

# The Dhyana-Samadhi Meditation Absorptions - Part 1

The topic of the 9 Samadhi absorptions, also called the nine Samadhi, Dhyana, jnana or Jhana, are so important that I'm excerpting this extensive lesson from How to Measure and Deepen Your Spiritual Realization as a gift to you.

You need to know this material which you won't find anywhere else -- not on the internet (unless someone copies this lesson and distributes it), not in Books, and not in front of some other Esoteric or Zen master.

This rare details for this precious information just are not publicly available. Until now ...

In my Various Stages of the the Spiritual Experience personalized course that I teach to private students, we go into about twenty to thirty times more Information than even this chapter contains, but this chapter is so extensive that it will orient you correctly as regards the Samadhi realms of Spiritual cultivation. If you are a psychologist, researcher, cultivation student or other seeking extensive case studies on this material and a collection of Samadhi descriptions from Islam, Judaism, [[Wikipedia:Christianity|Christianity]], Sufism, Hinduism, yoga, Taoism, Tantra, Vajrayana and Buddhism, they are available in the Stages course.

Here now, please enjoy this most valuable material from How to Measure and Deepen Your Spiritual Realization:

Chapter 10:

THE Meditative REALMS

OF THE NINE Samadhi ABSORPTIONS

When we start to devote ourselves to Spiritual cultivation practices with the target of settling our busy minds, we will eventually arrive at the calm purity and peacefulness of Samadhi. But there are myriad types of Samadhi just as there are myriad methods you can practice to attain these various realms of Concentration wherein the Mind seems absent of heavy discriminative Thought. The process of becoming a Bodhisattva can even be considered a type of Samadhi.

All of us can be considered the nirmanakaya transformation bodies of original Enlightenment. We are the transformation bodies of the original fundamental nature, or the primordial Buddha Vairocana, each striving to recover that primordial state of ever present Enlightenment. Despite this common basis of the Enlightened nature, our thoughts, habits and merits differ from one

individual to the next. This is due to the fact that the karmic streams of each nirmanakaya and its past activities are different.

We all share the same fundamental nature, or ground state of being, which is why many Zen masters speak of "seeing face to face" in reference to belonging to that same intrinsic foundation of Enlightenment. Even so, our Appearances and functioning behavior are all entirely different.

Despite this common ground state of being, our bodies and minds are also choked full of unwholesome karmic Influences and obstructions, and each of us has different primary obstacles that prevent our Awakening to Enlightenment. Because of these obstructions, our only recourse on the Spiritual path is to use whatever pain, Joy, and other experiences we encounter to better allow ourselves to realize that Dharmakaya true nature of ours. That, in effect, is the gist of Spiritual cultivation practice.

Starting from wherever you are, without complaining of your current status (which is of no use), you must use whatever you have as a spring board for the journey to realizing your Enlightened true nature, and Samadhi is one of the realms you can cultivate that will definitely aid in this task. From Samadhi you can cultivate Prajna Wisdom, and with Prajna Wisdom you can finally reach the enlightenment of Spiritual realization. That is the Spiritual Liberation that all religions talk about.

Definite principles must be observed if you want to cultivate Samadhi, and Samadhi itself is absolutely essential to all the paths of self-realization regardless of any particular Spiritual school you might follow. In fact, if your Spiritual path lacks Samadhi and Prajna teachings, it is not safe to say that it is a very meritorious or advanced Spiritual path, or perhaps it has simply fallen to the wayside.

There are common practice methods for entering into the Samadhi states of Meditative absorption that most religions follow, and there are also common levels of Samadhi, which you can reach no matter what your particular school of Spiritual training. Since the Samadhi attainments are nondenominational and nonsectarian, the various Samadhi are therefore another means often used to measure a person's stage of Spiritual advancement. They are a genuine technique for measuring your stage of Meditation achievement.

In general, we can say that there are eight major Samadhi (also called "absorptions" or Jhana) common to all the cultivation schools of the World, and an additional ninth Samadhi also exists--called the "Nirvana with remainder"--although its attainment lies only within the province of Spiritual schools with great Prajna Wisdom teachings. As with the other Samadhi, even this fractional Nirvana cannot be equated with Enlightenment, although it far surpasses these other realms and is only achieved through great Prajna cultivation.

How can we define the differences between these nine Samadhi? To start with, the first four of these Mental absorptions are properly called the four "Dhyana," while the remaining states are typically termed the formless "Samadhi" absorptions. In colloquial terms, the first four Dhyana are also sometimes called "Samadhi" because they refer to a state of Meditative Concentration characterized by ease and peaceful Mental unity. As the Abhidharmakosabhasya of Vasubandhu says,

Dhyana is the application of a pure Mind to a single object ... The nature of Meditative Concentration (Dhyana) is Concentration (Samadhi).

The famous Chinese Dharma translator Xuan Zang, who was immortalized in The Journey to the West, adopted the term ching-lu for his translation of the term Dhyana. Xuan Zang got the term ching-lu from the Confucian classic, The Great Learning, and roughly translated, it means "stilling thoughts," or achieving stable Concentration. Hence, the Dhyana and Samadhi are stages of Mind, typically achieved through Meditation, which are characterized by extreme Mental calm (or Emptiness) conjoint with awareness.

To be specific, since the Samadhi states all involve Concentration, we must try to answer, "What exactly is Concentration?" We can describe Concentration as the centering of Consciousness on a single object, the binding of Consciousness to a single point. Because of this, Concentration is sometimes referred to as "one-pointedness" or "single-mindedness." That, in effect, is the nature of Concentration; Concentration is to be single-mindedly mentally centered or focused on some particular Mental scenario.

All minds possess Concentration since Concentration is a Mental event among the ten omnipresent Mental factors, but weak Concentration cannot be equated with the extent of one-pointedness required of Samadhi. The reason that Samadhi is characterized by an extremely stable field of Concentration is because most ordinary monkey-Mind thoughts are absent within this state, and thus within Samadhi there is very little coarse discriminatory activity.

The Concentration realm of the Samadhi or Dhyana is a state wherein your Mind has one-pointed focus and is calm, undistracted and unscattered. In this state, the Mind is not excited to a state of disturbance, nor is it dulled to a state of blankness or torpor. In Samadhi the Mind is balanced, awake, and aware. Whenever our Mind achieves this sort of empty but focused Concentration, which is very different than our normal Mental state of scattered discriminatory mentation, we can call it a type of Samadhi absorption.

What are some of the other different terms used in place of "Samadhi"? Sometimes it is translated as Samapatti or Samaya and even Satori (in Japanese), and it is often translated as "taming," "rectifying," or "stabilizing the Mind." When you become adept at fixing the Mind on a single point so that it settles there without stirring, this is a state of Samadhi absorption. For instance, in the Complete Enlightenment Sutra Buddha says,

When a meditator performs their practice while keeping truly still, then due to having purified their thoughts, a calm discernment will emerge as they become aware of the sensual cravings and delusional workings of their discriminatory Mind. As these false thoughts and feelings, which intrude to corrupt their Body and Mind, start to become eliminated, from within will flow forth a relaxation and lightening up of their sensory agitations, along with a sense of quiet harmoniousness. ... This skillful state is Samadhi, which is the bringing of the Mind to rest when it ceases to chase after things.

There are many different ways to describe the state of Mental Samadhi, but perhaps the best definition includes a description of how to reach this state.

Most Spiritual practices for attaining Samadhi are based on the principles of cessation and contemplation practice, which is also known as shamatha-vipashyana cultivation practice. The principles for this type of Meditative practice were best outlined by Chih-i, founder of the Chinese Tien-Tai school, who created the six step method of cultivating the Breath to arrive at Samadhi.

For our purposes it will be useful to go into some detail about these steps, for in this way you will learn how to enter into Samadhi and how to deepen your realization of this Spiritual state. The actual experience of Samadhi is infinitely more important than just knowing the definition of the word.

#### THE SIX STEPS FOR CULTIVATING Samadhi

The first of these six steps for cultivating cessation-observation is for a meditator to cultivate their Breath just by watching it, or by counting it until it calms down. The next step is riding the Breath, which means letting your awareness ride upon your Breath so that it reaches an even calmer and more subtle state of flow. At this point, your breathing will become so subtle, and your thoughts will become so fine, that the two can blend into one.

The third step in cultivating Samadhi is cessation, wherein your external breathing--because of relaxation--slows so much that it stops, and thoughts then seem to disappear or cease. This is the hsi stage of the Tao school, and this point constitutes the actual yogic practice of pranayama, for Patanjali's Yoga Sutras says, "pranayama is the cutting off of the inhalation and exhalation." The Hatha Yoga Pradipika provides us with yet another reference in saying:

Just as salt dissolves in water and becomes one with it, so also in Samadhi there occurs the union of Mind with Atman. Mind dissolves in Breath and Breath subsides. Both then become one in Samadhi. This state of equilibrium results from the union of the jivatnam (individual self) and paramatman (divine self). When Mind Thus, is calmed, we are in Samadhi.

