potential talents, a host of possible cognitions as well as recognitions and the 6 sensual abilities. The sixth sensual ability is the capacity to perceive 'mental objects', meaning thoughts, feelings and experiences from memory.]

These mental sense objects have shape of 'manas', their mental shapes in the fifth skandha, that are the causes of their reappearance in the first. Now, we have just described them as 'caitasikas', but that is their mental manifestation in the fourth skandha. In this same sense, also emotionality, the *kleshas*, become *klesha-manas* in the fifth skandha. Experiences from memory become actual thoughts by reflection over several courses of the five skandhas. Reflection imply both forming of concepts – and some times language – in the fourth skandha as well as awareness of the fifth.

Read the paper: *The 5 Skandhas* for more details of this process and about the mental sensations.]

Let us begin with the meditation, where we are mindful of physical sensations. We become aware of physical sensations. For example, something itches, we have a headache, or we feel good and very comfortable. Whether pleasant or unpleasant, we must begin by becoming aware of sensations. Then we become mindful of that sensation [by applying mindfulness, read the ‘preface’ above].

When we choose [to observe] the physical sensation, a headache for example, we are talking about a small discomfort or small headache, for beginners especially, because if we have a raging migraine, it will be nearly impossible to use it for our meditation. The beginners can choose an itch, a small headache or any other small discomfort, or small physical well-being or pleasure. We become aware of it and use it as the focus of our meditation. Once we recognize a sensation, we analyse it: we look at it, analyse how it exists, where it is located: to the right or the left? Up or down? What size it takes? What does it look like? What does it appear to be

like? Is it big? How big is it? Can we manoeuvre it? Is the sensation fleeting? If it is, where does it go? This analysis shows us, that the *sensation is characterized by chance*, as it is not fixed or stable.

[Sensation is the result of various processes in the mind, that are constantly repeated. When the same sensation is repeated, it may very well look like something stable, but it is *the repetition*, that is stable. Likewise it is *the mental processes*, that are fixed to the repetition, while the sensations are changeable or transitory.]

And thus, we can recognize its elusive nature.

[Because sensations all the time appear as new, change, vanish or move around – they are never the same in each moment of consciousness. The next moment of sensation will be different from the present one, including all details. *Every moment of sensation is completely new and fresh*. So, when sensations appear stable and unchanging, it is a trick of the dynamic mind, that is constantly creating or recreating this impression. When nothing happens, there is a lot of work behind.]

Meditations Associated with Sensations

There are actually two ways to analyse sensations. The first is an analytic meditation, in which we examine the sensation itself. We ask ourselves where it is. Is it located in the mind? In the body? Is it one with the body? Separate from the body? We ask [such] questions in order to understand, what its nature is through logical analysis.

[Sensations happen in the *skandha of form*. Then they are processed by interpretations and habitual reactions in the second, third and fourth skandha – and appear afterwards as a composite mental shape to awareness in the fifth skandha of consciousness. This whole process is analysed in relation to sensations. Read the paper: *The 5 Skandhas* for details.]

The second method consists in going to the very essence of the sensation, of looking at it directly in the moment, when the sensation arises.

[You become aware of sensation in the so-called 'moment of consciousness'. This is the moment of the fifth skandha, when sensation has already been worked on by the previous skandhas. *The character of the moment is, that it vanish all the time and then reappear again*. The moment does not continue. It stops and then a new moment start up. We know this from observations and simple logic. The 5 skandhas describe a single course of events whereby an experience is created in the mind. The course starts in the first skandha and end with the fifth. This is the smallest measure of a moment, though – theoretically – you may consider every single skandha as a momentary occurrence. Then a new course start, again in the first skandha. Such courses are repeated many times in just one second. After each course [Sanskrit: *santana*] an interruption takes place, before the whole process is repeated again and again. Some Pandits stress, that there is actually an interruption between each and every skandha. This interruption or space between two courses of the 5 skandhas, consist of a timeless void with neither skandhas, existence nor awareness. A kind of zero point, Sanskrit: *sunya*. This is so, because the difference of two courses cannot consist of yet another similar course. There are no skandhas in between the skandhas. The moment of consciousness kind of 'switch on and off' all the time. [More about this subject later.] *This is a process and not a thing. Or the experience of a thing is a process and not a constant. The process take place in the space of mind*. That is the emptiness, Sanskrit: *sunyata*, of sensation. As a process it is relative, and its essence is mind, that has no essence, because of minds space nature, Sanskrit: *alaya*.]

