

Prayers to Buddha Shakyamuni and to Manjushri.

Introduction

The Bodhi Path Buddhist Center of **Remetschwil** has now been established. The main objective of the Center is to give teachings on the many subjects in Buddhism in general, and the teachings of the Kagyüpa lineage of Buddhism.

Within the Kagyüpa lineage, two main streams of Buddhist practices are upheld. There is the lineage transmitted from Tilopa to Naropa of the *Practice of the Six Yogas*. The other is the lineage called the *Mahamudra* received from Saraha. Saraha transmitted it to Maitripa, the guru of Marpa. From Maitripa to Marpa, the transmission then continued to Milarepa and then to Gampopa.

Gampopa combined Mahamudra with Atisha's *Lodjong* practice, and taught it extensively. This combination, called the combined lineage of Kadampa and Mahamudra, thus became a very special lineage of Gampopa. Since then, it has been upheld as one of the main streams of teachings of all Kagyüpas.

The Karma Kagyü Lineage of Mahamudra

Within the Karma Kagyü lineage, the Mahamudra is one of its principal teachings. The Karmapas and other Karma Kagyü Lamas had written various commentaries on Mahamudra. In particular, it was the 9th Karmapa who had composed three volumes of Mahamudra teachings: concise or small, medium and large. The concise volume is called *The Finger Pointing out the Dharmakaya (choeku dzubtsug)*. The medium one is called *Illuminating the Darkness of Ignorance (marig munsal)*. And the third or large volume is called *Ocean of the Ultimate Meaning (ngedoen gyamtso)*. All three volumes teach the Mahamudra.

The majority of the Kagyüpa Lamas were enlightened by the Mahamudra practice. The name Mahamudra is a Sanskrit word denoting a tantric term. There is a particular tantric practice of Mahamudra related to *Tummo* (inner heat yoga). Whether or not a practitioner combines Mahamudra with the practice of tummo, depends on the individual. Some of the realized Kagyüpa Lamas needed the support of Tummo or the *Six Yogas of Naropa* to speed up the Mahamudra realization. Many other Lamas, on the other hand, did not require such supports and they simply became realized through the Mahamudra practice.

The Mahamudra lineage of Saraha's *Mind-pointing-meditation/Pointing out the Mind Meditation* is very profound. This teaching or method, precisely points to the nature of mind and leads the practitioner in its special way. Saraha travelled as a beggar. He gave Mahamudra instructions by singing songs with his own guitar accompaniment. In his songs, he elucidated the nature of mind. Many people, by listening to his songs, were enlightened with Saraha's blessings. These people were able to attain the first level of realization on the Mahamudra path.

Today, three volumes of Saraha's songs called the *Dohas (songs) of Saraha* are available to us. They are the *King Doha*, the *Queen Doha* and the *Minister Doha*. Saraha's lineage has been passed down to us through his disciple Nagarjuna in the beginning, and then followed by Shawaripa, Maitripa, Marpa, Milarepa and Gampopa.

Teachings can be transmitted in two ways: through written instructions, which tend to be more superficial and then through oral instructions. Instructions found in books titled Mahamudra, are limited in scope, and are often restricted only to the first level of Mahamudra. However, the books thus titled, give the impression that they give an entire system of Mahamudra.

People may read a book on Mahamudra to start, having received some instructions from a teacher. But only the practitioners, who are able to reach a more advanced level in their practice, would receive the secretly kept part of the Mahamudra teachings, called the *oral instructions*. As the term *oral* implies, these are *not-written*. There is a reason why that part is kept secret. If it were written down and made public, then people would naturally be drawn to meditate on what they have read. Their meditation would simply be their own imaginings and as such could not be accurate. This would also mean that the key points of Mahamudra were being distorted, or altered by people, serving no purpose to anyone. To avoid this adverse disturbance of the teachings, the oral instructions have been strictly kept.

The path of progression in Mahamudra begins first with a student receiving some instructions from a book, from private teachings, or from public seminars. Then he reflects on the teachings he has received so as to reach a proper understanding about the path of Dharma. Once he has a good understanding of the path, then he should follow the path and practise as instructed. According to his personal progress, his teacher will give him the more profound instructions when it is deemed appropriate and fitting.

The direction of teachings in the West up until now

Up until now, Mahamudra has not been taught in an organized way in the West. I think that His

Holiness, the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, Lama Gendün Rinpoche, and others who had taught here in the West must have meant to teach it later and to introduce it gradually. These teachers have now passed away, having laid down indeed, a very good foundation here in the West.