Accordingly, when you reach the state of cessation your thoughts will eventually settle just as will any dust suspended floating in a glass of dirty water. All you have to do is maintain the third person observer-like awareness of the Mind, and refrain from energizing your Mind by adding lots of extra Thought energy. Then your Mental realm will eventually settle naturally all by itself.

If you continue with this practice according to the steps already outlined, the four Dhyana can all be attained in your Spiritual practice, but you should not attach to them when they arise. If you let the Mind rest it will automatically become pure and clear, but you should never dwell with Attachment in any state of clarity that arises. This is the correct practice of cessation, and this is what will result in the state of Samadhi. If you focus on the Breath and attain one-pointed Concentration in this manner, coarse Mental discrimination will die down and eventually become empty. This is a state of Concentration, but in cultivation terms it is most often called "Emptiness."

These first three initial steps of cultivation practice initial focus on the Body somewhat, but at this point in Tien-tai practice, the focus should entirely switch over to the Mind. In other words, after an initial emphasis on physical calming and relaxation, you must next turn inwards to cultivate the Mind.

First we can say that you cultivate Body Samadhi, and next you work on attaining Mental Samadhi. Mental cultivation means cultivating Prajna Wisdom rather than investigating Phenomena, so the fourth step in Chih-i's six Dharma doors is to switch from a focus on following your Breath to observing your Mind as your external respiration starts to calm down and diminish in coarseness. This practice is called observation or contemplation, and is the point when Prajna Wisdom can arise.

In Spiritual practice, at the point of cessation when your Breath has stopped and miscellaneous thoughts have died out, you should look into the Mind and inquire, "What has stopped? What has reached cessation?" You should look into your Mind and watch for thoughts, but they will not be there since they have died down. Yet that thing which has the Power to recognize thoughts and observe them coming or going is still there, and that's It. That is what you want to find through cultivation, and you can find it by so relaxing that you let go of all things to realize it; the more you mentally let go of your Body and Mind, the more your Prajna Wisdom will arise and the greater it will become until you can achieve this realization.

Hence, at the stage of observation in your Spiritual cultivation, you will reach a point where your Mind is extremely calm, clear, crisp, and aware, absent of all the miscellaneous thoughts which normally trouble us. The state you reach will be one of Emptiness, clarity, and cessation. And what can know in this state is our wordless, Prajna Wisdom that knows through direct knowing.

There are two Mental characteristics absent in this state, but which can disturb it: (1) torpor, which is like a foggy, sleepy state of Mind, and (2) Mental excitedness or scatteredness. In normal situations our Mind is always in one of these states or the other, but in Samadhi there are no wandering thoughts, foggy thoughts, or scattered thoughts. The state of Samadhi is so clear of random thoughts that it is like a clear sky free of clouds for ten thousand miles in all directions. Hence, after reaching some special state of cessation, the famous Zen master Han Shan wrote:

My Mind is like a bright moon,

The lake is still and pure and clear.

There is no comparison which can be made.

Tell me how I can express this to you?

Thoughts can stop in our minds, but thoughts are not the Mind. Thoughts are just Phenomena that arise in the Mind; they are things that appear in the Mind. The Mind is really completely empty but has the capability of awareness that can know arising thoughts; thoughts are just empty experiential realms that it can know, and so we say "experience."

In fact, the initial state of Mental Emptiness and clarity which you can reach because of Thought cessation is not really the Mind either, but is still just a Mental Phenomenon or experiential realm known by the true Mind! It is still a Thought of Emptiness rather than true Emptiness. This stillness is like one super-big Thought that you can still know, but it is not the prepositional you. Hence, at this stage of Mental stopping achieved through cessation-contemplation practice, you are still within the realm of Phenomena arising out of the Mind.

This situation of Mental calming is like the lightness and darkness of day and night which are always alternating, but That Thing which can perceive the Light and darkness is neither Light nor darkness. That Thing which stands behind them never moves, and never leaves its place. In fact, it will never change and has never changed because It, itself, is empty and void of everything. By definition, this void is changeless.

All the infinite things tumultuously coursing through the past into the future cannot affect this fundamental one at all because they constitute a false realm empty as well. So that original thing will still be there throughout all the miraculous transformations, and yet it does not experience them as realities because they are falsities lacking a true existence. On the road of Spirituality, we practice cultivating Prajna Wisdom and Samadhi in order to return to That One and rest in its true nature without any efforts or artificialities. It is that fundamental one which we seek.

Therefore, the fifth step of the process of Spiritual cultivation, according to Master Chih-i, is called returning. After the fourth step of contemplation and introspection, the Mind can recognize its original nature, and thus return to its natural state. What does it return to? This is

incredibly hard to describe, just as is the last step of cultivation called purity. You cultivate cessation and contemplation practice to quiet the Mind, activate your Prajna Wisdom, and then realize the fundamental nature of the Mind that is neither stillness nor busyness. When you can reach that fundamental face beyond stillness and busyness, and abide there without abiding, you have reached the sixth and final step of Spiritual cultivation called purity.

## The Dhyana-Samadhi Meditation Absorptions - Part 2

### A GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO THE Samadhi

The nine Samadhi absorptions all involve some degree of purity, peacefulness, stability and Concentration but in each of these Meditative realms, the Concentration and purity is of an entirely different character. As a result, these Samadhi absorptions can only be considered training stages that help prepare you for realizing your fundamental nature. Someone with high Wisdom can cultivate to realize their fundamental nature directly without having to cultivate these practice stations, and this sort of direct practice is laid out in the Complete Enlightenment Sutra and Surangama Sutra. However, since most people cannot do this, the various Samadhi realms are usually laid out in a graduated path of attainment so that people have some method to cultivate to the Tao.

In terms of the Spiritual cultivation ranks involved in this training path for Enlightenment, there are four Dhyana, followed by four formless Samadhi, and also the ninth great Wisdom Samadhi that is the Nirvana with remainder of the Arhats. The four Dhyana are what most Spiritual schools focus upon, and are themselves levels of ever-increasing Mental refinement. The first Dhyana is the lowest of these attainments, the second Dhyana is a degree higher in Spiritual purity, the third Dhyana is yet higher in terms of Spiritual refinement, and the highest Meditative level of the four is the fourth Dhyana.

In terms of the degrees of progressive refinement, the first Dhyana can be categorized as having the attributes of Vitarka Mental Investigation, Vicara Mental analysis or consideration, physical bliss (rapture), Mental Happiness (Joy) and one-pointed Concentration (single-mindedness). As someone climbs the ranks of Meditation, many of these characteristics are purified away so that by the time someone reaches the fourth Dhyana attainment, they are solely abiding in a very ultra-refined state of just one-pointed Concentration without any other coarse Mental factors. In other words, the fourth Dhyana can be characterized by the very purest stage of the calm abiding or single-mindedness that constitutes Samadhi. The characteristics of the four Dhyana can therefore loosely be summarized as follows:

### MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FIRST FOUR Dhyana

## Dhyana Descriptive Factors, or Characteristics

1st - Investigation (Vitarka), analysis (Vicara), Joy, bliss, one-pointedness

2nd - Joy, bliss, one-pointedness, (inner purity, or internal clarity)

3rd - bliss, one-pointedness,(Equanimity, Mindfulness, Insight)

4th - one-pointedness; (completely pure Equanimity, Mindfulness,  
neither pleasure nor pain)

As human beings we live in the Realm of Desire, but the four Dhyana attainments correspond to higher Mental states within the Realm of Form, which can be described as a type of energy realm. As to the four formless Samadhi absorptions, they correspond to the heavens, realms, or states of Mind characterizing the Realm of Formlessness. Thus when anyone cultivates a state of Samadhi, we can loosely say that his or her Mind finally matches with Heaven.

When a practitioner attains the first Dhyana, we can say they have finally escaped from, or ascended out of the Realm of Desire, because this cultivation attainment places them at the initial entry level into the Realm of Form. The second Dhyana corresponds to a firmer or higher level of being within the Form Realm, and by the time a Spiritual practitioner has reached the third and fourth Dhyana in their Meditation work, their level of Spiritual attainment has progressed to the very top stages of the Form Realm. When anyone achieves a Dhyana attainment, their attainment level matches with the heavenly beings who inhabit the equivalent Spiritual realm. Such an individual is in this World, and yet their Mind is beyond it.

