

Segyu Rinpoche

Week 1, Awakening the Mind: A Journey for Contemporary Life

Awakening the Mind and Meditation

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Segyu Rinpoche: Hi, hello. I am Segyu Rinpoche. I'm very happy to have this *Tricycle* online retreat. The topic of this retreat is "Awakening the Mind." I would like to start this retreat with one fundamental question: How come I, a Gelugpa master, am wearing brown? I would like to go back a little bit about my training, my history. I have been training for the past 28 years in the Gelug-pa school. The more I was able to absorb the culture and observe the teachings, the more I could see the differences between me, this master, and the tradition. How could I possibly transmit those teachings to the West? It's a great gap. It's a great difficulty because not only are there cultural differences, but there are differences in the psychological profile. Because of that, I have so many students, great students, who always say, "Rinpoche, I try to understand what you say but it is impossible to practice that way. I don't have time and it doesn't fit in my cultural profile. When you give a retreat you spend so much time with prayers and with cultural affairs and when you finally get to the subject I'm already tired." Because of that, in 2003 I pretty much closed my entire operation all over the world and started to develop the Juniper school.

As Juniper was born and we started to develop the lineage, we tried to develop the content while making sure that we weren't missing the essence of this great tradition that has been practiced all over the world for many, many, many centuries by unbelievable masters. As a team we not only aim to transmit from the essence of the teachings, but we also aim to teach a method that is appropriate for the Western psychological profile, lifestyle, and modern culture. And that is what Juniper is about: a tradition that maintains its integrity as a lineage, as the essence of the old teachings, but one that is accessible for the modern life. So that's what we want to transmit with this retreat—for you to hear the potency of what we call the awakening of the mind. That's the awakening the mind that we believe is the blueprint of the Juniper lineage and the Juniper teachings.

Let's see. I'd like to talk now about the life potency that we have. Let's see where that idea comes from in the old and profound teachings. The idea comes from the borders we create inside. If we want to change the quality of our experience, we need to change internally how we *perceive* those experiences. Without that inner change, we will not be able to change that experience to be a positive experience. That was the fundamental, great idea of the Buddha. When that statement, that insight came from him, he taught many, many, many disciples, which become a hoard of teachings for different people, different cultures, and different environments: how to change that inner structure, that inner story.

And then the second fundamental thought was created, which is the *bodhisattva* vision. What is the bodhisattva vision? The bodhisattva vision is a simple thesis: by freeing oneself, we will find our full human potential, and we will develop our full maturity outwardly, so that we can help others attain the same thing. That's what the core of the Juniper teachings is about. That's what the core of the awakening the mind teachings is about—how we go inwardly to do that profound transformation, and in pursuing that, how we grow into that transformation in order to help others attain the same transformation. That is what the Juniper view is about: how we could become a potent, positive force in this world.

So, how can we realize this vision? How can that vision come about? That vision, that transformation, doesn't come by itself. It would be wonderful if it could, you know? Say a little magical word and then suddenly it appears like that. No, it takes time. I want to give a little example about that. I'm going to quote a master from the sixth century, who said two phrases. It's very easy to understand how we forget them in practice. He said, "If we do have a problem"—and by the way, we *all* have a problem—"If you do have a problem and you know the solution of that problem, why worry? Why you get worried about it?" Huh? And the second phrase is the second aspect of the same thing. "If we do have a problem, and you know that problem doesn't have the solution, what is the use of the worry?" Very simple. We comprehend that. But how can we put that into practice? When I say "worry," it's just one word, but that word is loaded with emotions and feelings that disturb us. Therefore, the only way to really understand that is to be able to go within and awaken the mind, to use the mind to change our perspective. Then we'll be able to not only intellectually understand the world, but understand ourselves psychologically as beings. And our experience will change because of that.

So yeah, we'll have a problem, and we'll face that problem with a creative mind to solve the problem. We'll patiently see the problem resolve because we know we have the solution. We have to be patient. If the problem doesn't have solution, we abandon completely and create new ideas, new focus instead. But again, how do we manifest that? How do we get that? I have four words for you, which are the four building blocks, as we understand them at the Juniper school, for training the mind. The first block is meditation. The second block is balancing the emotions. The third is developing or cultivating compassion, and the fourth is developing insight. Let's repeat that. First would be meditation. Second would be balancing the emotions. Third would be cultivating compassion, and the fourth is developing insight. Those four building blocks are the topics of our retreat weeks here.