In Le Bost, Lama Gendün Rinpoche had strictly organized the Practice of the Six Yogas of Naropa. In general, over the last few decades, most teachers taught the general Buddhist practices including Lodjong, a mind training practice, which is a Kadampa teaching. And of course, instructions were also given on the *Ngöndro* practices. They are the most important prerequisites to both the practices of Mahamudra as well as the Six Yogas of Naropa. Some teachers taught it extensively. Other teachers as requested by the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa, taught focusing more on the Refuge vow, the Bodhisattva vow, and Ngöndro as well. This has been the direction of teachings laid down in the West up until now.

Le Bost, which was under the direction of Lama Gendün Rinpoche, is still doing very well. After Lama Gendün passed away, I went there to give initiations and teachings. And now, H.H. Karmapa is leading it, and so Le Bost continues to improve. And Dhagpo Kagyü Ling is also doing very well under the leadership of Lama Jigme Rinpoche.

Bodhi Path – a Mahamudra Teaching Center

Until now, there has not been any properly established Mahamudra teaching-Center. I am now organizing Bodhi Path Centers to teach Mahamudra. The first Bodhi Path Center has been set up in America, and since then several more Centers have been established there. Here in Europe, this is the first Bodhi Path Center. Herbert Giller's Foundation has purchased this house in Remetschwil, which is now the first Bodhi Path Buddhist Center in Europe. I hope that the Center will be very useful and beneficial for the people in Europe.

I myself will teach at these Centers. Of course H.H. the Gyalwa Karmapa will also come here to give initiations and teachings. In addition, Jigmela Rinpoche, Khenpo Chödrak Tenphel Rinpoche and other Khenpos, many Rinpoches and Lamas, Drublas of Le Bost who are well experienced in the Mahamudra teachings, will on occasion, visit and teach here as well.

A suitable Mahamudra practice

When the Mahamudra teaching is combined with Tantra, it is generally the Tantric practice of the Four-armed Chenrezig (or Avalokiteshvara in Sanskrit), or the Two-armed Chenrezig, or

Chakrasamvara. With respect to the Four-armed Chenrezig, there are two: white or red. Gyalwa Gyamtso is the red one. The Two-armed and Four-armed White Chenrezig combined Mahamudra practice is also mixed with *Maha Ati (Dzog Chen)*. The Chakrasamvara or the Red Chenrezig is combined only with Mahamudra practice.

When a disciple arrives at a certain stage, the guru will select a yidam for the disciple. The selection is based on the disciple's own qualities. The disciple will then do the Mahamudra practice according to his designated yidam.

When I was first organizing a Bodhi Path practice, I did quite a number of predictions to determine which Yidam would be suitable for the disciples in general. Every time the result showed me that it would be the White Avalokiteshvara combined with both Mahamudra and Maha Ati.

The Karma Kagyü's White Avalokiteshvara lineage comes from the 9th Karmapa – it is a combination of all lineages of the White Avalokiteshvara. There are many White Avalokiteshvara lineages. In Tibet, for example, there is the lineage from the Bodhisattva King of Tibet, Songtsen Gampo. There is the lineage of Guru Padmasambhava. There are also other lineages from the later Sakya and Kagyü masters. It was the 9th Karmapa who combined all of them into the one White Avalokiteshvara practice.

Karma Chagme was a very great Bodhisattva of the Karma Kagyü lineage. He taught the 9th Karmapa's White Avalokiteshvara combined with Mahamudra and Maha Ati. This combination practice became immensely popular among the Kagyü, Nyingma and also Sakya practitioners. For most of the genuine meditators of Kagyü and Nyingma, it was their heart practice. They still did the Guru Yoga on Padmasambhava, on Milarepa, or on Karmapa. They still received teachings and initiations on many yidam practices and then, practised them. But in the end, they chose and kept this combination practice to be their *heart* or *goal* practice.

A System of Practice at Bodhi Path

The Dharma Path

To be successful in your Dharma practice, you need to walk the path of Dharma. There are two types of paths: the common (ordinary) path and the extraordinary path. Without the support of the common path, you can never reach the extraordinary path. Ultimate enlightenment depends very much on the extraordinary path, which in turn depends on the common path. This means that you have to practice both together.