In this particular Spiritual ranking scheme, each of the higher realms--as you would naturally expect--is progressively more refined, higher, or purer than the realms below it. For instance, the Desire Realm is equivalent to the material World of Phenomena, the Form Realm can be equated with a higher energy World, and the Formless Realm can best be compared to a great transcendental Spiritual realm. The Form Realm is so pure compared to the Desire Realm that you have no more sexual desire when you reach it; what you have is more akin to affection. In the Formless Realm, all sorts of gross thoughts are absent for it really is a profound stage of Spiritual being.

The four Dhyana of the Form Realm are common stages of Spiritual attainment you can achieve through Meditation practice. Thus, so they are commonly shared by most every genuine religious school. The four formless Samadhi of the Formless Realm are also common stages of attainment as well, and include:

- o the Samadhi of infinite space (Emptiness)

- o the Samadhi of infinite Consciousness
- o the Samadhi of infinite nothingness
- o the Samadhi of neither Thought nor no-Thought

Each of these four Samadhi absorptions represents a stage of attainment in the Formless Realm. In other words, if you can attain any of these Samadhi, it means you can reach the realm of experience of the various heavenly beings residing in the Realm of Formlessness. If you can cultivate any one of these Samadhi to stability and master its attainment level, you might even be reborn in the corresponding Heaven yourself.

The last Samadhi of the nine is the "Nirvana" Samadhi of the Arhats. In this Samadhi everything is gone --spirit, Wisdom, Consciousness--absolutely everything is emptied out. If you attain this Samadhi you become a Great Arhat and can jump out of the Three Realms of Desire, Form and Formlessness, but this is only achievable if you also cultivate the transcendental Prajna Wisdom taught in Buddhism. Although it is a high Spiritual state, this Samadhi still has some remainders of imperfection because the individual who achieves it still retains a trace of subtle Defilements, and these Defilements will necessitate Rebirth after an extraordinarily long period of time.

These nine Samadhi are the basic practice vehicles people cultivate in order to attain the Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya Spiritual bodies. They are also a way of ranking or measuring someone's stage of cultivation attainments. While all beings share the Dharmakaya Body, which Westerners identify as God and Easterners as Tao, in actual fact few people actually attain self-realization and Enlightenment because they cultivate incorrectly or do not put in the required effort.

Even Monks and nuns, whose entire lives are devoted to Spiritual cultivation, tend to take Spiritual cultivation as a humdrum job after awhile, and attach to it no sense of urgency. As a result, they, too, fail to climb the Samadhi ranks of Spiritual attainment. Many even enter a holy order simply to avoid the World rather than because it gives them the perfect chance to search for self-realization. And so when we survey the various schools of the World, we can find many techniques for attaining Samadhi as a stepping stone or practice vehicle along the path for Awakening to the Dharmakaya, but we find very few practitioners committed to actually attaining the ranks of Samadhi. Those who attain some stage of Samadhi today are rare indeed.

Religious people usually know all the teachings about Spiritual cultivation, but what they are usually missing are the motivated efforts to attain the states of Spiritual Samadhi that can lead to genuine Spiritual realization. Just studying words in holy texts is not enough, for you have to meditate to empty the Mind in order to experience the Spiritual states of Heaven. But even if we only considered very committed Spiritual cultivation practitioners, we would still find very few people who practice Meditation and other Spiritual exercises correctly, because most people lack

sufficient Wisdom to know the meaning of the path, and therefore how to correctly apply themselves.

If they have not yet "seen the path," then they usually end up spending practice time without making too much Spiritual progress at all, and seeing the path requires Merit, Wisdom and hard effort. Thus it is that few people ever succeed in the great matter of Spiritual self-realization.

No matter whether one follows a Buddhist path, Christian path, Jain path, Hindu path, Islamic path, Jewish path, Shintoist path, the Hinayana school, Mahayana school, orthodoxism or Esotericism, Taoism or Confucianism or whatever, these Samadhi absorptions are definitely within your reach. Everyone is capable of attaining them because everyone already has the Tao, and these are just levels of clearing the Mind. All the great Spiritual heroes of religious traditions were usually heroes precisely because they cultivated Samadhi; without it they were nothing. In fact, it is the Samadhi attainments that make someone a saint, Guru, prophet, sage, avatar, Arhat, adept, master, initiated or accomplished one. You cannot elect or vote individuals into this stage, for they must practice to attain Samadhi themselves.

The Samadhi attainments are not Evil ways, but just specific realms of Mind which you can scientifically reach through the process of Mental resting and nonattachment. How could that produce anything Evil? In fact, to explain it using the Christian terminology employed by medieval Monks who cultivated Samadhi: by letting go of self-thoughts and anything else that belongs to the ego, and thereby cultivating selflessness, one clears the Mind of all selfishness and ego so that only the connection or fullness of God remains. The Spiritual state resultantly reached is the Spiritual state of Samadhi.

Many different Spiritual traditions therefore know of these Samadhi, since they are the Spiritual practice methods common to all schools (although classified under different names and terminology), but very few people can accurately characterize the various differences behind these states. To understand the stages of the cultivation path, we must therefore analyze these states of Spiritual attainment in some detail.

### THE FIRST Dhyana

Whenever a meditator can finally detach themselves from the view of being a physical Body, or having a physical Form, then the first Dhyana can finally be attained. This sort of detachment will produce a wonderful experience of Mental Joy (or Happiness) along with a comfortable Feeling of physical bliss felt in every Body cell. But you can only achieve this state if you detach from the Body and Mind, for that is the only way in which this physical bliss and Mental Joy will arise.

In the past, many Christian saints and lay cultivators were often described as having entered a state of "rapture," and many of these historical accounts used this term to refer to the Joy and

bliss characteristics of the first Dhyana attainment. Of course, whether or not this was actually the first Dhyana, or simply emotional fervor (as often seen in Bhakti worship), depended upon whether or not a number of other Dhyana characteristics were there as well.

If we connect the statements from the Esoteric and Tao schools that "bliss arises when the jing descends," "when full of jing, a practitioner does not think of sex," and "jing transforms into chi," we can correctly surmise that the first Dhyana is somehow related to transformations involving a Spiritual practitioner's jing and chi. Furthermore, an extremely intelligent person can pull together various other cultivation teachings we have gone over to understand how the first Dhyana becomes the actual target of sexual cultivation practice, and how it corresponds to the bliss and Emptiness brought about by kundalini cultivation. In short, the fact that the first Dhyana involves Mental Joy and physical bliss, which are related to jing and chi, strongly suggests that its achievement involves attaining a state of Harmony between the physical and Mental natures.

When, as a Meditation practitioner, you can actually succeed in abandoning the rigid Mental hold you usually have on your physical Body, and become free of habitually clinging to its sensations as well as free of the idea of being a Body, you will naturally experience some degree of psychological Joy and physical bliss. You will experience them because when you totally let go of the Body and the Mind, your chi circulations will flow freely without restriction. This free circulation will, in turn, produce positive Mental and physical states.

Achieving the first Dhyana does not necessarily mean that you will be free of the Skandha of sensation, yet it does indicate definite progress towards the Tao. In addition, the very fact that bliss and Joy arise through the first Dhyana accomplishment serves to remind us that the root of the Body (which experiences bliss) and Mind (which experiences Joy) are one, which should help focus our efforts in cultivation attainment.

When you attain the first Dhyana, you will experience such Mental Joy and physical comfort in every cell that the experience will far surpass anything available within the Desire Realm, including sexual orgasm. Thus, you will get a taste of the pleasurable state experienced every moment within the higher Desire Realm heavens, and this bliss will signify a transformation beginning to take place in every cell of your Body. But to attain this experiential realm, it is absolutely necessary that you first achieve one-pointed Concentration, and there are various factors that can interfere with this accomplishment.

#### Factors Inhibiting Samadhi

The main factors that keep us from accomplishing any of the Dhyana are our desires for Fortune, Fame, Food, sleep and sex. In addition, we can also say that our Attachment to sounds, smells, tastes, tangibles, visibles, etc., also keep us from attaining the four Dhyana. In terms of Meditation, drowsiness (torpor) and excitedness are enemies of the Dhyana, and in terms of

psychology, the factors of desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and Doubt expand this list. You can mention any number of factors which serve as cultivation hindrances, but perhaps the biggest hurdle to attaining the Dhyana are the five poisons.

The five poisons that inhibit the attainment of the Dhyana are desire, Anger, pride, Ignorance, and Doubt (lack of Faith). As we have covered before, these are fundamental karmic forces that constantly create all sorts of Mental troubles and Afflictions. They are unwholesome Mental factors that keep us ignorantly bound up with our bodies and ordinary mentation. For instance, you might begin to experience physical bliss through your Meditation, and then sexual desire might seize you so that you end up losing your jing through masturbation.

