

The Vajra Essence on Prāṇāyāma
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- Buddhaghosa: “As to suitability to temperament... Mindfulness of breathing is the one meditation subject suitable for one of deluded temperament and a temperament of compulsive ideation.” (*Path of Purification*, III: 121)
- *Ānāpānasati Sutta*:
 - “There is the case where a monk, having gone to the wilderness, to the shade of a tree, or to an empty building, sits down folding his legs crosswise, holding his body erect, and setting mindfulness in front of him. Always mindful, he breathes in; mindful he breathes out.”
 - “Breathing in long, one knows, ‘I breathe in long. Breathing out long, one knows, ‘I breathe out long.’ Breathing in short, one knows, ‘I breathe in short.’ Breathing out short, one knows, ‘I breathe out short.’ One trains thus: ‘I shall breathe in, experiencing the whole body. I shall breathe out, experiencing the whole body. I shall breathe in, calming the composite of the body. I shall breathe out, calming the composite of the body.’ Thus, one trains.”
- Asaṅga (*Śrāvakaḥ*): “By closely applying mindfulness to the object of inhalation and exhalation, you closely attend to, and thus comprehend and recognize, the location, duration, manner, and time of occurrence of the inhalations and exhalations. That is how you train. By devoting yourself to that practice and familiarizing yourself with it many times, physical pliancy and mental pliancy will arise, and upon reaching single-pointedness, you will take delight in the object.”
- Buddha: “Just as in the last month of the hot season, when a mass of dust and dirt has swirled up, a great rain cloud out of season disperses it and quells it on the spot, so too concentration by mindfulness of breathing, when developed and cultivated, is peaceful, sublime, an ambrosial dwelling, and it disperses and quells on the spot unwholesome states whenever they arise.” (*Samyutta Nikāya* 54.9)
- His Holiness the Dalai Lama (Excerpt from preliminary teachings to granting the Kalachakra Empowerment, Washington DC, July 11, 2011):
 - “That single-pointed mind you call *śamatha* is common in India for thousands of years in all traditions, a common practice. Sometimes I do feel that we Tibetans are a little bit negligent on that. We make excuses, and that is a mistake.”
 - “The *Heart Sutra* mentions, ‘gate, gate, paragate, parasamgate.’ Unless you experience single-pointed meditation, the ‘gate, gate’ is meaningless. So if you’re really serious about “gate, gate,” then you must start the practice of samādhi. This is very important—a single-pointed mind.”
 - “To practice something subtler than focusing on an external object but coarser than focusing on the mind as the object of meditation, it’s best to focus on the in-and-out-breath. So single-pointedly concentrate on your breathing, just coming and going.”
 - “When we stop memories about the past and do not let in hopes and visions of the future, then in that moment you get the feeling of nothingness, vacuous. That is not *śūnyatā*. We are normally so caught up in feelings and images. While you prolong for a little while that sense of vacuity, then you get a sense of sheer

luminosity. It mirrors appearances but is itself nothing. It is nothing in particular, but reflects everything. That is the conventional reality of the mind. It is neutral, just pure luminosity. Then concentrate on it as long as you can.”

- H.H. the Dalai Lama (“Śamatha and Vipāśyanā for Those with Many Responsibilities and Work in Daily Life,” September 6, 2020)
 - Question: “When we have too many responsibilities and too much work going on in daily life, how can we find peace of mind?”
 - HHDL: “Normally, we spend most of our time focusing on our five physical senses, like watching television and napping. So... withdraw your awareness from the five physical senses, and to the best of your ability, rest your awareness on your mind itself. This single-pointed way of placing the mind is called *śamatha*. That’s primary. Do not follow after the five senses, but try to rest in the nature of your mind. When you rest solely in the mind, there’s just a sense of the sheer luminosity and cognizance of awareness. Remain as long as you can in the experience of sheer luminosity and cognizance. That is the cultivation of *śamatha*. On the basis of having some experience of resting single-pointedly, the power of the sheer luminosity and cognizance of the mind will grow stronger. To the extent that this occurs, then vipāśyanā, a kind of analytical meditation involving investigation, will arise.”