Whether or not you meet the extraordinary path depends on karma. If your karma is fully functioning well towards enlightenment then you will meet the extraordinary path. If your karma is all right and you have only a good foundation, then you will always connect with the common path. Eventually, you will likely meet up with the extraordinary path. Again, it all depends on your individual karma.

Refuge

With respect to the ordinary path, you need the Refuge and Bodhisattva vows. To take Refuge means to take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. This is a first and fundamental level of Dharma practice. It acts like a fertilizer. When you want something to grow, first you need some soil, and then the soil has to be fertilized. Similarly, Enlightenment depends on your mind. The path of Dharma has to develop from your mind and your mind has to be purified. Any ignorance of mind has to be cleared away. Therefore, taking Refuge affords you a very important foundation.

The Bodhisattva vow - Relative and Absolute Bodhicitta

The Bodhisattva vow is like a staircase. In a many-storied house, you cannot reach any higher levels without a staircase. The Bodhisattva vow has two aspects: relative Bodhicitta and absolute Bodhicitta. Relative Bodhicitta is like the root of a plant, and absolute Bodhicitta its main stem. You need to take

the Bodhisattva vow. It will enable you to develop the special quality of Bodhicitta towards all sentient beings, an attitude of loving kindness and compassion towards all.

Absolute Bodhicitta is the wisdom of Bodhicitta mind, and is therefore non-dualistic. When the attitude of loving kindness and compassion is dualistic in nature, then it is relative Bodhicitta. This is connected to the emotional states of mind and does not carry much quality. Nevertheless, it is the base of absolute Bodhicitta or wisdom. In other words, you have to develop the absolute Bodhicitta mind from the ground of relative Bodhicitta.

Relative Bodhicitta is compassion and loving-kindness mind. Lacking the wisdom of absolute Bodhicitta, you will attach to things, and you will grasp. The effect is that a lot of emotions will be stirred up making your Bodhicitta *not pure*.

Bodhi means enlightenment. *Bodhicitta* means the heart of enlightenment. *Bodhi Path* means the path to enlightenment. While on the Bodhi Path, the *heart* should be detached from the emotions. So, the view of absolute Bodhicitta is called for on the Bodhi Path.

Relative and ultimate truths

In order to develop absolute Bodhicitta, a few steps have to come first. The first step is to hear the precise instructions about the nature of

phenomena. The teachings of the Buddha explain precisely how phenomena are just illusions of your mind. On a relative level, everything is there as you see it. However, the absolute or ultimate nature of any phenomenon is that it does not truly exist.

Take the beams of this house, for example. They are supported by the pillars, and the pillars in turn stand on the ground. So we say that the beams depend on the pillars, which depend on the ground. And the roof of the house depends on the beams. Put all these interdependent parts together, and you have a house. This is the relative truth of the house –a collection of the many interdependent parts.

But, if you were to look for the absolute truth of the house itself, you would not find it in any of its parts. The ground is not the house. The pillars are not it and neither is it the roof nor the beams. In absolute/ultimate truth, the house does not exist. Ultimate, in this sense, means that which cannot be removed or altered.

Relatively, everything exists in an interdependent way. You are in a relative existence in samsara. If you wish to liberate yourself from samsara, then you will have to depend on the Dharma, as well as both relative and absolute Bodhicitta. They are all the parts that you need in order to build up your (house of) enlightenment. In other words, to reach

the ultimate truth of enlightenment, you rely on the path of Dharma, which is the relative truth.

Enlightenment is when all the ignorance of your mind is cleared away. It is the final, ultimate truth. But you need a path to get there, a path that can clear away the ignorance. The path is relative so long as you need it to get to your destination, just like you need all the parts to build a house.

We could also think of using the relative path to ultimate truth as taking remedies for problems until there is a full recovery. The meaning of terms like *remedy*, or *solution*, is relevant in the face of a problem. Where there is no longer a problem, or a full recovery, there is no longer the need to talk of a remedy. The remedies are therefore relative and dependent on the problems. In the same way, the Path of Dharma containing all the remedies is therefore relative and dependent on all the problems of mind. We take the remedies until we are fully recovered. We walk the relative Path of Dharma until we have reached ultimate enlightenment.

Samsara has only relative existence, like a dream, and so it can be eliminated. If Samsara ultimately existed, then it could not be removed. If a dream truly existed, then it would not disappear even when you wake up. Because a dream itself has no real existence, it can disappear naturally upon waking. The dream has not gone off somewhere, nor could

you put it away in some corner and walk off either. The dream itself does not exist, and therefore, it disappears when you wake up.