Another problem is that the Attachment to bliss might become so strong that this Attachment ends up plateauing your cultivation progress because you end up holding onto that state. You might also become inflated with pride at reaching some stage of cultivation, which in turn might end up strengthening your view of the ego. You might also begin to have doubts, and wonder about the path and whether you can attain the Dhyana at all. All these various hindrances can arise and inhibit your progress on the Spiritual path.

These are not the only factors that can prevent your entry into the first Dhyana. Naturally you must cultivate Merit and Wisdom, practice the discipline of accumulating and maintaining your jing without leakage, and must devote yourself to practicing Meditation (through an appropriate cultivation sadhana) in order to reach the first Dhyana. These requirements are necessary for any sort of Spiritual work and subsequent stage of attainment. Furthermore, if you do not work on detaching from deviant and erroneous views, you will have trouble entering any type of Dhyana as well.

What are these deviant views that can inhibit the attainment of Dhyana? As previously discussed when we dealt with the Skandha of volition, they are the view of taking the Body as the self, the view of taking anything in an extreme way, the view of holding onto subjective judgments (loving your own personal views), accepting incorrect Knowledge and Information as true, the view of improper discipline, and various false notions regarding the experiential realms you may encounter in cultivation. You have to jump out of these views in order to make any sort of substantial progress in Spiritual cultivation. To detach from these things means being open in Mind, and another word for this Flexibility is Emptiness.

These five views are fundamental karmic sources of trouble. If you can get past these views, you can reach the various Dhyana and start to really transform your unwholesome tendencies, habits and behaviors. People today seem to have adopted the New Age Mentality that simply going to conferences and workshops will help transform your thoughts and behavior. This is certainly a beneficial type of involvement; however, you can only really start to purify your unwholesome habits and Mental Afflictions when you start cultivating the Mind on a deep level by mastering the various Samadhi.

When you transform things at the deep level of Mind, this is the only type of real and lasting transformation. In fact, you can only transform things at a level of true depth when you cultivate the Samadhi and Dhyana, because this is the only thing that can purify habit chi flows and reach down far enough to purify the roots of behavior. Otherwise, simple "changes in behavior" are usually just changes in outward conditions, or the result of binding yourself to a set of rigid rules and regulations that do not ever transform the fundamental impulses of your behavior.

Each of the characteristics of the first Dhyana acts as an antidote to certain emotional Afflictions which work to prevent this state from arising: applied Thought counteracts doubts, the consideration of Mental analysis counteracts the hindrance of torpor, Mental Joy counteracts aversion and hate, physical bliss counteracts agitation and worry, and the achievement of single-mindedness counteracts the factor of desire. Hence, you can see that we all have these root Afflictions affecting us, and these Afflictions are the enemies of the Dhyana. However, the Dhyana are also the antidotes to these Afflictions, so cultivating the Dhyana is the true way to go about the human being task of changing, which means perfecting, our behavior.

The karmic Afflictions that prevent entry into Samadhi and Dhyana are like a big knot of karmic forces that will impel you to do things no matter how many Spiritual conferences or sensitivity classes you attend. They will compel and push you to do things even when you know you should not. Therefore, this is another reason why the Mind and Body must both be transformed before we can see the Tao, for otherwise the Mind and Body will both serve as obstacles on the path.

Both the Mind and Body can impel you to perform certain acts of behavior, so both have to be pacified on the cultivation trail, and brought to a higher degree of perfection. However, if you can transform the Mind and Body to the extent that the pressure behind these impulsive stirrings dies down, the obstacles on the path will be greatly lessened. Then it will be much easier to cultivate the Dhyana.

There are many routes we can follow to cultivate a realization of the first Dhyana. Regardless of the route or routes chosen, Chinese culture has two phrases of instruction that should help guide us through all these practices:

- o Your Mind should always be focused on one point (like using a rope to wrap your Mind around one thing).

- o You should separate (detach) yourself from your Body and Mind, and thereby attain Joy and bliss.

## **The Dhyana-Samadhi Meditation Absorptions - Part 3**

## Methods for Attaining One-pointedness

Naturally, there are many ways to attain the four Dhyana and formless Samadhi, and certain of these methods are common to a number of different Spiritual schools. Mantra practice is one such method, as are visualization and breathing techniques. All the methods that help you concentrate on a single object fall into the category of Spiritual cultivation practices as well.

The practice of sitting Meditation is also a well-known means for cultivating the single-pointed Concentration required of Samadhi, and there are quite a variety of different physical positions you can use for Meditation practice. But the question is, of all the cultivation techniques available, why is it that sitting contemplation is the most common technique?

The principles behind the use of sitting Meditation (zazen) are very deep. In fact, they are so deep that they would require an entire book of explanations to fully cover the topic. However, with the little space we have, we can shed the following Light on the matter.

The Mind reaches Samadhi when it attains a stage of one-pointed Concentration, or absorption. Since Mind and Body are of one unity, if the Mind reaches Samadhi, the Body will be able to attain Samadhi, too, which means that its normal irritations will stop bothering us. And if we proceed conversely, in trying to maneuver our Body into Samadhi (which means that it becomes relaxed but without leaking energy), this can help our minds arrive at a state of calmness as well.

Simply put, to initially attain Samadhi requires a unity of both Body and Mind, so in stilling the Body and calming its energy flows (by detaching from them and the sensations they generate), we can speed any efforts to calm our minds. Through the stability of sitting Meditation, comforting the Body helps still the Mind for its entry into Samadhi. In other words, if we can calm the Body Consciousness, we can detach from it and achieve the Emptiness required of Samadhi Concentration.

Our bodies are used to moving around all the time and get quite restless if they are motionless for even the shortest while. That is because when our bodies are as yet unpurified or untransformed, their energy flows are not smooth. Even if we sit quietly somewhere with the intent of resting the Body, we usually find ourselves shifting positions quite frequently in order to become more comfortable, unless of course we enter some stage of Concentration wherein we end up forgetting about our bodies entirely.

Therefore, if we want to attain Samadhi, it will help to sit in a special posture that will eliminate this need for Constant shifting; if the Body can become peaceful through this special posture, then the Mind can become peaceful as well.

This is one of the principles behind sitting in special postures for Meditation practice. These special sitting positions may feel uncomfortable at first, but they help bind our energies to stay

within the circuits of our bodies. Furthermore, the various saints and sages have found that once mastered, they are the best positions for eliminating the distractions of the physical nature. That is why sitting in Meditation is one of the most important positions for Spiritual practice.

Not talking--both internally and externally--also helps us to attain Samadhi, although of course, some cultivation methods require us to recite mantras. But even in these cases, your Mind should be internally listening to the Mantra without adding any extra commentary to the sounds; the only Sound experienced within Mantra practice should be the Sound of the Mantra itself rather than any internal talking. There should be no second dialogue, and you should not impose any internal Thought words of comprehension. In fact, when we are Chanting a Mantra there should not be any internal dialogue--the Mental realm within should remain quiet. As Kuan-Yin Bodhisattva taught, all you should do is use your Mind to listen. First you listen to the Sound, then to the stillness or Emptiness within, and then you forget them both to enter into Samadhi.

In the first Dhyana, the Mind and Body can enter into one-pointed Concentration because they get absorbed into one thing, one scenario. One way you can achieve this Concentration is through practicing the skeleton method contemplation wherein your whole Mind becomes absorbed in visualizing your shining white skeleton absent of muscles and flesh. You have to practice this until you reach the point that the visualization totally absorbs you and eventually becomes a Constant habit. In this way you will finally be able to achieve one-pointed Concentration.

If you entertain any other feelings or sensations during this period of absorbed Concentration, then you have lost this stage of Concentration, as you are no longer focused. That is why you may have to practice technique for awhile until you finally achieve it. Every cultivation method takes practice, but you have to make every technique a continuous habit until you are practicing that technique always.

The breathing methods of anapana are another way to develop the one-pointed Concentration required of Dhyana. They involve cultivating the Breath until it becomes so calm that the Mind and Breath unite into one. If you allow your Mind to follow other things at this stage, then you have also already departed from this technique. You must want your cultivation practice, whatever it is, to become such a solid habit that you are always within a scenario of Concentration (without a knitted brow, of course). Then you will actually be able to achieve Samadhi.

Most of the methods for attaining Samadhi require this habit of continual Mindfulness, or nien. Mindfulness means grasping a technique and sticking with it with Constant devotion, because lackadaisical or haphazard practice will not produce anything substantial in terms of Spiritual attainments. Without Mindfulness, you will make very little Spiritual accomplishment whatsoever despite what you may believe. You will just go through the motions of practice for years without ever tasting any of the fruits of attainment.