If we analyse or examine sensations in this way, we will be able to distinguish a sensation from our **grasping** to it. So if we actually look at and practice with sensation in this way, we can then observe our attachment or the grasping to the sensation as being pleasant or unpleasant, agreeable, disagreeable, pain [or] pleasure. We [will then] no longer grasp [at] the sensation or reject it [– or become indifferent towards it]. *We thus reach a state of equanimity with regard to, what we are feeling.*

The analysis of sensation allows us to understand the non-reality of sensations on an ultimate level: they have no essence; however their relative nature may be pleasant, neutral or unpleasant, of the nature of suffering and pain. We can distinguish physical sensations, experienced by the senses, and mental sensations, experienced solely by the mind. All sensations are by nature ephemeral, subject to change. They are likewise characterized by suffering, because of this insubstantiality. *One cannot rely on pleasure - its nature is to disappear*; thus it is a form of suffering, because it is subject to change [– it is impermanent or transitory].

Suffering (Sanskrit: dukkha) and Calm Abiding (shamatha)

The teaching on *the Four Noble Truths* explains, that there are the suffering of suffering [meaning: pain], the suffering of change, and existential suffering [suffering by the fact of being composite and clinging to identity]. The painful sensations belong to the category of suffering of suffering – it is a quite obvious suffering. Since pleasant sensations are impermanent, they belong to the suffering of change. Painful sensations are obvious suffering, and the [emotionally] neutral are characterized by *existential suffering*. Seen in this light, there are no sensations, on the relative level, that do not imply one of these three sufferings.

Existential suffering is always present, but it is extremely subtle [intangible]. If you take for example physical pleasure, you could say, that there might be a pleasurable experience. Even though we may not perceive any sort of suffering, these sensations are marked with an existential suffering [suffering by the fact of being composite and clinging to identity]. Take the example of lying down on a waterbed. As long as that experience is happening, and we have not gone into the change, where it turns into suffering, even while we are experiencing pleasure, we have this subtle undertone of the existential suffering, that we are generally not aware of.

[Even while enjoying the waterbed, you will also suffer your identity, the feeling of incarnation and complexity, feeling separate from the world and composite in your own life.]

If existential suffering was not present continuously, both on the physical and the psychological levels, then we would not experience the grosser [tangible] levels of suffering.

We can [thus] see, that suffering comes from the grasping, we generate. This grasping is constant. There is no discontinuity in the grasping, leaving no place for liberty. It is like [driving on] a highway. You look at a paved highway, and it looks like it is completely continuous and uninterrupted. This is the grasping. It is the persistent subtle suffering [the existential suffering by being composite and clinging to identity].

This subtle and constant grasping is characterized by agitation and not calm or peace. Thus we can see, that this inherent suffering, this subtle agitation of the mind [by clinging to being composite, which means attachment and identification with *the 5 skandhas*, that are, what is composite in the mind] – is the

opposite of peace or tranquillity.

In order to pacify this grasping or identification, first on the gross level, identifying the Self as the physical Self [the fact of feeling incarnated in a body], we are going to meditate, [by cultivating] shamatha or calm abiding meditation also known as shiné [in Tibetan]. By sitting and meditating, by practising [Sanskrit: *sadhana*], we exercise concentration, and we will be able to pacify the agitation, the gross [tangible] agitation, of the mind. Then progressively we will be able to bring the mind to a certain [more subtle or intangible] degree of quietude or pacification. We will be able to have this experience of well-being [Sanskrit: *sukha*, pure joy – which is experienced in the state of *samadhi* as result of *shamatha*] – because our inner agitation has been truly calmed down. [Read Shamar Rinpoche's paper: *Samadhi & Shiné* about this subject.]

But we can go further in pacifying the mind and cultivating quietude. In fact, you can always go further, you can continually go further in pacifying the mind. There are states of well-being, that can be developed *ad infinitum* [endlessly].

[*Vajra-samadhi* is the deepest or highest kind, that possess this sort of ultimate endlessness. It is therefore characterised by great joy, Sanskrit: *mahasukha*, the joy of a Buddha. To understand this subject properly, ask a Dharma-teacher about *the 4 dhyanas*, the 4 levels of mastery in meditation and about *the 9 steps of shamatha*, the path to mastery.]