Samsara is like a dream that is made up of all the negative emotions and karma. Its basis is ignorance, which gives rise to negative emotions on a stage of karma displaying uninterruptedly the illusions of samsara. All these conditions depend and feed on each other. Together, they are experienced as samsara. Yet nothing truly exists. There is ultimate enlightenment. It is possible only because all of samsara's problems can be solved and removed since they are not ultimately real. Develop ultimate enlightenment and samsara will end!

The precious human life

This human life is precious. In the introduction to all Buddhist teachings, you can find this fact. A human life has the potential and the capacity to see enlightenment, to know all the paths leading to it, and to be able to go on such a path to get there. A human life has wisdom. It has potential, opportunity, and richness enough to absorb the path of enlightenment. We are quite capable of understanding the meaning of ultimate Bodhicitta – that all phenomena do not truly exist. Human mind can understand all of this.

The 3 steps of the path - listen, reflect, and meditate

Therefore, first you have to listen to the teachings of the Buddha. Listen to how he explained the ultimate nature of phenomena. You have to think about it over and over again to find the actual meaning. When you do, the path of meditation will become clear to you. Listen to the teachings, reflect on the teachings, and then meditate. These are then the steps of the Dharma path. Your capacity to absorb the most profound meaning of the Dharma depends on your reflecting on its teachings.

Once you have self-clinging, then you have many things to cling to. *This is what I want.* Thinking like this, you will cling to everything. All living beings are in this trap of clinging. And meditation has naturally come about to solve this chain of clinging, which is actually a mistake of your mind. The process of meditation clears up the chains of clinging. There are two types of clinging: clinging to the samsaric phenomena and a more advanced level of clinging – clinging to the path of Dharma. The latter is also a problem. Your precise understanding and view of absolute Bodhicitta, of Madhyamaka free from the four extremes, and together with the view of emptiness, can remove both types of clinging.

The Refuge vow comes first. Then later, the Bodhisattva vow may be taken. As I have explained already, there are two aspects to the Bodhisattva vow: relative Bodhisattva vow and ultimate

Bodhisattva vow. The relative Bodhisattva vow is taken as a commitment. You commit to uphold the relative Bodhicitta mind of loving kindness and compassion. The ultimate Bodhisattva vow is more than a vow. You actually will have to develop the wisdom of Bodhicitta mind.

Shi'nay

After you have taken these two vows, the Bodhi Path program will give you teachings on *Shi'nay* (calm abiding meditation). *Shi'nay* practice consists of two stages: preliminary *Shi'nay* and advanced *Shi'nay*. You can follow the Bodhi Path program where you will be guided through the stages of *Shi'nay*. At the same time you will also do the prostrations to the 35 Buddhas, which is a practice to purify bad karmas. The practice text has now been translated into German as well as English. The Center here will provide you with the instructions for this practice.

The purpose of *Shi'nay* is to train your mind to be free from the bad habit of constantly thinking, and constantly being busy and confused. Your mind has to be free from all its preoccupations. The first level of *Shi'nay*, or common *Shi'nay*, trains your mind to be stable. Of course, the stability of your *Shi'nay* depends on your own diligence. If you maintain your *Shi'nay* practice constantly, then you will achieve it as your nature. It actually becomes your nature, and not something that you bring into your mind. Common *Shi'nay* is a very smart way to train

your mind to be free from bad habits. Later, the more advanced Shi'nay allows you to develop the unobstructed peace of mind, the open mind.

The realization of emptiness is the eye of meditation. The realization of the emptiness of self, and of phenomena, is the eye of meditation for enlightenment. To develop these two eyes, one has to have stability in the contemplation of mind. And the practice of Shi'nay develops this stability. When you have a very strong base in Shi'nay, it becomes the foundation that allows you to develop a realization of the emptiness of phenomena and of mind. These two eyes actually are the view. It is not a view that you learn from books. It is a view that you experience. With these two eyes in your experience, then you will be able to look at your mind, examine each of your negative emotions whereby you will clear up all the ignorance of your mind.

