

Cultivating Attentional Intelligence
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- The culminating phase of being in retreat in order to achieve śamatha as the basis for entering and proceeding along the path of Dzogchen entails devoting oneself to full-time practice in solitary retreat with a *sole* emphasis on śamatha, disengaging from all recitations and liturgies, and complementing one's śamatha practice only with guru yoga, taking the four empowerments, and merging one's mind with the guru's mind.
- *The Kṣitigarbha Tenth Cycle Sūtra (Daśacakraṣitigarbhasūtra)*: “How do you correctly note, with the power of mindfulness, the in-and-out movement of the breath? You count them correctly.”
- *The Primary Tantra of Mañjuśrī (Mañjuśrīmūlatantra)*: “By resorting to mindfulness of the respiration, conceptualization is calmed. Since the mind is completely inflamed, fasten it firmly to one meditative object.”
- Mindfulness of breathing, with mindfulness placed in the space in front of you, while introspectively noting the rhythm of the respiration by way of awareness of the tactile sensations of the breath
- Settling the mind in its natural state, with mindfulness focused on the stillness of luminosity and the cognizance of awareness, while maintaining a peripheral, introspective awareness of the movements of the mind
- The analogy of engineering (e.g., mindfulness of breathing) versus reverse-engineering (e.g. settling the mind in its natural state) the laser-like mind of śamatha
- Asaṅga (*Abhidharmasamuccaya*): “What is mindfulness? The non-forgetfulness of the mind with respect to a familiar object, having the function of non-distraction.”
- Śāntideva (*Bodhicāryāvātāra* V:108): “In brief, this alone is the definition of introspection: the repeated examination of the state of one's body and mind.”
- Machik Labdrön (1055-1149): “Tightly focus, then loosely release. There is the mind's place of rest.”
 - In the śamatha practice of settling the mind in its natural state, this oscillating awareness is used as a wrecking ball to break through subjective mindsets to the luminosity of the substrate consciousness, from which mindsets emerge, and to break through objective appearances to the vacuity of the substrate, from which appearances emerge.
 - In the vipaśyanā practice of cutting through, this oscillating awareness is used as a wrecking ball to break through the obscurative reality of the substrate consciousness to the actual nature of the mind (*cittatā*), primordial consciousness, and to break through the obscurative reality of the substrate to the actual nature of phenomena (*dharmatā*), the absolute space of phenomena.
- *The Vajra Essence*: “Previously, cognition and mentation demarcated outer from inner and grasped at them as being distinct. Now, ascertaining that there is no outer or inner, you come upon the nature of great, all-pervasive openness, which is called *meditation free of cognition and devoid of activity*. In such a meditative state, motionlessly rest your body without modifying it, like a corpse in a charnel ground. Let your voice rest unmodified, dispensing with all speech and recitations, as if your voice were a lute with its strings cut. Let your mind rest without modification, naturally releasing it in the state

of primordial being, without altering it in any way. With these three, dispensing with activities of the body, speech, and mind, you settle in meditative equipoise that is devoid of activity. For that reason, this is called *meditative equipoise*.”

- All appearances to our six senses (including “objective” and “subjective” appearances to mental perception) are our doorway to the whole of saṃsāra, while our experience of the sheer luminosity and cognizance of consciousness is our doorway to nirvāṇa and the dharmakāya, just as looking outwards to our physical environment on earth and up into the night sky is our doorway to the physical universe. “For the moment, what we attend to is reality,” wrote William James. So it is our choice whether to look outwards and perpetuate the obscurative reality of saṃsāra or inwards and unveil the ultimate reality of the indivisibility of dharmadhātu and dharmakāya by way of resting in the bliss, luminosity, and nonconceptuality of the substrate consciousness, which is the ground of the whole of saṃsāra.
- *The Royal Seal of Mahamudra* by the Third Khamtrul Rinpoche Ngawang Kunga Tenzin:
 - “Furthermore, it has been said that by cultivating samādhi, craving for the allures of the desire realm is averted; points of uncertainty are severed; extrasensory perception and samādhi arise; great compassion is born; authentic reality is [13] seen; one is able to establish disciples on the path to enlightenment; and many other sublime qualities are developed.” P. 25 (my translation)
 - [82] Thus, simply without letting the sentry of mindfulness and introspection be distracted or deluded, from that very perspective, without deliberately blocking or sustaining the arising of thoughts, but without falling under their influence, whatever arises, while recognizing their own essential nature, focus right there. In that way, without exerting effort, free from rejecting and accepting, if you familiarize yourself with focusing on their essential nature, eventually, thoughts will inflict no harm, and conceptualization itself will become the main practice. So this is a very profound, crucial point.” P. 64 (my translation)