

Progressive Stages of Meditation

The principles and practice of meditation as an essential aid to the understanding, experience and development of our lifestyle and personal practice of Yoga



Level 1: Shamatha (Calm Abiding)

(based on BWY Module of the same title)

A 7 Day Training Module

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Sheffield Yoga School

Course Outline

Aims / Rationale :

- To present a structured guide to the path of meditation and how this applies to the practice of Yoga.
- To encourage regular meditation practice and to provide a supportive platform for the exchange of feedback/experience
- To discuss aspects of personal development regarding 'Yogic' lifestyle in general and the practice of meditation in particular.

NB - This module aims to provide tools for the development of your own personal practice. For any Yoga teachers taking part, it is hoped that by gaining a deeper insight into the process of sensitivity and openness in meditation and post-meditation (lifestyle), participants will ***in time and after appropriate practice*** be able to impart some of these insights to their own students.

Content :

With the help of study, reflection and practice, the following naturally overlapping topics will be explored:

- Lineage and the significance of transmission.
- View, Path and Result: an overview of the meditation methods
- Motivation and inspiration: the importance of study, reflection and meditation; Buddhist 'Four ways to turn the mind'
- Karma, Klesha, Avidya and Dukha/Samsara
- Meditation: the progression from calming the mind (Shamatha) to the investigation of Self and Phenomena (Vipashana).

Guided meditation practices in this course :

- Shamatha: posture; meditation with support: breathing meditations; Tratak and external images; Chakra and internal visualization; mantra and sound;
- Meditation without support: dissolution of visualization; opening the senses; directly on mind, etc
- 'Transformation' meditation; 'Deity Yoga'
- The power of prayer
- Healing meditations for self and others
- The principle of 'Rushen' (separation): balance and spontaneous meditation
- Vipashana: analytical; direct/ non-conceptual; nature of 'Self'; nature of Phenomena
- Obstacles to meditation ('hindrances') and their remedies: Patanjali's view; Buddhist view
- Signs of progress: differentiating experience (Nyam) from realization; non attachment to 'Siddhis'
- Linking meditation with Yoga :
- Definition of Tibetan word 'Ku': ways of 'being in the body'
- Working with sensations as a cause for relaxation and meditation.
- The Buddhist perspective of Sthirasukhamasanam (stability and ease in posture)
- The 'Inner Breath' as basis for Pranayama and Breathing Meditation.
- 'A doer and deed refined until they're gone' (exploring spontaneous movement).
- Using classical texts and Dohas ('songs of realisation') as inspiration: reflection; recitation; chanting

Post-meditation: how to integrate in daily life:

- Mindfulness
- Yama and Niyama
- Buddhist Eightfold Path and Six Paramitas

Outcomes :

By the end of the course, participants should be able to:

- Consider the role of meditation in the context of the 'Path' to realization.
- Practise different forms of Mind Calming meditation (Shamatha) with appropriate confidence.
- Recognize 'state of mind' and select appropriate meditation methods.
- Recognize hindrances, obstacles and signs of progress and select appropriate remedies
- Appreciate the difference between Shamata and Vipashyana (Insight) Meditation (from the Buddhist perspective).
- Demonstrate a perception of some of the principles of mindfulness so that these may be applied to the personal practice of Asana, Pranayama and Meditation.
- Reflect on the meaning of a selection of quotes from classical texts and Dohas.
- Recognize the importance of Post-Meditation, and practise mindfulness in daily life.
- Consider the need for continued study and practice!

Methods :

- This is an experiential course: theoretical and philosophical principles, including those from classical texts, will be discussed to underpin the mostly practical work.
- There will be prolonged meditation sessions, with some Asana, Pranayama and chanting
- Home practice is essential, and participants are expected to maintain a reflective 'Practice Diary' during the course
- Students are encouraged to generously participate with feedback, discussion, self-assessment and evaluation.

Course Certificate :

A Certificate of Attendance will be given at the end of the course; this is dependent on a minimum of 80% attendance.

The Course Tutor :

Maarten Vermaase studied Hatha Yoga with the late Robert Van Heeckeren and Tibetan Buddhist Meditation, Yoga and Healing Exercises with Lamas and Teachers from the Kagyu and Nyingma traditions. He has taught in the Oxford area and London since 1979, and holds workshops and retreats for groups nationwide. In 1999, at the suggestion of his Teacher, Kenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, he started the Mahasiddha Yoga Group. He is a retired DCT for the BWY.

