

Shinay Meditation
Teaching by Shangpa Rinpoche
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Karma Kagyud Buddhist Centre, Singapore

Our second session for today is all about meditation. I am supposed to explain to you about Shinay meditation. As this is a very big subject, I can merely provide an introduction here. I will give you the procedures to accomplish Shinay meditation. There are many masters from different traditions who teach Shinay in their own methods. Some people meditate a lot. Some might even feel that they have accomplished Shinay meditation. It is good to know what is Shinay meditation, how it should be progressed and when Shinay meditation is achieved. Then we can clear much confusion on how and when Shinay meditation can be achieved.

Having some calm and peace is not Shinay meditation. Qualities of calmness and peace are just part of the progressive practice only. Even if you can meditate for 1-2 hours with peace and calm, it is not Shinay meditation. It is a progressive path to achieve Shinay meditation. When someone has meditated stably for an hour, we may have the impression that he has achieved Shinay meditation. That meditator may also think in the same way.

I will try to explain the steps on Shinay meditation to you. **Shantideva mentioned in four sentences.** When you have the basis of perfect shinay and from there you develop insight meditation, that insight is wisdom itself and it will completely eliminate defilements. Therefore, the first preparation to eliminate defilement and cause of defilement is through Shinay.

In order to achieve Shinay, you need to have complete renunciation for the world. There are certain favourable conditions that you need to acquire. One important one is to develop renunciation towards samsara. There should not be any strong attachment to samsaric existence. That is a precondition of Shinay meditation. There are 6 preconditions of Shinay Meditation. Without these preconditions, you cannot do Shinay meditation in any way.

Some people think meditation is too difficult. So they think of skipping meditation and simply do recitation of mantra or other forms of practices. Whichever practice you do, it has to integrate with meditation. Even with recitation of mantra, you need concentration and calmness. With visualization, you need both shinay and insight to complete practice of yidam. There is no other way to clear our ignorance since beginningless time. Without wisdom, ignorance cannot be cleared. So meditation is important and is involved in every practice of all traditions.

6 Preconditions of Shinay Meditation:-

- 1st Preparation – favourable location for meditation
- 2nd Preparation – lessen greed
- 3rd Preparation - more contentment

4th Preparation – abandoning activities

5th Preparation – good moral conduct

6th Preparation – abandoning grieve or strong defilements e.g. desire, hatred

We try to acquire these 6 preparations.

1. Favourable Place for Shinay - it must have five conditions.

- i. Basic necessities must be easily available e.g. food and shelter
- ii. Pleasant environment. The place of meditation should not be complicated and arouse agitation. E.g. too many photos or objects are distracting.
- iii. Good ground – some place with lots of moisture is not good for health. A place with too strong sun is also not good.
- iv. Good companion – to provide assistance. Not a companion who will instill hatred or desire.
- v. Necessity comfort materials

2. Lessen Greed

Greed invokes many emotions. With less greed, there will be lesser emotions. Don't think too much on what I want or what I can get. If I have \$100K, what should I do to get the next \$500k, then \$1million and so on and so forth. Some people think I can relax once I have achieved a million dollars. However, greed is a defect. The moment you reach a million, your mind will think of how to increase this million. So don't have this greed.

3. Contentment

With less greed, you can be contented easily. Whatever you have, you feel comfortable. There is a dharma teaching that says contentment is the greatest wealth.

4. Abandoning excessive activities

With contentment, you will abandon excessive activities and have more time for meditation. Many social activities are not important. So it is good to keep minimal activities for your own spiritual development.

5. Observance of Moral Conduct

Perform the 10 wholesome actions and avoid 10 unwholesome actions

6. Abandon Strong Defilements

Extreme desire, hatred and jealousy is not good for practice and disturbs our minds for development. We are unable to completely remove them at this stage. Try to apply antidote, recall that you are a practitioner and calm down.

So you need these 6 preparations for Shinay Meditation. Now we come to the meditation itself. There are two important aspects in Shinay meditation, i.e. Body and Mind.