Shantideva said, *"Through developing stable Shi'nay, you conquer the emotions by emptiness. Therefore, first you must practice Shi'nay."* You can develop successfully this level of Shi'nay if you are not terribly attached to things, or to phenomena. It does not mean that you should not own a car. It does not mean not to enjoy your breakfast. It means not to be emotionally grasping at your breakfast.

This is what Tilopa taught Naropa. *The chain is not what you see; the chain is what you are attached to.* The chain which ties you, is not what you see. What you grasp turns into a chain that ties you up. This is why avoiding emotional grasping is a necessary condition to develop your Shi'nay. And once you have a good foundation of Shi'nay then you can develop the precise view of *Lhakthong* (Vipassana).

Prostration to the 35 Buddhas

While we will first teach Shi'nay to subdue your mind's confusion and its restlessness, there is yet another obscuration, another problem in your mind that has to be addressed. It is the problem of bad karma. Karmic problems can be totally purified by doing the practice of the prostrations to the 35 Buddhas. The practice is contained within the *Four Foundations* practised by Marpa. And all four schools of Tibetan Buddhism embrace this lineage of practice. We will teach it here.

Mandala offering

After prostrations comes the Mandala practice. The Mandala practice is for the accumulation of merit power. As long as you are on the path of Dharma you need merit. On the one hand, you purify your karma, on the other, you gather the support of merit.

To be a successful Bodhisattva for the benefit of sentient beings, you have to depend on the accumulation of merit, which depends on giving, on generosity. The practice of the Mandala offering allows you to practise generosity mentally. It is a kind of mental therapy. In the mind you visualize, or think of, all the things that you are attached to, then you release your clinging to them by offering them. You *give away, give away, and give away* all these things. In this way, you are accumulating the thoughts of giving them all away, and that is a very meritorious practice.

You don't have so many things to give to sentient beings now, right? Your capacity to give to others depends on your karma. So the first step is to give away everything mentally, and through that, you will accumulate the mind-merit of generosity. I don't mean that you are not lucky right now. Rather, by practising generosity and giving, you will perhaps become a very, very wealthy Bodhisattva able to give many things to sentient beings to benefit them.

Tonglen

While you are doing the 35 Buddhas prostrations and Mandala practice, you continue to practise Shi'nay. First, you do the common Shi'nay and then later, when you are well used to the common Shi'nay, the teacher will teach you *Tonglen* – the practice of giving and taking. Tonglen is also Shi'nay but a more advanced practice. It is a Bodhisattva practice where you give your

happiness to sentient beings, and you take on their suffering. It is effective in accumulating very powerful merits.

You will do the Tonglen, the prostrations to the 35 Buddhas, and the Mandala practice, which would enhance your Shi'nay practice. You will definitely be able to achieve very good experiences of Shi'nay. This result is natural because the greater the purification of negative karma, the shinier and clearer your mind. Your Shi'nay will be very advanced, very familiar to you, and very tranquil. Your stability of mind will be much more mature.

Lhakthong

At the Center, we will teach analytical meditation. This practice is connected to Lhakthong (higher seeing, or insight meditation, or *vipassana*). It is more of a preliminary level of Mahamudra. In the analytical practice, mind is divided into three parts: past mind, present mind and future mind. There is a way to analyze the mind as such. If you have a good level of Shi'nay, then you can do this practice very comfortably and it is very effective. So we will teach the analytical meditation, called *analytically-examining-the-mind-meditation*.

Vajrasattva

You will do the Tonglen meditation (giving and taking) combined with analytical meditation where you examine the mind. During that time we will give

you the Vajrasattva empowerment. Then for some time, you will do the Vajrasattva practice.

Kyerim and Dzogrim, Chenrezig

After that we will teach the *Kyerim* practice (creation stage). A Vajrayana practice has two phases: *Kyerim* and *Dzogrim* (completion stage). *Dzogrim* is the Mahamudra meditation.

We will teach the Vajrayana view of *Kyerim*, what it is versus *Dzogrim*. We will give instructions on the philosophical view of *Kyerim*. There are three parts to the instructions. One part is on how one receives an empowerment. The second part is on the kinds of precepts, or *samayas* to protect the Vajrayana practice. And the third is on the reason for *Kyerim* practice.

After the teaching on *Kyerim*, we will give the *Chenrezig* empowerment as well as the teachings on how to practise it.

I have thus given you a general course or direction of the teachings offered at the Bodhi Path Buddhist Center. The way is now laid out for you in order for you to achieve enlightenment within one lifetime. And the system of programs available to you at the Bodhi Path Center will provide you with the necessary teachings and guidance.