The material presented in this module is based on the Mahamudra tradition of Vajrayana Buddhism which Maarten has studied and practised since 1973. Maarten gratefully acknowledges the kind suggestions made by Thrangu Rinpoche, Ato Rinpoche and Ringu Tulku

Suggested Detailed Course Plan :

Day 1:

- What is meditation? Reference to classical texts; Dukha and Moksha
- Why meditate? Classical texts; meditation and mind; meditation and health
- Ways to inspire us: importance of lineage of transmission; Buddhist 'four ways to turn the mind'; Songs of realisation (Skt Doha), we will sing some each day!
- Shamatha (Mind Calming Meditation) with Object (Support): posture of meditation; basic breathing meditation; Ajapa (Vajra Recitation); walking meditation
- The importance of 'Post-Meditation': mindfulness in daily life

Day 2:

- Meditation 'view, path and result'; importance of study, reflection and practice
- Shamatha with object ctd: using any sense objects, including basic Tratak; using external sacred images and sounds: statues and pictures; Yantra; Mantra and Bija
- Walking meditation ctd
- Mindfulness in daily life: Yama and Niyama

Day 3:

- Feedback and check experience
- Klesha, Karma and Avidya
- Shamatha with object ctd: internal and external visualization; Chakras; purification, healing meditation and 'Tonglen'; Deity Yoga and the power of prayer
- Walking meditation ctd
- Mindfulness in daily life: the Buddhist Eightfold Path

Day 4:

- Feedback and check experience
- Hindrances (obstacles): Patanjali's and Buddhist views; Signs and Siddhis, non-attachment to them
- Shamatha without object: dissolution of form into formless; opening the senses; meditation directly on mind itself
- Walking meditation and integration: walking the city streets
- Mindfulness in daily life: The Buddhist Six Paramitas

Day 5:

- Feedback and check experience
- Linking meditation with Yoga
- Contrasting the Yogic view and meditation view
- Definition of Tibetan word 'Ku'; ways of 'being in the body'
- Working with sensations as a cause for relaxation and meditation.
- Buddhist perspective of Sthirasukhamasanam (stability and ease in posture)
- The 'Inner Breath' as basis for Pranayama and Breathing Meditation.
- 'A doer and deed refined until they're gone' (exploring spontaneous movement).
- Principles of Rushen (Tib, = 'separation'), spontaneous meditation
- Progression Shamatha (Mind Calming) to Vipashyana ('Insight')

Day 6:

- Feedback and check experience
- Conceptual or Analytical Vipashana: meditation on a theme or text; investigating 'Self and Phenomena'
- Non-conceptual Vipashana: meditations directly on the 'Nature of Mind' (a taster)
- Assimilation of practice
- Teaching meditation to Yoga students; how far to go
- Mindfulness in lifestyle: integration; increasing understanding and motivation
- The need for continued practice!!: possibilities for further study.

NB Meditation on the stages of Non-conceptual Vipashana is the subject of the Level Two Module now available from the Tutor.

Day 7

- Feedback and evaluation; submit Final Assignment (or send to Tutor)
- Meditation retreat day: interspersing silent meditation with walking meditation
- 'Thanksgiving': the singing of mantra and Doha (Yogic Songs) over tea and goodies to celebrate the end of the course

Booklist

** = for this course

* = recommended

Healing Exercise and Meditation:

- Peter Barth- *A Meditation Guide for Mahamudra*, MMC 1998, private publication, available online.
- ** **Bokar Rinpoche, *Meditation Advice to Beginners*, Clear Point Press 1993**
NB If unavailable photocopies may be provided of relevant sections
- * Tarthang Tulku, *Mastering Successful Work*, Dharma Publishing 1994
- Eric Harrison, *How Meditation Heals*, Piatkus 2000
- Karmapa 9th Wangchug Dorje, *Mahamudra, Eliminating the Darkness of Ignorance*, LTWA 1978
- Joel Levey, *The Fine Arts of Relaxation, Concentration and Meditation*, Wisdom 1987
- Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, *The Practice of Tranquillity and Insight*, Shambala 1993
- Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, *Pointing out the Dharmakaya*, Snow Lion 2003,

Breathing:

- * Buddhadasa Bhikku, *Mindfulness with Breathing*, Wisdom Publications 1988
- * Donna Fahri, *The Breathing Book*, Henry Holt 1996
- Thich Nhat Hanh, *Breathe! You Are Alive*, Parallax Press, 198

General Buddhism

- * Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Heart of Buddha's Teachings*, Rider 1998
- Traleg Kyabgon, *The Essence of Buddhism*, Shambala 2001

The Four Reminders to Turn the Mind (NB: most texts on *Lojong* will discuss this topic)

- Thrangu Rinpoche *Four Foundations of Buddhist Practice*, Namo Buddha 2001
- Traleg Kyabgon, *Mind at Ease*, Shambala 2003

Lojong (NB there are a large number of publication available!!)

- ** - **The Dalai Lama, *Healing Anger*, Snow Lion 1997**
- Dalai Lama, *Transforming the Mind*, Thorsons 1999(? out of print?) - **for level 2**
- * Jamgon Kongtrul tr K McLeod, *The Great Path of Awakening*, Shambala 1987 - **for Level 2**
- Traleg Kyabgon, *The Practice of Lojong*, Shambala 2007 - **for Level 2**

37 Practices of a Bodhisattva

- * Chokyi Dragpa, *Uniting Wisdom and Compassion*, Wisdom 2004 - **for Level 2**

Patanjali's Yoga Sutra, any translation you prefer, or:

- ** Sri Swami Satchidananda, *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, Integral Yoga Publications 1978, 7th ed 1999