Chanting The Buddha's name, or another Mantra and even the rosary, are also popular means of reaching the scenario of single-minded Concentration. But even though all these methods are really available, who is actually able to enter into Samadhi? Not many people today. And why? Because people easily give in to distractions and do not maintain the required continuous effort of practice. When the phone rings, they interrupt their practice and fail to get started again. They let hunger or the desire to see a movie override their practice time. If they have to prepare for work tomorrow, they put their practice aside.

There are many other excuses people use ... there is always some bad Karma which people let get in the way of their Spiritual practice efforts, and thus, the achievement of genuine Spiritual progress is always a hope rather than a reality.

Think of a time when you were clear-minded and calm. Were you able to constantly maintain that scenario at all times whether you were lying, walking, sitting, standing, or whether you were experiencing a good time or were in the midst of a difficult situation? Not many people can do that, which is why a lot of people give up the World for a while in order to cultivate Samadhi. They hope by getting away from the distractions of the World, they can full-heartedly devote themselves to the effort of cultivating Dhyana.

In Esoteric Buddhism, there are a variety of cultivation practices whose intent is to actually keep you so busy that you cannot help but remain in a Concentration scenario to complete the tasks they set, and so you thereby enter Samadhi in this way. They ask you to simultaneously ring a Bell, recite a Mantra, visualize some particular scenario, and move your hands in peculiar mudras, or hand gestures. They put a thousand demands on your Concentration so that you become completely absorbed in what you are doing, and then get so tired that you finally give them all up to attain an empty Mental state.

This is the intent of their own particular method for leading you into Samadhi. It is a way of tricking you into the desired realm of Concentration because the practices are not the important thing in themselves. They are not the holy thing, but just a means of overloading your Mental abilities so that you develop a sharp single-minded Concentration, or abandon everything to attain Emptiness. In either way, you end up with Concentration. Unfortunately, people lose sight of this fact and take the actual ceremony for the important thing, which is just one of the problems inherent in the Esoteric school of today.

The stark simplicity of a Zen tea ceremony has the same goal and intention, so you must remember that any ceremony and its aesthetics are not really the important thing. Rather, the state of single-mindedness that is intended to be produced is the important thing, and whether or not you attain it is the measure as to whether the ceremony is successful. Therefore, no matter what cultivation method or technique you follow, you must practice for Samadhi attainments if you want to achieve the highest levels of Spiritual accomplishment. There is no other way.

Milarepa, Gampopa, Yeshe Tsogyel and Machig Labdron all cultivated a variety of practices to initially achieve their Samadhi, after which they devoted themselves to making it stronger and stronger until they finally had unveiled enough transcendental Wisdom to realize--to experientially see--that the Samadhi arise from within the realm of Enlightenment. Samadhi is empty already, but when they saw where this Emptiness came from--the true Emptiness-Without-Other--they were finally able to attain the true Tao. Thus, this is the normal sequence of Spiritual cultivation practice: First you work hard to attain some stage of Samadhi and then, using this basis as a foundation, you work even harder to further your cultivation attainments, and ultimately achieve the breakthrough to self-realization.

For the goal of Spiritual progress or Spiritual realization, there is no other choice than to practice some Form of Meditation to attain Samadhi. Thus, we have briefly mentioned several ways of applying the Mind so that it becomes unified into a single scenario; these are all bona fide ways to achieve the desired level of Concentration.

The book, *Twenty-Five Doors to Meditation: A Handbook for Entering Samadhi*, contains many more methods than we have space to go into, and you are advised to study this text if you want to understand these cultivation techniques and their relevant biophysics in detail. Just as we are doing here for the principles of cultivation, this book takes a nondenominational approach to explain, in a highly integrated fashion that references many religions, the main Spiritual techniques of cultivation. It tells why and how they work using explanations from a variety of different Spiritual schools and disciplines.

When ordinary people sit down to meditate, they might experience Samadhi Emptiness immediately at the start of their session, and yet lose it a moment later as they become distracted by all sorts of other stuff. When people follow the road of Esotericism, the same thing might happen; you might "get it" as soon as you initiate practice. However, the moment you start complicating matters by adding commentary, you lose that initial state of immediate Concentration. Other schools, such as yoga or Taoism, try to simplify things as much as possible by asking you to concentrate on the region of the third eye or the tan-tien below the belly in order to achieve Concentration. Even with such simple practices, however, it is difficult to really focus on these spots and not become distracted by anything else.

In Zen, the principle is to head directly for realizing our true self-nature, so Zen is a school of no-method. The Zen method used by great masters is simply to use expedient means that point directly to the great matter in order to help Spiritual disciples awaken. Later on, as it declined the Zen school in China started using the method of the hua-tou (or koan), where you keep concentrating on a question in order to try to attain the Samadhi of Concentration. You concentrate on a question such as "Who is this person walking, eating and calling Buddha's name?" or "Where did I come from?" or "What am I?" Since you are concentrating on a question

while oblivious of all else, the intense questioning mood tends to cut through a lot of Mental chatter and can subsequently produce one-pointedness.

Tying up distractions in this way is one possible means to arrive at single-minded Concentration. The important focus of the question must therefore be to look within and try to answer "Who am I?" or "What am I?" These are the questions that most directly lead us to our true nature.

Furthermore, when you adopt the hua-tou as a means of cultivation, you should always be in it because you should always be cultivating Mindfulness. The Investigation of the hua-tou must become a permanent habit just as in visualization practice, Mantra practice, or any other type of practice. It has to become a permanent habit you always carry around with you so that you are always in that particular scenario. This is the Mindfulness aspect of developing Concentration.

Naturally, this principle of Mindfulness applies across all the different cultivation methods, because in order to enter Dhyana or Samadhi you must become totally absorbed in some particular scenario, and that requires Constant Mindfulness. Without Mindfulness, you would just be engaging in just another line of Mental gymnastics. Hence, when a particular religious school wants you to follow the practice of worshipping some particular deity, you must not lose your head and think there is something ultimate about that particular deity. After all, both you and the deity have Tao, and so are fundamentally equivalent. The deity cannot give Tao to you; you have to awaken to it yourself. What you must recognize is the importance of one-pointed Concentration on the deity as the crucial point of the cultivation practice to help you attain the Tao.

This is the inherent principle behind the Bhakti yoga practice of devotion; it is irrelevant whether you worship Jesus or Krishna through Bhakti, for they are both worthy Spiritual examples and the state of Samadhi that you resultantly reach is the important thing. The rest of the stuff you use to cultivate this state just constitutes skillful expedient means--whatever it takes to get you into that unified Mental realm. If you are Hindu you use Krishna, Christian you use Jesus, Buddhist you use Buddha--it is all expedient means. When you are finally inside a scenario of single-minded Concentration that you resultantly achieve, you should forget about absolutely everything--time, space, the Body, Mind--including the particular scenario you used to enter that state!

Forget it all, drop everything and detach from your thoughts! Then you will really be "one with God," you will really be practicing the Tao, you will really start to understand the meaning of nonego and selflessness, and you will really be in Samadhi. You can describe this in a multitude of different ways, such as to say you are "cultivating Emptiness," but it is the same principle no matter how you word it. This stage is what Spiritual practice is all about. Attain that state, and then you will know this to be true. Otherwise, all these words are like useless garbage.

Whether we talk about Yeshe Tsogyel, Milarepa and Gampopa, or Machig Labdron, they had all specifically trained to achieve a unified scenario of Mind, meaning they all worked very hard to

attain Samadhi. If you, yourself, cannot accomplish this feat, do not even be talking about your own genuine Spiritual growth and real Spiritual attainments. All these practitioners, and all the saints and sages, equally mastered some degree of contemplation training, because without it, they would have had no foundation of Spiritual achievements whatsoever.

When we read the Bible or some other holy text and wonder why all these past saints or prophets were so great, the reason is not because of "heavenly grace," but rather because they cultivated Samadhi attainments. Spiritual accomplishment is not a thing handed to you, but something you must work for. If you seem to be luckier than others in this respect, it is just the carry-over of karmic rewards from past-Life cultivation efforts.

Every now and then we find some individuals who do not need to practice too hard to attain Samadhi because they already have vast Prajna Wisdom and a high degree of previous cultivation attainment. The famous Sixth Patriarch of Zen, Master Hui-neng, who was the incarnation of a very ancient Buddha, did not go through this prior training because his Prajna Wisdom was already so high from so many previous lives of practice. Thus, he said to the Fifth Patriarch of Zen, Master Hung-jen, "My Mind abides in Wisdom at all times and is not separate from the self-nature. ... What (Spiritual practice) would you have me do?" Upon Enlightenment he achieved the great mirror Wisdom, which was the result of his cultivation merits.