This afternoon I will teach *Shi'nay*.

Shi'nay (Calm Abiding Meditation)

This afternoon session marks the start of a program of teachings at the Bodhi Path Center. I now begin with a teaching on Shi'nay.

Training the mind and a *trained mind* are two different things. To practise Shi'nay is training, and it is different from a '*trained Shi'nay*'. There are different varieties of Shi'nay practices but they all serve one purpose and it is to train the mind to be *in Shi'nay*.

Shi'nay is an ordinary level of mind. To attain a trained Shi'nay does not depend on purification of mind, or the accumulation of merit, or Lhakthong (Vipassana) meditation. So it will not take long to achieve the results of Shi'nay. But success in Shi'nay does, however, depend very much on how many times a day, and how long you can do it. What is essential is consistency of practice.

Mind does not exist substantially, or physically. Once you are trained, then you will have the flexibility of mind to do many things. How well you have trained will determine how much freedom of mind you have to remain in one level, while thinking, or concentrating. You are considered trained when your mind has this kind of freedom. This is the trained state, and to get there, you employ the methods of training.

To have this flexibility of mind of Shi'nay is very useful. You have heard of the so-called *Five eyes* and the *Five extensive powers of the mind to know hidden things*. You can access these states after you have achieved the training of Shi'nay. If you have wings then you can fly anywhere you'd like. If you are a good swimmer, you can swim in whichever way you want. Mind has limitless skills. When you have trained your mind, you will have more freedom than you do now. Since mind is not physical, it is very easy to use it everywhere. Through training, you will know more extensively than what you do now, which is rather limited.

At present, your mind has no peace because you are not free to be at peace. Because the mind is in the habit of thinking constantly, like a waterfall, it is totally overwhelmed by thoughts. The habit of thinking is very strong. All the time, you are thinking because the mind connects to everything and everywhere. The thoughts are therefore incessant, and you have no freedom, only distractions. If you hear something, mind connects to the sound. If you feel anything, or see anything, your mind is right there. Mind is totally inundated by contacts. There is no rest, no peace. Peace of mind means to be free from thoughts. You need freedom of mind to have control of your mind. This means you need to be free from confusion. Then you will be able to maintain your mind in its peace.

Because mind has no form or substance, the extent of mind's peace is limitless. There is just peace. When you are able to go deeper into the nature of mind, then it is called a realization of mind, which can get rid of the ignorance of mind. First you should have the freedom to rest in the peace of mind. Later, you develop the skill to

realize the nature of mind, and then you will be free of the ignorance. These are the steps.

To achieve some freedom of mind, you practise Shi'nay. The level of Shi'nay within the ordinary level of mind does not take long to achieve. However, it does depend on effective methods. They are effective in pacifying the mind, to free it from thoughts, or to give it some freedom. One very effective method to gain control over the habit of thinking is to concentrate on the breath.

Breathing and meditation sitting posture

The main causes for mind's restlessness are ignorance and dualistic attachments. But temporarily, an imbalance in the physical posture can also disturb the mind.

To maintain a proper balance in the internal circulation, you need to know how to breathe gently. When your breathing is proper, it brings about a very balanced circulation in the body. It makes your mind comfortable and clear. The Buddha gave a lot of advice on health, too. One such advice is proper breathing, which keeps your physique very steady and comfortable.

To make mind peaceful, the sitting posture must be correct. A wrong sitting posture will give you physical as well as some nervous problems. Sit in the shape of a pyramid (triangular-shaped) where all sides of the body are properly balanced. It was exactly how the Buddha sat under the tree. He sat on a stone-seat with some kusha grass layered on top. Nowadays, we use cushions, and we don't need to go to the forest either.

Here are the points for a proper sitting posture (They include all the points of the *seven-point posture*):

- While sitting, the backside should be a little higher. The lap in front is thus lowered and slopes slightly downward. If you sit as you would on a sofa with the front higher and the back lower, then you cannot meditate. The full lotus posture for the legs is fine. If you cannot sit fully cross-legged, then you can adopt the half lotus posture with the left leg in and the right leg out.
- Regarding the two hands, the right hand is placed on top and in the left hand. Both hands are resting on the lap.
- The two elbows should not be bent. They should be straight, but not too much. If you have long arms that reach past the lap, you could rest the hands on the feet to give them support.
- The shoulders should be raised up slightly.
- Your eyes are open and looking downward and slightly ahead of you so that you can see the tip of your nose.
- The head or neck is tilted very slightly forward and not too much.