It is always possible to go deeper and be more subtle, increasing our stability of the mind. As one goes deeper and deeper into shiné, the initial peace and well-being that was experienced [previously, it now] seems actually quite gross. This first experience, that we had acquired, will [at first] seem like stability, but we will later see, that it can be fortified even further, as after reflection it [then] will seem rather gross.

The Mind as Field of Mindfulness

Applying mindfulness on the *mind* leads us to recognize the nature of the mind, that [habitually] is grasping [at] phenomena. Placing the mind on *phenomena* allows us to have an understanding of the true nature of the objects [phenomena], that are being grasped [at] – by the mind.

[This last subject is discussed in the next chapter.]

If we know the nature of the mind that grasps [= the emotionally clinging mind, Sanskrit: *kleshacitta*], we will be able to eliminate the problems of the grasping mind. If we eliminate the problems, that are connected to the mind that grasps [which are: identifications and attachments], then we will naturally eliminate any problems connected to phenomena, that have been grasped at.

[Please notice: to let go of identity and attachment does NOT mean indifference in regard to the experiences. Indifference is a kind of attachment – one of the attitudes to let go of. *To let go means to let the mind open naturally and all by itself, unimpeded by any hindrances from the past. Hindrances* – Sanskrit: *nivarana*; Tibetan: *geg* – are what distort cognition, impede insight and prevent *samadhi*, the trance or absorption of meditation. If the mind does not open up spontaneously, there are still identifications and attachments

at work, putting a stop to it. Those are instinctive habits and concepts, so it is not over in an afternoon. You must recognise the illusory character of these hindrances, never the less, in order to overcome them. The hindrances are attachment, ill will, dullness, restlessness and doubt. How to bring an end to the first 4 points, should appear quite clear, when you have read this paper. The last point means more trouble.

Whatever doubt, you may have about Buddha's Dharma, is removed by simply finding answers to all questions, so keep asking. When there are no more questions, there are also no more doubt. So, doubt and questions are very important and cannot be replaced by faith. *You will need the answers, and it is possible to find them as well.*

The instructions about absolute and relative *Bodhicitta* help to enable you to let go of identification and attachment by various means. Bodhicitta is not directly the subject in this teaching. It is important though, to know that an open mind has truly friendly love and compassion as natural consequences of cultivating an open, curious, sensible and sensitive attitude to experience, without the 3 kinds of attachment to basic feelings.]

We begin by developing the stability of mind, through shamatha. Once it becomes stable, and we are quite comfortable in it, [then] we begin to observe the mind-stream [Sanskrit: *santana*] itself and the different *moments of awareness* in the mind-stream.

Mind is characterized by its ability to be aware. It is described as a sort of luminosity; it is possible for the mind to experience, to know. But these qualities do not mean, that we have to be constantly aware of or conscious of something.

[You may also just be aware of awareness alone, even though consciousness always arise together with its perceived sense objects in any actual moment of consciousness. You need to shift your attention from *what*, you experience, to *how* your mind does experience.]

The mind is a continuum, a series [Sanskrit: *santana*] of conceptual instances, or thoughts that is incessant. When we are talking about the mind [in this context], we are talking about the 'dualistic mind'. The dualism that is grasping at itself, and because [when] there [thus] is a [relative] Self, there is also everything, that is other than a Self.

[So, you should catch yourself as being 'the experiencer' of your experiences and comprehend, what it means exactly. This is the first manifestation of dualism, when a difference is established in the mind between experience and experiencer. Observation and observer. An event and a witness to that event. You will need an instruction from a Dharma-teacher to point this out to you. Also, you should establish what exactly is being experienced. Finally, you should observe, *how* exactly you experience whatever in the present moment. That is: observer, observation and process of observation, the 5 skandhas.

The observer cannot be caught [– anyway, you must try to catch, in order to understand –], the observation is a mental image or a mental shape and the process is in its character distorting, inviting dualism.

When you do this diligently, you will be able to overcome the inborn instinctive dualism, that in its character is misunderstanding, delusion and resultant superstition.

Read more about this subject in the paper: *Fear of Emptiness* – in Danish: *Angst for tomhed*. Unfortunately, I have not translated this paper to English yet.]