On the Body aspect, we need to adopt the correct physical posture or the **7 postures of Buddha Vairocana.**

- i. Vajra asana – sit crossed leg
- ii. Spine straight like an arrow
- iii. Shoulders stretched like that of eagle
- iv. Hands placed together lightly on the lap and comfortably
- v. Neck is slightly tilted forward comfortably
- vi. Eyes level - gaze from the tip of nose to one feet away
- vii. Tongue gently presses the upper palate. Upper and lower teeth do not touch each other; they are slightly apart.

Vairocana is one of the five Buddhas namely Vairocana; Aksobhya; Amitabha; Ratnasambhava and Amoghasiddhi.

The Five Aggregates are:-

- Form
- Feeling
- Cognition
- Formative
- Consciousness

Transformation of purity of form or Buddha Vairocana into wisdom.

The first mental posture is to cut off both the future and the past. The past is already gone and no more part of you or me. The future is not yet here and it is not connected with you or me. So when both past and future are disengaged, you are left with that very moment. That very moment is the subject for you to remain in meditation.

When we come to meditation, Shinay meditation, there is object meditation and non-object meditation. Object meditation is subdivided into pure object meditation and non-pure object meditation. Object meditation need not be a physical object; it can be a mental object meditation. In the creation stage of the tantra, you visualise the yidam of the tantra. It could be light form or seed syllables form or even your breath. Other times you can concentrate on the bliss or joy. These pure objects are symbolic and related to the dharma. The impure objects are for instance rotten bodies in cemeteries, stone, wood, flower and crystal; anything that is not so complicated. Just place it in front of you and rest there.

First you must find the resting state of mind towards the object. That is the finding of your mind. Then, you can sustain it. You must know exactly the state of your mind. You should not put any pressure on your mind. In the beginning, just 5, 6 or 7 seconds of rested mind is great achievement. Subsequently, you can increase it to minutes of rest in the same state of mind. With time, it will improve, progress gradually and sustain it.

Next we come to non-object meditation. First we need investigation. Then we rest into finding of investigation. We use our intellectual to find the wisdom to

analyze the emptiness. That investigation we need to do a bit. Why is appearances emptiness in nature? Finally we come to the conclusion that emptiness and interdependence are linked. Emptiness in nature and interdependently arise. Then you rest in that state and there is nothing for you to think and investigate, elaborate and fabricate. Totally rest in that state of emptiness. That is non-object meditation. That emptiness is for you to rest. You cannot straight away jump into this non-concept stage. We are too used to objects and concepts. So it is better for you to start with object meditation.

When you rest in the state of Shinay meditation, always have a clear mind. Sleepy or unclear mind is not part of Shinay meditation.

- a. Clear mind,
- b. Mind must not absent but alert and awake
- c. Mind is not moving from focal point. Fully present in the object

Always check that these three are present.

Maitreya's text mentioned need to overcome 5 defects and engage in 8 perceptions. Shinay meditation is not so straightforward.

Five defects:-

1. Laziness – don't have joy of meditation. Always finding excuses to not meditate. Even if you are very keen in housework, you are lazy in meditation.
2. Forgetting the object of focal point – mind starts wandering and lost the focal point.
3. Drowsiness – this is very common. Half meditating, half sleepy state.
4. Agitation or discursiveness – mind is too alert and it cannot rest.
5. Defect of non-application of antidote – by not applying the antidote, you will be bothered more and more and you won't be able to meditate well.
6. Defect of applying antidote – when your mind is calm, you should let it remain as it is yet you apply antidote unnecessarily.

Eight perceptions to overcome these five defects:-

- I. Apply (i) devotion; (ii) motivation; (iii) effort and (iv) mental ecstasy (ability to use the mind in anyway) to overcome laziness.
- II. Apply (v) mindfulness; (vi) inspection or awareness to overcome forgetting of object of focal point
- III. Apply (vii) antidote force to develop bliss or comfort to overcome
- IV. (viii) Not applying antidotal force unnecessarily.