There are all sorts of methods available for practicing to reach the one-pointed Concentration required of the various Samadhi and Dhyana. In fact, the purpose of worldly Religion is to give you these options of practice, and help get you started on their road of attainment. Another one of the important jobs of Religion--in addition to preserving these cultivation routes and continually making them available so that Spiritual aspirants have a living road of practice to rely upon--is to explain them and teach you how to tread these paths. Otherwise, a Religion is not doing its job.

Yet even though this is one of the responsibilities of Religion, sometimes the ruling powers within organized religions try to persecute and even destroy individuals who actually attain the Samadhi Spiritual states. Other times the leaders of religions are well meaning and really want to help people, but just do not know what to teach about these things because the Spiritual leaders lack any understanding themselves. When this is the case, true Spiritual cultivators can still suffer religious persecution even though their Spiritual attainments far surpass those of the established orthodoxy.

Christianity emphasizes that you should develop Samadhi Concentration through the road of prayer and giving (Offering and good works). Hinduism places particular emphasis on Bhakti yoga. The yoga schools stress various Body and breathing exercises along with special Mental contemplations. Judaism has Kaballah Meditation, Tantra has its Mantra practices and deity or Mandala visualizations, and so on it goes.

The World's Spiritual traditions champion all sorts of paths of practice, but they are commonly designed to help you become absorbed in a Mental realm of Concentration wherein you forget all your troubles and Mental Afflictions. But this is not the final objective of these Spiritual practices, for they only orient you into the initial steps of the required Spiritual practice effort.

If successfully cultivated, the initial result of all these methods is the one-pointed Concentration realm of the first Dhyana. The first Dhyana is not the sole property of any cultivation school, even though some schools make the claim that the road to Spiritual salvation is theirs alone. Unfortunately, people always think that the four Dhyana and other states of kung-fu attainment are unique to their own Spiritual sect alone when they are naturally occurring, universal, nondenominational, nonsectarian Phenomena.

Putting this mistake aside, the various schools of cultivation all agree on the need for Spiritual aspirants to achieve a Mental calm abiding marked by single-mindedness. This realization is what fuels the common use of these practices across Spiritual traditions. Faith or belief are not enough; you have to attain the states of Samadhi for true Spiritual Liberation.

When a scientist or Philosopher becomes so involved in trying to solve a problem that he or she forgets himself or herself and his or her surroundings, this too is a type of Concentration. However, it is best Thought of as an ordinary person's Samadhi because it lacks Prajna transcendental Wisdom and the absence of desire. Furthermore, it also lacks the characteristics of bliss and Joy found in the first Dhyana, which the Tibetan school refers to as physical and Mental pliancy.

Even scratching one's ears can be considered a type of Mental absorption, though it hardly qualifies as a Spiritual cultivation Samadhi. We can therefore understand that one difference between the attainment levels of various practitioners is the depth of their single-mindedness (Emptiness) and the extent of their Insight discernment (Prajna Wisdom). These are actually the appropriate measures of someone's genuine cultivation kung-fu.

Taoist tenets say, "If you achieve really deep Concentration, then even your shen enters into it." The Enlightened Chinese prime minister Kuan Tzu also said, "Your Insight reaches to such an extent that your comprehension penetrates to things not apparent." Ordinary people typically concentrate on making money, on sexual indulgence, or going after Fame that we can say they are almost insane with Concentration. This is certainly one type of unified scenario, but it is a sick one. It is certainly not the unified scenario of Spiritual cultivation.

The key points to this conversation are that (1) being unified in single-mindedness is a common principle to all cultivation schools, (2) there are various factors that inhibit entry into the Samadhi of single-minded Concentration, (3) the various Samadhi absorptions are common to all beings throughout the Universe because the principles of Mind are the same, and (4) there are a variety of techniques you can use to enter into the stage of Samadhi Concentration.

Unfortunately, many people who normally try to meditate and achieve one-pointedness just sit there sleeping or playing with thoughts rather than work on becoming mentally unified, so they cannot taste any of the Spiritual states they usually hope for. Then, since they cannot attain these states themselves, they do not believe they exist even though others report attaining them. Of course, there are even people who, out of stubbornness, will not believe in the phenomenal displays of superpowers and Siddhis that originate out of these states, even when they see them for themselves! Hence opinionatedness and stubbornness, as previously stated, are enemies to cultivation attainment.

It is hard to teach or even Interest individuals in the genuine process of Spiritual cultivation. The job of a teacher is not to actually convince you of anything, but simply open the way to help you practice. You have to generate your own motivation as to whether you will go down the road of cultivation practice, and a teacher can only help guide your way once you have made this decision.

If you do practice correctly, we promise that you will be able to produce all the results of Spiritual practice stated, and then you will be able to convince yourself of the Truth of the path. As several Zen masters explained, it was only after they had reached certain stages of attainment that they "had no more doubts," so the only proof you should accept is in your own Spiritual attainment.

There are all sorts of mistakes that ordinary people can make when it comes to Spiritual cultivation practice. For instance, even advanced practitioners typically believe that the Orthodox and Esoteric Schools of Buddhism, which represent the two great roads of Mind and Body cultivation, do not contain the same principles. However, people who hold this view simply have not studied deeply enough. For instance, these schools are definitely connected in the area of the Samadhi, or Mental absorptions. Once you understand the theory behind various Meditation techniques, and once you spend some time Thinking about their results, then you will begin to understand the cultivation path and be able to see these connections quite clearly.

Cultivation does not mean you can give up using your Mind and forget about studying entirely, for you still have to explore matters and familiarize yourself with the theory of cultivation. You must still read, study and deeply investigate Spiritual texts to comprehend everything. Theory without practice is useless; kung-fu accomplishment without understanding is useless as well. When you have understanding, Merit and the success of practice attainment, you will finally be able to enter the first Dhyana.

How much time will you require to achieve the first Dhyana? It will depend entirely upon your efforts and background. In other words, your Karma will determine how much time is required- both the Karma from your past lives and the extent of your efforts in this Life which will bring the ripening process to fruition. Remember that you are always in an ever present state of Samadhi, but simply cover it over with thoughts so as to hide it. Let go of these thoughts,

however, and Samadhi will be unveiled instantly. Some people in Buddha's time attained Samadhi in as little as three days.

The Alaya Consciousness contains the seeds for all the Samadhi, as well as the seeds for your current situation, so all you have to do is cultivate to activate the seeds for the Dhyana that are already resting there in your Alaya Consciousness. They are universal states, which is why all beings can achieve them. In the process of working towards this goal, your Body will undergo various physical transformations that put you in line with this higher perfection. You will experience Joy, bliss and all sorts of other sensations because as you climb towards one-pointed Concentration, your chi and mai will transform, your kundalini will start to rise, and all sorts of internal blockages will become unstuck. These transformations are all the proper kung-fu of Spiritual practice.

When all four elements of our bodies change, it is natural that we will experience various physical sensations. However, these sensations and physical transformations are not the important thing. The important thing is that Mental Concentration will result in the Body transforming to a state much better suited for maintaining that state of Concentration, and since frictionless Emptiness is the Mind's natural state, the physical state supporting this achievement will correspond to optimal physical health. Health is a physical Phenomenon, so attaining the first Dhyana cannot be separated from cultivating the Body's jing, chi and mai. When you cultivate these to their prime, the natural result is optimal health and possible Spiritual achievements.

In Shakyamuni's time, some students needed only a matter of days or even hours to reach the state of Dhyana because their minds were simpler and uncomplicated and their Concentration was good enough. People like Milarepa and Lady Tsogyel suffered all sorts of hardships and required a longer period of time because they followed a path of Body cultivation rather than a path of pure Prajna Wisdom. Shakyamuni Buddha, in his Wisdom, rarely spoke of this route although he did explain the hard ascetic path of cultivation, for he underwent it himself. Mostly he emphasized the cultivation route of Mind rather than the Form practices of the Esoteric school.

Thus, the time it takes to achieve Awakening will depend upon your merits, your efforts, and the path you choose, as exemplified in the case of Zen master Hui-neng. Master Hui-neng, by looking into his Mind, reached Enlightenment almost instantly. Afterwards, he spent the next fifteen years in seclusion working on transforming his Body while stabilizing and deepening his Spiritual attainment.

## **The Dhyana-Samadhi Meditation Absorptions - Part 4**

## The Joy and Bliss of Dhyana

To attain the first Dhyana, many people understand that you must liberate yourself from your Body and Mind to experience Mental Joy and physical bliss. However, nobody asks why this is so. When you detach from the Body to attain some measure of calm, you will naturally experience some measure of Mental Joy. For instance, those people who undergo near-Death experiences often feel a great Joy because of being released from the clutches of the physical Body. But in terms of the sequences of the Spiritual path, if you loosen your hold on your Mind and Body without losing your jing, then your jing will become full and transform into chi. Next your chi will become full, your energy channels will open, your vitality will freely flow everywhere, and even your ching-se will become activated. How could you not feel a state of Joy and bliss with all these accomplishments happening?

