

Meditation

Kurze Einführung von Chogyong Palga Rinpoche für Unterrichtsmaterial der DBU auf DVD, Berlin 2010

Hello everybody, my name is Chogyong Palga Rinpoche, and I am a Buddhist lama from a small Himalayan kingdom in northern India. I was brought up in a monastery in another state in India. I went through many many practises and other trainings. And the reason that we do all these things is to make you peaceful and to achieve happiness and inner peace.

There are different methods that are used, that we go through, different trainings. I think, the best training that I have been through, the most beneficial one and that I really liked, was meditation. So, **what is meditation?** It is difficult to say, because there are different kinds of meditation within Buddhism and even in non-Buddhist religions or traditions, so it is difficult to say what is meditation exactly. But I would say that **meditation is a method to achieve calmness first of all, and then to basically know more not only about yourself, but about many other things.**

First we start with a type of meditation that we call Shamatha which is about calmness. Literally speaking Shamatha means "calm abiding". And I think that is a wonderful technique and I have seen many benefits after doing that practise.

In my life, when I was younger, I was quite naughty, I guess like any other kid, I was a little bit aggressive, I was full of anger, I would not sit properly in the monastery. I would run around, I would give my teachers and my attendants a very hard time and when I grew up, as I grew up as a teenager I had a lot of problems in my mind: Not being very patient, not being able to focus on anything, even I hadn't fun from playing sport and all that, or listening to songs, I never had any true happiness, I was not relaxed, really.

But afterwards I went through some changes in my life, which were very profound. When I came back, it means, when I started meditation formally, took it seriously, when I actually did meditate, it brought about amazing changes in my life: in the way that I feel, just about myself, many things.

Even I used to be sceptical about what meditation is or what are the benefits of meditation, why should we sit down and just meditate? But then I actually did it for some time, and - to tell you the truth - it was really good. After I have done some meditation myself I feel much more calm than before and if I do something to enjoy - being with my friends, my family members, or having some food, or even listening music - everything is much more, brings more joy than before - because you have this calmness. It is amazing, really, and I would also suggest to all of you whoever wishes to do so, **whoever wishes to have more calmness and peace in their mind and also to enjoy life, enjoy everything, I would suggest you to do meditation** as well.

Meditation is not difficult, even when it sounds complicated or confusing, even boring. That is one thing, boring is the biggest problem, when we talk about meditation, people start always yawning. They say: "I do not want to meditate, it bores me". Initially it is boring, trust me, I'm being honest with you, but for a little while. After you get used to it then it becomes okay, but even afterwards then you feel like "Hmm, meditation is not really bad", and then, after some time, you start seeing the changes due to meditation, then you start actually liking it and that is when the fun starts. It takes some time, so if you had expected some kind of meditation which you could enjoy all of a sudden - but it takes some time to see the results

and see the benefits. It is only boring in the beginning. But trust me: If you really want to achieve calmness and to be happy, if you really want to do that for yourself then you should do - why not?

What sort of benefits, you may wonder, did I experience? Like I said earlier, I was aggressive and not very patient, I got angry easily, did not enjoy anything much. But now I feel calmness and space.... It is very nice - **there is so much space.**

I will give you an example: Before, I used to be a small puddle and if you throw a stone in it, that puddle will get really disturbed, that was my mind. After meditation, this puddle got bigger and bigger. So, eventually, the stones did not create as big ripples as it did before, but now it is like a small lake - and when you would now throw some stones, it did not do very much, the ripples are very small. And, eventually, if you keep meditating, your puddle will become like an ocean. **People can throw as many stones as you want - it doesn't make any difference at all to the ocean.** That is how I feel about meditation. It is amazing, you don't imagine: Everybody starts liking you more, because you have that sense of calmness and you also look cool. And then you can say: "I do calm abiding meditation", and they will say, "oh cool...!" You can even boast about it if you want... - I'm just kidding...

As I mentioned earlier, there are different techniques of meditation, in Buddhism there are generally two main kinds of meditation and there one is called **Shamatha**, which I talked about earlier and one called **Vipashyana**. Shamatha is more like calming yourself. Because the way I see it, that **unless you calm something, you cannot know much about it. If everything is in chaos, you can't find what is what, you can't arrange things. First thing is, you calm everything down, then you can arrange stuff and then you can do with them whatever you want.** Our mind is full of different kinds of thoughts, bad emotions, sorrow, boredom, all kinds of emotions - it is being disturbed all the time. But if you do calmness or Shamatha-meditation, then it sort of makes you calm and afterwards you see more space, you kind of sense there is clarity. Then, you know, **you can see the clarity in space** and then. It's very nice and afterwards - if you continue doing meditation if you go on to Vipashyana -meditation - then really you can do wonderful things. If you really meditate for a long, long time, you feel you could even fly. I know we had great examples of teachers in the past, great masters who meditated for many years, they could fly. And so if you want to become the Superman or Superlady of the 21st century, just keep on meditating until you fly ... (Rinpoche laughs...).