It is a bit complicated, I can tell from your faces. These are the procedures that I need to tell you within a short time. There are diagrams depicting Shinay Meditation.

Elephant = mind to be tamed

Monkey = mental discursiveness or agitation

Human = meditator of Shinay

Rabbit = mental dullness or drowsiness

There are 9 progressive stages of Shinay meditation. Only after the Ninth stage are you able to complete Shinay meditation. I will give you brief explanation on these nine stages.

Karmalashila meditation books called Gomrim contain the 9 stages of Shinay meditation.

First we gather more knowledge and embark – that is mental placement. All put into one object and focus without disturbances. So the first stage is Mental Placement.

9 progressive stages of Shinay meditation:-

(1) inwardly placing the mind on the object – **Mental Placement**

(2) extending the duration of the concentration – **Continual Placement**

(3) replacing the mind on the object when it is distracted - **Resetting**

(4) continuously restoring the focus of the mind – **Closely resting**. Most of the time we are unaware that the mind is distracted. Grouse distractions start to disappear. At the same time, dullness and agitation disappears. This is a rather high level of meditation.

(5) achieving a state of inner control – **Taming**. You start to appreciate the qualities of meditative concentration. You start to like meditation. Also while you are in meditation, defilements will not interfere. You will be able to meditate calmly and joyfully. Meditation is no longer a burden or tough task for you. You feel meditation is the most wonderful moment for you.

(6) achieving a state of inner pacification – **Pacified Mind**. You start to see distraction is a defect. There is no more dislike towards meditation or liking to distractions. Mental states are pacified and feel that moments of meditation are the greatest qualities of your mind. At that moment of practice, no matter how long you meditate, you will not be tired.

(7) achieving a state of complete inner pacification – **Completely Pacified Mind**. This is more controlled than the earlier stage. Even emotions, pressure etc will disperse the moment you meditate. You don't need lots of efforts to overcome e.g. depression and become free from it.

(8) achieving single-pointed mind, - **One-Pointedness**. Without effort and full of joy you engage in meditation. This is a very high level of meditation.

and

(9) achieving mental equilibrium – **Even Placement**. Effortless to start meditation. Mere thinking of it and you will be able to enter meditation. The duration is like a quarter of the day (3 hours in one sitting) without any disturbances or tiredness. It is effortless. Putting effort and struggling to sit for three hours is not counted.

After these 9 stages, then you are very close to Shinay meditation. You will start to see some signs of Shinay meditation. These signs are Shijang. Two parts are involved – Mind and Body.

Mind – you can use it to wherever you desire and not carried by defilements and emotions. From that, your body is affected through energy or wind. Utterly Processed Mind to Utterly Processed Body.

Body – it is not an electric current. It is like after shaving your hair, you touch it and there will be some friction. Then it becomes comfortable and spread to the entire body. This body will in turn affect your mind.

This is the first sign. Eventually, very obvious comfort disappears and stabilise. You will feel constant bliss in the state of mind and body. That is called Shinay Meditation! Only now you have achieved Shinay meditation!

Shinay meditation is not impossible for us to achieve. Yet it is not as seemingly easy as it appears to be. Reaching second and third stage of meditation is not necessarily Shinay meditation. One of my teachers said that in this world, it is difficult to find even one person who has achieved complete Shinay meditation.

Shinay meditation needs 6 forces

1. listening of dharma instructions (for the first stage of Shinay meditation)
2. reflecting and contemplation (second stage of Shinay meditation)
3. recollecting the processes of practice (third and fourth stages of Shinay meditation)
4. introspection – ability to use the mind in whatever ways you choose (fifth and sixth stages of Shinay meditation)
5. joyous effort (seventh and eight stages of Shinay meditation)
6. familiarity (ninth stage of Shinay meditation)

We managed to complete basic information on Shinay meditation. Try to recall all these when you want to embark on Shinay meditation. It can be future references for you. I sourced from various meditation guides. So it is very genuine instructions not created by myself.

So that's all.