The Vajra Essence:

- “Even though the methods for forcefully constraining the energy-mind by retaining and exercising the channels and vital energies are profound, there are great obstacles to such practices, and there are many ways to go astray.”
- “Some will not be able to subdue their minds because their thoughts are so extremely agitated, and they may experience uncomfortable maladies and sharp pains in the heart, the life-force channel, and so on, while others may fall unconscious or slip into a trance. For such people with unstable minds, with a wind constitution, or with coarse minds, it is uncertain what may happen.
- “When such things happen, these individuals should relax and let thoughts be as they are, observing them and sustaining that observation with unforgetful mindfulness and the introspection from which nothing is hidden.
- “Remaining still without thinking of anything is called *stillness in the domain of the essential nature*. The various thoughts that move and arise are called *movement*. Not letting any thoughts go by unnoticed, but recognizing them with mindfulness and introspection, is *awareness*.
- “Once each of these has been pointed out to you, say to yourself: ‘Now, in order to remain for a long time in the domain of the essential nature of the mind, I shall observe movement, and keeping my body straight, I shall apply vigilant mindfulness and watch.’ When you practice in this way, roving thoughts do not cease, nor do they arise in their ordinary way, for mindful awareness reveals them.
- “By applying yourself to this practice continuously at all times, both during and between meditation sessions, eventually all coarse and subtle thoughts will be calmed in the empty domain of the essential nature and you will become still and stable in an unfluctuating state. An experience imbued with clinging will arise, from which you will believe that

you cannot bear to be separated: bliss like the warmth of a fire, luminosity like the breaking of dawn, and nonconceptuality like an ocean unmoved by waves. And intense attachment to this state will arise.”

- “First arrest and subdue the thoughts aroused by your energy-mind, and then relax and let thoughts manifest. Further, alternate concentration with release.”
- “Moreover, during the postmeditative state: ultimately, without mistaking appearances for the mind, you do not depart from the panoramic sweep of your own pristine awareness. Those who are not yet endowed with such a crucial point should never forget to keep the vital energies in mind, and should continually press the vital energies down to the key point below the navel and keep them there during all such activities as eating, sleeping, walking, and sitting. These are the vital energies of the postmeditative state, and the crucial point of achieving stability in them is especially profound.”

The Vajra Essence: “Then Boundless Great Emptiness asked, ‘O Bhagavān, if all meditative experiences, whether pleasant or rough, are far from being the path to omniscience and bring no such benefit, why should we practice meditation? Teacher, please explain!’

The Bhagavān replied, ‘O Vajra of Mind, when individuals with coarse, dysfunctional minds agitated by conceptualization are initially taken through the door to enter this path, by reducing the power of their thoughts, their minds become increasingly steady, and they will achieve stability free of forgetfulness. Otherwise, even if individuals are introduced to conscious awareness, there is the danger that they will not practice and will succumb to spiritual sloth and distraction. Even if they do practice, there is the danger that due to forgetfulness they will become lost in endless delusion.

‘Therefore, it is necessary to practice meditation for all these reasons: The mind, which is like a cripple, and vital energy, which is like a blind, wild stallion, are subdued into service by tethering them to the stake of meditative experiences and firmly maintained attention. Once individuals of dull faculties have established the mind [as primary], they control it with the reins of mindfulness and introspection. Consequently, as a result of their meditative experiences and familiarization, it will appear that all coarse and subtle thoughts have vanished. Finally, a state of unstructured consciousness becomes manifest, devoid of anything on which to meditate. Then, when they come upon pristine awareness, the state of great nonmeditation, and their guru points this out, they will not go astray.

“For this to occur, first you undergo great struggles in seeking the path; you take the movements of thoughts as the path; and finally, when consciousness settles upon itself, this is pointed out as the path. Until path pristine awareness, or unstructured consciousness, becomes manifest and rests in itself, due to the arousal of afflictive mentation, you must gradually go through meditative experiences such as the rough experiences discussed earlier.”

Padmasambhava (*Natural Liberation*): “Without genuine *śamatha* arising in one’s mind-stream, even if pristine awareness is pointed out, it becomes nothing more than an object of intellectual understanding, one is left simply giving lip-service to the view, and there is the danger that one may succumb to dogmatism. Thus, the root of all meditative states depends upon this, so do not be introduced to pristine awareness too soon, but practice until there occurs a fine experience of stillness.”