- The stomach should be in. Below the navel is the abdomen. When you gently press in the stomach, the breath will go down to the abdomen so just keep it there. In this way, you will feel very comfortable. If you keep the breath in the stomach then it will become uncomfortable to meditate.
- The back should be straight, and when it is, your whole posture will naturally be proper. And the inner circulation of the breath will be smooth.
- The mouth is gently closed and you breathe through your nose. You should not breathe through the mouth. Just naturally, breathe very gently.

What is beneficial for health is to visualize the breath as a very bright (not straight, but slightly arched) beam of crystal light. This will prevent you from falling asleep, or feeling drowsy. The bright light brightens your mind and keeps away dullness. But do not attach to it. You should not have a vision of crystal as practised in some crystal religion. The object here is for your mind to concentrate on your breath. When breathing out, the light is almost touching to the ground, and when you breathe in, it comes back into you and down into the navel. The light is just a visualisation. It is not real. It is not like the tongue of a lizard, going out and in again. The light should be independent of you.

Length of practice

As to the length of practice, in the beginning, it should not be too long. Later on, when you are more trained, you can practise for a longer period. To concentrate means to focus the mind on the breath, and to keep the awareness. To be aware means you know what you are doing. And at the same time, you can count by mind. You can also use a mala, a counter, or you can use a clock, and time yourself for five minutes. Afterwards, relax a little, feeling free, and then you can start again. It does not matter whether you do it for five minutes, or for three, the point is to do it with quality. This means to keep the awareness, and try not to think unnoticed.

Training means to develop new habits. Your habit now is *thinking constantly*. You don't need training in that. You already do it all the time. To train a new habit depends on the accumulation of the desired new habit. This means to accumulate 'quality', which is to focus with awareness – this is proper training. If you do one hour without resting during which time you are very distracted, then you are nurturing a bad habit again. Therefore, do it for just a short while, but with quality. There's nothing wrong with that. To be clear means you realize, you are fully aware, whether you are concentrated or not. True, awareness is also thought, but that does not matter for now.

A 5-minute session with quality counting to 10, is much better than a 10-minute session of lower quality where you are distracted. In the latter case, you are not accumulating good habits. Instead, you are practising making mistakes. Therefore, do the five minutes well, and take breaks in between. If you can manage a count with quality to 10 for a five-minute period, then you will be trained very quickly. Soon you will be able to increase the duration to ten quality minutes with counting to 10. Many of my students in Washington D.C. in America can comfortably count to 100. There is even one member there, who could count to one thousand. Then mind is very, very peaceful and you will experience the wide peace of the mind. For extensive training,

the practitioners train to have the capacity to count up to many thousands. This means that they are then fully trained.

The levels of Shi'nay

Counting the breaths is the first level. Not counting, or letting the mind to simply follow the breath is the second, and subtler level. A third level is where the mind does not even follow the breath. Mind just rests on the breath. Between these first three levels, you progress from coarse to more subtle, to very subtle. All three levels fall within the very preliminary levels of Shi'nay.

Another three levels that are even subtler follow the preliminary levels. The first of these is called *realization of the connection of mind and breath* where the realization of the described connection becomes the object of focus. When you are able to control mind then you will know how to do it. If you don't have the control then it is difficult to imagine. But, that is the first step of the advanced Shi'nay.

Once you have become proficient in the first, you can then progress to the second level called *playing*. At this level, you will play a lot with the mind in order to extend the skills of the mind.

The next or third level is called *pure level*. This level is connected to Lhakthong (Vipassana). There you will enter into the natural peace of the mind. There is a way to enter into a more profound, deeper, or subtler state of mind.

You will be taught these levels according to your own progress in your practice. What I have presented to you is for your information only. The main thing for you to do now is to start the practice of the counting of breaths. The first three preliminary levels are very important. To dance in the water, you must first know how to swim. So, start from the counting.

Shi'nay is very important. Without Shi'nay you can never meditate. There is no chance, no way to meditate without Shi'nay. Think about it, how can you meditate with this busy mind? You cannot keep the candle lit in the wind. You cannot ride a wild horse without taming it first. Mind is like a wild horse so you should train it. And discipline is quite important in order to train the mind to be clear and energetic.