Attention on the mind consists in observing the continuum of the mind [Sanskrit: *santana*]. Seeing that the moments of the past that existed in the mind no longer exist, and future thoughts do not yet exist either. This being the case, we look at the present moment.

Let us look at this present moment of consciousness and see, if it [really] exists. How does it exist? Is it autonomous? Does it have a substance? Does it have a shape? Does it have a colour? What is this present instant of consciousness like? We use all sorts of different aspects of what the instant of awareness or consciousness could actually look like to understand just what sort of form, that it has, if it has any.

[Awareness alone is just to know, that experience is taking place. Awareness has no form as such. It take shape of the so-called *dharmas*, that are being experienced. A 'dharma' is a constituent component, unit or element of the whole experience, that thus consist of various conditioned dharmas. There are 3 kinds of conditioned dharmas: *rupas*, *jñeyas* and *caitasikas*, meaning perceived sensations, mental impressions and reactive conceptual states of mind – or in another sense: experiences from memory; *caitasikas* meaning both.

[Caitasikas are simply the manifest or actually active *samskaras*, in contrast to all the other *samskaras*, that in any given moment are NOT active, nor manifest. You may ask, why the *viññaptis*, interpretations, are not mentioned. My understanding is, that they belong under the heading of *jñeyas*, because they appear in the third skandha. But since they are interpretations, they are in a certain sense *caitasikas*, because *viññaptis* are the comparison of the present with experiences from the past. Also *vedanas*, feelings from the second skandha, are not mentioned. They belong with the *jñeyas*, mental impressions, because they are perceived by consciousness as integral parts of the composite impressions.]

So awareness take shape of these conditioned dharmas, as long as the experience lasts.

But we have learned, that such a conscious moment last only a fraction of a second, after which it stops. So, the conditioned dharmas are as relative as awareness itself. They only appear, when there are causes and conditions for them to happen. Awareness always rise together with its perceived dharmas, so it is very relative as well.

[Consciousness is itself a conditioned dharma as the fifth skandha. In practise this just means, that you can experience awareness, while it happens. All 5 skandhas er conditioned dharmas by being defining stages of the whole experience. It is only, though, when we investigate the skandhas, that we think of them as experiences. Generally, the skandhas define the processes of experience, but they are of course also the experiences, that they generate. When we observe the 5 skandhas, they will appear as all the 3 kinds of dharmas. The objects of observation are either *rupas* or *jñeyas*, and the descriptions and understanding – or the deductions and abstractions – are *caitasikas*.]

[Another way to understand dharmas is as **events**. A dharma as an event is actually the most accurate description.]

[*Dharmadhatu*, *Nirvana* and space as such [Sanskrit: *akasha*, cosmic space, as well as mind space, Sanskrit: *alaya*] are the *unconditioned* dharmas. They seem to be present as well, but you may only know that in the moment of consciousness. Both *alaya*, mind space, and *akasha*, space of the world, can be understood as *Dharmadhatu*, in which case there are only two unconditioned dharmas. [Both *akasha* and *alaya* must be somewhere – that place is *dharmadhatu*, rather than the cosmos.] *Dharmadhatu*, the dimension of dimensionality, and *Nirvana* are not the subjects directly of this teaching.]

So, even awareness basically is formless, there are all the dharmas in the moment of consciousness. They appear though, more as events than some 'forms' – even they do take mental shape in consciousness. The moment as such cannot be said to have form. Even the space of time for the moment, is more a definition of the development of the experiences than of the moment itself. *We can really only define the moment as the point, where awareness is present.*

The moment of consciousness is constantly destroyed and reborn, together with the 5 skandhas. Just like a stroboscopic light, constantly being switched on and off. The moment has to vanish completely in order to provide space and give way for the next moment. The next moment could not happen, if the present one does not finish first.

Never the less, there seems to be a flow of mind, Sanskrit: *santana*, from moment to moment, even there is really nothing in between moments. Even there is *coherence*, there is no observable *connection* between moments.

The present moment is a continuation of the previous one, but these two moments are separated by a void, Sanskrit: *sunya*. So, the moment is the clarity aspect of the mind, that engage with the 5 *skandhas* in the space of mind at the moment of consciousness, experiencing *dharmas*, that appear in this very same space. The end to the moment is not experienced, because the next moment is born instantly, when the previous has finished. The moment of consciousness seems as elusive as the observer, the observation and the process of observation.]