These events will naturally produce physical bliss (comfort), and if you become absolutely flooded with bliss while withdrawing from normally bothersome physical distractions, your Mind will experience Emptiness, freedom and Joy. In other words, as your disturbing emotions settle down, Joy and bliss will both naturally arise. Since Body and Mind are interrelated, bliss and Joy will intensify as you loosen the tight restrictions normally binding your Mental and physical states.

Eventually these two factors will pervade your Body and Mind to the extent that Joy will help further your Mental tranquility, and tranquility will give rise to a deepening of physical bliss. This generation of bliss will in turn help heighten your level of Concentration, and the bliss together with Concentration will both become more refined the longer and more devotedly you cultivate Spiritual practice.

This entire process begins at the time you start to become free of Afflictions and stabilize your emotions. If you can reach a state of internal tranquility, you can get rid of confusion and Ignorance and give birth to Prajna Wisdom. Prajna Wisdom clarifies or sees the way in which our Mind manufactures thoughts and emotions, and thus, it can penetrate through our Illusion of being an inherent self. It is the empty awareness knowing that does not need words--our bright nonconceptual knowing awareness--and it lets us ultimately realize our fundamental nature. When you attain tranquility and have calmed your desires and Afflictions, Prajna Wisdom can burst forth like flames on dry wood.

With Prajna Wisdom you can more readily abandon obstructions on the Spiritual path, and then definitely climb the stairs of cultivation attainment. To attain the first Dhyana you must therefore relinquish unwholesome Mental factors that interfere with tranquility and Prajna, such as the five poisons, and you must withdraw from sensual desires. Abandoning an Interest in sensual desires means detaching from the Body and thus becoming able to match with the higher realms of Spiritual attainment. It also helps you maintain those attainments, through nonleakage, once you

reach them. For instance, if higher Spiritual beings have bodies different than ours, how can clinging to our bodies assist in gaining Spiritual achievements?

To summarize the matter, we should say that freedom in both Mind and Body, which results in Mental Happiness and physical bliss, are necessary preconditions for attaining the first Dhyana. In the higher stages of Meditation, Joy and bliss are actually viewed as gross Mental and physical factors that inhibit further Spiritual progress on the path. Nevertheless, in attempting to gain entry into the first Dhyana, they are necessary components of the overall Spiritual process.

We can therefore say that physical bliss and Mental Joy are necessary at the earliest stages of Spiritual attainment, not just because they are generated as a result of Mental Concentration, but because they contribute to generating Concentration. For instance, when the Mind is joyful, it naturally settles into tranquility (stability). As Shakyamuni Buddha stated, bliss increases as tranquility increases, and bliss serves to perfect Concentration. That is one of the reasons that physical bliss from chi cultivation is emphasized so predominately in the Tibetan school of Esoteric Buddhism and its various tantric yoga practices.

If you are able to cultivate a Feeling of disgust for both the Body and the World which motivates you to detach and separate from your physical nature, then gradually your chi will transform and your mai will open so that you can obtain the necessary factors of Mental Joy and bodily bliss that characterize the first Dhyana. That is the purpose behind the white skeleton visualization technique, but in practicing this technique you must also joyfully imagine Offering away your organs and flesh in order to allow the Joy and bliss of the Dhyana concentrations to arise.

In other words, if you practice Concentration while prohibiting Joy and bliss from arising, you will not be able to reach even the first Dhyana; you can never attain any Spiritual states through a Mental clamping down, or suppressive Mental force.

Before you achieve this stage, however, you will still have to go through all sorts of Suffering and troubles because there is no way to escape the painful nature of the World until you succeed at your Spiritual cultivation. In fact, it is the pain of the World which motivates many people to turn toward Spiritual cultivation in the first place, for cultivation provides the only sure means to escape from the World of Suffering. Even if you live a Life of Virtue, unless you succeed at Spiritual cultivation you will have to return to the World once again for many more lives, and who knows what experiences your subsequent lives will bring? When your cultivation stage is so low, you cannot even pick where you will go and what you will do next, because Karma will have you in its grips until you cultivate to the stage where you can become master of the process. That is when you will be able to come and go as you please.

Another reason people sometimes cultivate is because they want health and Happiness; they run after cultivation because they are running after Joy and bliss. However, the Joy and bliss of the first Dhyana are different from the Happiness and Joy of ordinary people when they make a lot

of money, get married, engage in sexual intercourse, become famous, and so on. It is a Joy and bliss of a much higher level than any physical or material concerns. For lack of a better word, the Joy and bliss of the first Dhyana constitute "Dharma Happiness" which is very difficult to comprehend unless you actually achieve this stage of cultivation. We can borrow a Tibetan analogy which says that Mental Joy is akin to spotting water when you are thirsty in the desert, whereas physical bliss is like actually satisfying that thirst. Nonetheless, these experiences of Joy and bliss cannot even begin to match the Joy and bliss of the four Dhyana. Thus, it is that people today only know the names of the four Dhyana and their characteristics without truly being able to comprehend the actual meaning of these states.

Buddhism, for instance, is nothing but an organized set of cultivation techniques and Prajna Wisdom teachings, and it will eventually decline over time as fewer people end up cultivating to reach these states of Samadhi and Prajna attainment. As it decays, fewer and fewer people will become able to verify all its other teachings and explain them to others, and as people's Wisdom Life diminishes, fewer people will be able to accept these teachings as well.

An accomplishment in Spiritual attainment is therefore necessary to keep the paths of Spiritual cultivation alive. When religions no longer produce individuals with Samadhi and Prajna attainments within their ranks, they quickly turn into ossified Power structures that actually look down upon the Spiritual path and accomplished cultivators while becoming depleted of the ability to guide others to Spiritual Liberation. This is a calamity, but it is the way of this World.

#### Retreat Practices

If you really want to spiritually cultivate, you must lay a solid foundation of Meditation practice and then go into Retreat for a certain period of time to fully devote yourself to uninterrupted cultivation practice. It is normally useless to do this, however, unless you already have made great progress in transforming your jing, chi, shen and mai, whereby you know what you are doing. Otherwise you would just be kidding yourself that you were cultivating. You would end up wasting time or using up your good Fortune to enjoy a period of solitude, or would simply be torturing yourself for no reason at all.

If you really want to reach Enlightenment, it is natural to go through all sorts of Suffering because of the great value of what you are trying to attain. Furthermore, you will definitely go against the grain when you are giving up old habits and desires in order to create a new Life, so a bit of Suffering is to be expected on the Spiritual trail. Hence, hard work is to be expected, and the only way to guarantee any degree of success in Spiritual endeavors is to put in the hard work of cultivating Samadhi.

There are two general paths through which you can attain one-pointed Concentration. The first method requires that you go into isolated Retreat like Milarepa, Gampopa or Lady Tsogyel. Undertaking an isolated Meditation Retreat, like Vasubandhu's brother Asanga, does not

guarantee you will see the Tao in this lifetime. It might still require one or more additional lives for you to attain Enlightenment, but anyone who is devoted to attaining the Tao will eventually attain it because it is always there, and firm desire will clear the path for Spiritual attainment.

In actual fact, there is no one who has not achieved an actual Concentration in a former lifetime, and since the seeds of these experiences lie dormant in the Alaya Consciousness, the various Samadhi and Dhyana are within the reach of all. Perhaps an individual will fail to attain these states of Concentration in this lifetime because of insufficient practice at mentally nonclinging, but they can expect to succeed in a subsequent Life of effort if they just make the necessary preparations, especially if they lay a strong Spiritual foundation in this Life. The problem is, will they have the cultivation teachings available in that lifetime? If they do not put sufficient cultivation efforts into this one, the future availability of accurate Spiritual teachings is unlikely.

To be strictly accurate, any human being of determined will and unrelenting Faith can expect to attain Tao within at most three lives, and perhaps this is your third Life already! But you will need accurate cultivation teachings to follow, and you will need to cultivate both Prajna Wisdom and virtuous Merit to break the pattern of Ignorance that shields this realization, which is why the Stage of Accumulation (of Merit and Wisdom) precedes the Stage of Intensified Preparatory Exercises in Spiritual practice.

The Stage of Merit and Wisdom Accumulation means you must first study Spiritual teachings and tread the path of good deeds and virtuous ways while simultaneously practicing to gain some level of Spiritual accomplishment. From doing this, you will finally be able to "see the path" and truly begin to cultivate correct Spiritual practice. Before people "see the path" or "see the Tao," most of their cultivation efforts will have little Spiritual Power but after experiencing a genuine stage of Emptiness and selflessness, they will truly know the way, and their efforts will have a great effect. That is why this is the normal sequence of Spiritual practice.