Shamatha - first we talk about Shamatha because we need to calm our minds, we need to see this openness and clarity. In Shamatha there are also different techniques, but one technique of them which is common to all our traditions, even in non-Buddhist traditions - is focussing on the breath. When you focus on the breath seems weird, why should you focus on the breath? When focus on the breath somehow you are getting in touch with yourself even more. Because - just imagine - we are breathing since our birth. When is the last time you remembered you are breathing? It is amazing, that we have completely forgotten about it. Breath is something that keeps us alive. It stays with us until we pass away, until we die. So in a sense, it is our best friend it is helping us every day - but we don't think about this friend, we do not even acknowledge it. We don't even look at it. So I think, when we do Shamatha-meditation especially with focussing on the breath - you can also focus on other things, too - but **if you are focussing on the breath, it is very nice - in a way you are getting more in touch with yourself.** Breath is something you have not to buy, it is not something that is manufactured. Breath is not something that belongs to someone else. Your breath belongs to yourself. It is very nice. And the way to do this meditation is quite simple.

Now there are some technical details, like how to sit properly. There are seven points, but I do not want to go through them, I do not want to bore you in my first introduction. If you just sit down cross-legged (as you would normally sit) and if you just keep your hands in your lap or on your knees... Then just keep your spine straight and just look down. This is really enough. The most important thing is the spine - the spine has to be completely straight. In the scriptures it is said, the spine is like an arrow, as straight as an arrow. If you had a tilted arrow it will come back and hit you. You don't want that - do you? Therefore, you want the arrow straight, so it will hit the target. Sit like that: The spine has to be completely straight, and just have to relax, just take a deep breath before starting - (*Rinpoche breathes deeply*).

That brings some calmness to your body. And then start breathing as you normally do, in a relaxed way. But always keeping the spine straight - remember, very important. You just look down and **as you breathe you look at your breath**. That is the thing. You don't think anything else. **But do not block any thoughts that come into your mind**. I give you an example: it is like being in an airport or busy train station. Many people coming from different gates, are coming and going, have different colour, different shapes, short tall, big, small - it does not matter. **Just let them come and let them go**. If you are sitting there on a bench, you don't stop and follow each and every one you would get mad - how can you follow everyone? It is a bit like that: There are only thoughts in our minds and you can not follow or stop them, they come and they go. The thing you do is just sit down and let them come and let them go. This is something very important to remember.

So now, when you breathe normally - you look at your breath. I know: looking is something that we do with our eyes but not with our breath, not with our mind. **But if you understand, what "looking with your mind" means, then you can really focus on things much clearer, much better**. Now we are focussing on our breath. Breath is something that you can't see, it's something that you can feel. It is quite difficult to focus on it. **But after you can focus on something like the breath, then you can focus on your studies and having fun or whatever**. Now you can totally focus on anything else so you get good marks in your studies, then you enjoy more when you are playing with your friends and so then you can focus more and you do not get so easily distracted.

So, the first thing is to sit down nicely, just look down and then breathe, but breathe normally, don't breathe hard, keep your mouth slightly open and breathe normally through your nostrils. Then breathe and just look at your breath. Don't observe whether the breath is long or short, how long it stays in the lungs etc. - right now: just look at it as it goes in and comes out. It is very simple. If you do it for some time, I think you understand what I mean. Just sit down, I'm going to do it for a few seconds, okay? (*Rinpoche practises meditation for a short while*)

That is it. That is the way you do it. You look slightly forward, you just sit down, your spine is straight, and just breath normally and just look at your breath.

In the beginning it may sound a bit confusing. But trust me, if you keep doing it you will find out. One important thing, when you do this kind of meditation if you are a beginner is: I think that you should do this first for a short while, let's say 50 seconds or one minute. Now you are smiling, you feel happier if it is not too long, really, if you do it short sessions in the beginning is very good because first thing you don't get bored. I used to do it myself. I sat down, my teacher used to teach me how to meditate. I looked at his face if he is meditating, if he is in deep concentration, I shot my eyes and fell asleep, because I got really bored. But after I did it properly the boredom was gone. Therefore, in the beginning don't do it for so long.

To begin with, we do it for periods of a few seconds, which will be enough. After that one minute we take a break of 40 seconds or so. During the break you just stretch yourself, relax your muscles or look out of the window or check a message from your friend on your mobile as you want, or you even go to the toilet. But after the break is finished, you again sit down and again begin meditating.