Likewise, as soon as there is a thought or a concept that arises in the mind stream [Sanskrit: *santana*], we look at it in the same way. We ask ourselves about *its origin, its nature [and] its existence*. When an idea ceases, we move on to the next idea, that emerges and apply the same analysis.

The words, thought, concept, idea [Sanskrit: *manas*, and / or: *caitasikas*], help us to describe [meaning: observe and know], the way things [experiences] appear in the mind – the contents of the mind, you could say.

[Because of the presence of experiences, the contents of the mind, we are able to observe and describe the working mind. Such descriptions are helpful to understand and pay attention to *santana*, the flow of mind through each moment of time. The description is of course different in character from the *actual* experience of observation. Because there are mental perceptions in the moment of consciousness, you can observe the very flow of the mind, *santana*, by moving your attention from *what*, you experience, to *how*, your mind does experience.]

Through our sense perception, for example, through the sight consciousness, there is perception of a physical object [Sanskrit: *rupa*], and this appears [in consciousness]. It appears within the mind-stream [Sanskrit: *santana*].

The perception of the mind is based on perception of something, and we cannot say that perception or ideas or concepts can be separated from the mind. If the concept could be separated from the mind, it would be something material.

[Which of course it is not. Concepts only appear in the abstract world of the *fourth skandha*, from where awareness comes to perceive them in the *fifth skandha* of consciousness. Among the *dharmas*, concepts are 'caitasikas', reactive conceptual states of mind or experiences from memory; *caitasikas* meaning both.]

What is mind? Mind is experience: experience of phenomena and of thoughts.

[– the concept of 'experience' is called *anubhu* in Sanskrit – Tibetan: *yoñgwa* (yoñ ba) – to experience is: *anubhava*. Read the paper: *What is an experience?* – in Danish: *Hvad er en oplevelse?* Unfortunately, I have not translated the paper to English yet.

By the expression: thoughts [Sanskrit: *manas*] – Rinpoche also implies: emotions and experiences from memory.]

When we talk about observing the mind [like this], we are trying to see the mind as it is, completely, in an autonomous manner, disassociated with everything that is [habitually] grasped [on to]. This is looking at the fundamental nature of the mind itself. If we look at it, we see, that there is actually nothing, that can be grasped.

[There is nothing to hold on to. Mind is basically a container for experiences, Sanskrit: *alaya*. This container is not a thing. There is

neither roof, floor nor walls. There is just immense room for experience to unfold or space.]

There is no object, just no concrete object that can be grasped and called 'mind'.

[Because the word and concept of 'mind' is an interpretative and conceptual experience in the mind. There is no more 'mind' than this. The word 'mind' points to the mystery of experience. By using words and concepts like body, sensation, mind and phenomena, we are led to a direct recognition, Sanskrit: *pratyaksha*, of the nature of these experiences – without any words nor concepts. The application of 'mindful presence and meaning' is a path – or development – of discovery, cognition and recognition.]

Phenomena as Field of Mindfulness

Once we have practised the application of mindfulness on [our own] mind and have trained [in it], we gain some experience, and it is quite easy to extrapolate.

We can begin to look at and meditate using the application of mindfulness with regard to phenomena. Phenomena are perceived as existing outside of oneself, as something external to oneself. The reflection, the analysis that we proceed with, will be the same as in [the] other applications [of mindfulness], that is to say: **what** is grasped [at]? We thus reach the conclusion, that nothing outside of us is autonomous and can exist by itself [independent of causes and conditions].

Nevertheless, we see that mind plays an important role; all our perceptions are dependent on the mind, that perceives them. We can almost say, that everything that appears, are **like** a dream or a mirage - [or] all the [other] different examples we [traditionally] use for an illusion.

[Such as the flickering flames of a fire, an insubstantial rainbow, an ever changing cloud in the sky and so on.]

How we perceive depends much more on the mind that perceives, than on the object of perception itself.

So something that appears, or rather everything that appear, appear [so] based on mind. Milarepa said: *Phenomena appear from the mind-stream* [Sanskrit: *santana*] *and they are re-absorbed or disappear into the mind-stream* [again]. *They arise from the mind, and they fade away into the mind.*