The other means for obtaining one-pointed Concentration is the Mahayana way of remaining in the World and Suffering for the sake of others while cultivating all the while. This road of practice is really practicing austerities, for it definitely involves much more pain and Suffering than simply going into Retreat to meditate in a cave!

In other words, the Mahayana Spiritual path of cultivation is to try to attain one-pointed Concentration in the midst of worldly hustle and bustle, and you constantly test yourself in the World of troubles rather than in the silence of isolation. This road of practice really has you proving the Truth of Emptiness. You have to put lots of work into perfecting your outward behavior at the same time that you are cultivating your Mind, and you must learn to look at everything that comes your way as if it were a dream. The results of this sort of practice are very strong, for as Zen master Hakuin said, "Meditation in the midst of action is a billion times superior to Meditation in stillness."

This Mahayana means of cultivation is actually more difficult than a Hinayana Retreat in solitary seclusion because you need a great unselfish Mind to accomplish this way. You need to Love and accept people, and you need mercy and Compassion to take care of others and do the difficult things you vow to do while receiving slander, misunderstanding and Suffering in return. Working for the benefit of others involves a lot of pain and trouble, yet you must still find the time to meditate in all this mess; otherwise, you will just become an ordinary Charity worker with worldly rather than worldly and Spiritual Merit. In that case, Life will quickly pass by, and while you will accumulate Merit for the path, you will achieve no level of Spiritual attainment whatsoever.

You might accumulate a vast amount of Merit like a Mother Teresa or Albert Schweitzer in this way, but you will achieve little in terms of true cultivation attainment when you do not engage in Meditation practice as well. Meditation practice is the only way to purify the Mind and attain Spiritual states, for you cannot clean the Mind by Thinking pretty thoughts, or by replacing old thoughts with new ones.

On the Mahayana path you have to face many people and many troubles, but if your vows of mercy and Compassion are great enough, sometimes you can reach Tao even quicker along this route. This is possible because your Merit will grow astronomically, and because you will develop sufficient Prajna Wisdom to be able to detach from, or skillfully deal with, all the various distractions, disturbances and disruptions of modern Life. Those following the Hinayana road usually just become Meditation teachers, but those following the Mahayana path can become generals, kings, saints and all sorts of other occupations.

As to those people who undertake the isolated forest, mountain and cave retreats to accomplish the stage of cultivating their kundalini, some of them never experience the tumo Phenomenon prior to their seclusion. Therefore they must initially resort to visualizing the kundalini Fire in order to "strike a match" to get it started. If you do the various exercises necessary to awaken the kundalini, the tumo Fire will always appear when you achieve a state of one-pointed Concentration. The key, once again, is achieving a state of single-mindedness, which is why it is treasured in all religious schools (though not necessarily by the orthodox Power structure of such schools, which typically fear that a practitioner's successful cultivation attainment will undermine their own religious authority).

### The Discipline Required of the Path

As to the topic of discipline, which is required for cultivating kung-fu and Spiritual attainment, discipline is already included within the nine Samadhi. We have not discussed discipline as a separate feature of the path, because if you achieve single-minded Concentration, it means you are already practicing discipline to a tremendous extent. In fact, when you are in one-pointed Concentration, your discipline is actually stricter than any ordinary individual following some external code of conduct. Forget about dietary codes, "do-this-and-not-that," the number of times

you should pray per day and so on--none of that is real discipline because only Samadhi constitutes real discipline. These other things are just behavioral constraints that have no absolute standings themselves, but vary according to time and place. The real discipline is to attain Samadhi, and you break the rules of discipline when you lose this stage of Spiritual attainment.

While someone who holds to external behavioral discipline is to be praised, someone who "sees the path" and attains Samadhi does not talk about holding to it anymore because they spontaneously perform disciplined conduct at all times. Samadhi gives rise to natural discipline--the disciplined Mind of Samadhi--and all the artificial disciplinary rules of the World are just imitations of this true discipline. Disciplinary codes are designed to help you enter into Samadhi, and when you achieve that saintly state, you might even choose to break the rules of conventional discipline in order to teach others, as the famous Monk Jigong often did. But only people of the highest attainment dare do so in a public way.

Many individuals can achieve the single-minded Concentration of the first Dhyana, but you can tell that they are still treading a deviant Spiritual path if they become arrogant and proud, if they lose their affection for others, if they become selfish and do not want to be bothered by anything, if they become lazy and just want to meditate, or if their minds become so tight that they start measuring who is Good and bad in terms of Spiritual kung-fu and other attainments.

After you attain kung-fu, a real practitioner realizes that everybody can attain kung-fu if they but simply practice. It is like riding a bike in that everyone can achieve this feat of dynamic Balance if they simply practice. Thus, the Flower Ornament Sutra says, "I now see that all Sentient beings everywhere fully possess the Wisdom and virtues of the Enlightened ones, but because of false conceptions and attachments they do not realize it."

Everyone is fundamentally Enlightened, everyone has Prajna Wisdom, and everyone can attain Samadhi and kung-fu. People need only unveil or uncover what already exists, and that unveiling requires the work of cultivation effort that entails the dropping or clinging to Thought realms and Mental states. This particular realization that everyone shares in the same fundamental nature helps you to become even more affectionate and compassionate as you progress in Spiritual practice, for this is the correct attitude in all religious striving.

Mencius commented on this point in saying that a major problem with people is that they all want to be the teachers of others, meaning that we all want others to listen to us because we feel we are right, more clever, or more brilliant than the rest. Most of us fall subject to this improper, arrogant attitude. Mencius did not say you should not become a teacher. He just meant that you should not become arrogant and try to Lord your Knowledge or opinions over others.

Therefore, there is a tradition in Esoteric Buddhism and Indian yoga that one should go and search for his or her Guru. You actually go and inspect them, and meanwhile they inspect you; you check them out, and they check you out. The big questions both sides are looking to answer

is whether the other person is humble or not, has integrity or not, is greedy or not, and whether or not they have great mercy.

Getting into any of the eight absorptions, which are common to all the World's cultivation schools as well as to all the beings in the Three Realms, requires that you be able to reach single-minded Concentration. All the World's cultivation methods have this as one of their goals, so you should not let yourself get confused on this point or become side-tracked by other issues. Nothing is really sacred or holy in the ultimate sense, but since the calm abiding of one-pointed Concentration is the way to Tao and the basis of all forms of cultivation, it is the method supreme to be prized above all others. When we can finally achieve the first level of single-minded Concentration, we will enter into a state of Joy and bliss of the first Dhyana.

The particular level of Joy and bliss is different for each of the four Dhyana. Ordinary people, too, can experience Joy and bliss, but this is much different than the Joy and bliss of these transcendental states. When an individual, for instance, makes money through Gambling or engages in sexual intercourse, this gives rise to the ordinary man's Joy and bliss. So what exactly is the level of Joy and bliss you can achieve through Meditation? This is a big question.

Shakyamuni only provided us with the general principles for this answer, so you have to go and study the matter yourself to make some progress in your understanding. To go into it layer by layer would require an incredibly detailed Knowledge of Life science, medicine, psychology and all sorts of other studies, which is a task set before the cultivators of the next several hundred years. We can just summarize matters by saying that the Joy of the Dhyana is a wonderful psychological experience while bliss is akin to a wonderful physical sensation. Joy refers to Happiness in the Mind, and bliss refers to the physical Body.

When someone wants to evaluate the status of various cultivation practitioners in the World, the Samadhi and Dhyana are the real kung-fu of Spiritual cultivation rather than whether or not an individual can shoot lights out of their Body, walk through walls, foretell the future, fly through the air and so on. The Samadhi and Dhyana stages of Meditation are the common province of all sorts of Spiritual cultivation schools, so they are not theoretical constructs but the actual result of Spiritual cultivation practice.

The prophets of the Old Testament, Christian saints of the Middle Ages, Immortals of the Tao school, sages of Confucian cultivation, Arhats of Buddhism, rishis or seers of ancient Indian yoga, and so forth were all Spiritual greats precisely because they could achieve the realms of Samadhi. If they did not achieve Samadhi, they could not be prophets, they could not become Christian saints, they could not become Taoist Immortals or Confucian sages, etc. in the first place. Their Spiritual status was the result of their own disciplined hard work at Samadhi and Wisdom cultivation achievement rather than some spontaneous gift from Heaven.

This is why we talk about this particular measuring scheme of practice, rather than go into all the superpowers and the stages of attainment to which psychic abilities might correspond. You can become a saint or sage when you attain Samadhi, but to do so you must cultivate discipline. This is the discipline of practice, the discipline of nonleakage, the discipline of Merit accumulation, and the discipline of Constant Mindfulness.

---

Source

[www.meditationexpert.com](http://www.meditationexpert.com)