I didn't meditate for the same duration. If you can extend them by five seconds more for each session, that is very good. First time if you meditated for 50 sec, second time 55 sec, that is very good and then again you take a break for about 40 sec – you relax, you can look at some books, you can flip some pages, you can read half a page, you can take a break for anything that you want and after the break is finished, again you meditate, you start again with the time extended by a few more seconds. If you do this, always there is a pair: meditation – break – that is one pair. As a beginner you could do 7 pairs a day. If it is too much, you can do 5 pairs a day. But one very important thing is: don't bore yourself, meditation is not to make you bored, not to make you falling asleep. But if you have trouble to fall asleep in night you can use it also for this or anything else.

But meditation is to make you calm. That sort of calmness comes after some time, it takes some time to see this benefit. I don't know, it depends on how often you do it. I guess if you do these 7 pairs every day, then if you extend it little bit every day, like today we did 5, 6, 7 pairs and then tomorrow or day after tomorrow you can do 8 maybe. And after a few days you can extend it by 1. So if you keep extending it, I think after 20 days or even less than that you will see some improvement.

Keep a diary, that is very good, in which you can write down, for instance you can write: "Dear Dairy, today I learnt meditation from a crazy Rinpoche from some Himalayan kingdom and he told me how to meditate." - And then this and that, and today I started , today I meditated for this amount of duration....., I feel like this....., this is my experience.....". Whatever, you write it down what you experienced, and then after about 10 days you check back then I'm sure you will see some improvement. But you have to do it honestly, you cannot cheat, you cannot start thinking about other things while you are meditating, then you get lost.

The point is to bring back the mind, for example if you are focusing on the breath: in - out, in - out. What happens after 3 or 4 seconds? Your thoughts - your attention is dragged away by some thoughts. If that happens, you have to remember to bring the mind back on the breath. Don't lose your attention! If you bring it back to the breath - then, again you lose the attention after a few seconds - but again, bring it back to the breath! If you keep doing it - after some time, when you get good at this technique, the attention that you are able to pay, the focus "looking on the breath" becomes longer, that duration.

And then the thoughts are no more able to carry you away. Think in this way: The thoughts are like bad demons. Like even in Harry Potter there are these big demons and they come and drag you away, they are very nasty. Don't go away with them, they have beautiful toys, beautiful games or whatever, they tell you to come with them, they entice you. Don't go with them! That is how bad your thoughts are, they lure you away! Stay, keep your attention with you. Focus it on something that you want - like the breath. Remember: Your breath is your best friend. It may seem naturally, may seem boring, but really breath is something very precious. It keeps you alive. It stays with us from birth till death, it never betrays us, does it? Other friends in life, they betray us, they gossip about us, and then you break up with them, but the breath never betrays you. As long as you are living, your breath is with you. Bad thoughts are like demons, bad enemies, don't go with them. When you focus on the breath and if the attention is being dragged away by a thought, bring

your attention back to the breath, be with your friend - and then meditate like this. But most important: Don't bore yourself. If you feel "I have done enough today" - stop it, really. If you really don't feel like sitting, don't sit.

We can also sit on a chair if you are not able to sit cross legged. I know many people are not used sitting cross-legged long time, so you can sit on a chair, as you normally do it. When you sit on a chair, make sure your feet are planted firmly on the floor and if they are a shoulder-width apart, that is very good. Keep the spine straight as you normally do, keep your head slightly tilted forward, eyes looking down, with the mouth a little bit open, eyes not closed and then again meditate.

Like this you can meditate in restaurants, really, you can meditate in trains, you can meditate while you are waiting for your boring teacher to come back, - you can meditate at any time you want. I myself, I meditate in restaurants, for instance, when I have given the waiter the money until he comes back with the change. It takes you about one minute: So sometimes I just sit down on the chair and relax and meditate looking at my breath - it is very nice. Sometimes I meditate at the airport. As you meditate more, you'll be able to focus better on your breath and you don't feel disturbed in a busy place like an airport.

I think, that is all I wanted to say. Please, look after yourself. Please, study well. Try to meditate whenever you find time. It does not have to be in a romantic or a peaceful place. You can try it where ever you are when you are feeling doing it. If it is peaceful, it harms not doing it. Keep focussing on the breath. Keep doing it. I am sure, you will see good results. I'm sure you all are very good kids. I was a very naughty one. Even if someone like me could see the benefits from meditation, you will get the benefits even faster. So, take care of yourself, meditate, and have fun. Wherever you play, have fun and take care! Okay. Thank you.

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Kurzbiographie: Chokyong Palga Rinpoche ist ein junger, gelehrter Tulku der Drukpa-Kagyü-Linie des tibetischen Buddhismus. Er wurde 1984 in Ladakh geboren und im Alter von zwei Jahren von S.H. Drukchen Rinpoche als der achte Chokyong Palga Tulku anerkannt. Seitdem genoss er eine exzellente Ausbildung, z.B. in der Chauntra Klosteruniversität in Nord-Indien. Er lebte zwei Jahre in England und Kanada, und ist so mit unseren westlichen Denkweisen und unserer Kultur vertraut. (Kontakt über Arne Schelling: arne.schelling@gmx.de)