So the first of those four building blocks is meditation. Why meditation? Because not only is it the cornerstone for inner transformation, but it is also very good for you to do regardless of that inner transformation. Now let's define what that meditation is about, how we view meditation here at Juniper. Meditation is an act of concentrating on one object, which enhances the mind to be able to bring about that inner transformation. Therefore meditation has this potency to free our mind from the inner patterns and inner stories that are afflicting us. So that's why the meditation

is important. We have two types of meditation. One is concentration meditation. And the second is analytical meditation. The concentration meditation strengthens the mind. It brings the mind in such a way so that I learn to control my mind, by placing my mind on one object. When I am able to place my mind peacefully onto one object, then I will have clear conditions to make analysis of that object. That is what the second meditation is about—after I have placed my mind onto one object.

Now let's describe one-by-one that meditation. The first one, the concentration meditation, has three parts: the preparation, setting the mind upon the object of concentration, and bringing the mind back to that object of concentration. The preparation has three points; the first is time. Find a time to meditate. Don't block too much at the beginning. Do at least five minutes, but do not go over ten minutes. But do the five minutes with consistency. Do that daily. Create this habit. Second aspect is the place. Find a place in which you will not be disturbed by anybody else and especially your beloved pets. Just be there quietly and dedicate your time to the concentration meditation. Then there is the posture. Try to find a place where you feel comfortable with your body and are not in pain or in tight mode. So if you cannot sit cross-legged on the floor, sit on a chair. Place your feet on the floor. Feel comfortable. Make your spine straight. Your shoulders are relaxed. Your left hand is at the level of your naval and the right hand is right next to it, with your thumbs just barely touching each other. That posture is a posture that came from the great meditators from India to Tibet and is widely applied into the Tibetan Buddhism tradition. Relax the mouth of the face and all that and do pay attention to your eyes. The head should not be up too high and not facing low but looking straight. With the eyes, you look straight and then you close your eyes and let a little sliver of light come in. So for the preparation, you need to pay attention to the time, the place, and your posture.

And then you select your object of concentration. There are many, but at the beginning the best object of concentration is your breath. Just pay attention. Focus on the tip of your nose, the air going into your nose and the air going out your nose, your inhaling and exhaling. When you breathe, breathe in through your nose and bring your attention to that air. Your concentration should be onto that cycle of inhaling, exhaling. That will be your object of concentration—that inhaling, exhaling.

If you lose that concentration because the mind is wandering, bring the mind back, back to the object of concentration. Keep bringing the mind back to the area of concentration, so focus again on the tip of your nose, the inhaling and exhaling. So that's what you should do in meditation. This is the meditation of concentration. It's very simple, it's very easy. What we want to do is constantly create the habit of practice. So I suggest all of you to get the booklet from Juniper that you can download from the web called *Learn to Meditating Guide* [link on side of retreat page]. You can download that and see this whole procedure, and apply it.

The second meditation we mentioned is the analytical meditation. Analytical meditation has four parts: the familiarity, the analysis, the application, and the insight. I will explain more about analytical meditation in the course of the retreat, because we need the topics to start the analytical meditation, and it will be discussed very well through the teachings on balancing emotions, cultivating compassion, and developing insight.

Once more, how often should meditate? Daily. How long? At least five minutes. But keep the habit! Do a small bit of time and then keep doing that daily. If you are really motivated to do meditation for longer, don't do longer—do multiple periods. So ten minutes or so in the morning, ten minutes in the afternoon, and ten minutes in the evening. So multiply the numbers of that small concentration meditation during the day. It's more appropriate than you trying to get too long period of concentration and then you dropping that later on. I much prefer to have a short bit of time, with strong concentration, and bringing the mind back to that object. Then I think you be able to feel the results very promptly. You'll be very happy, and you'll see how much that benefits you in a very short time. So that is what I'd like to share with you this time in this first module of our *Tricycle* online retreat, "Awakening the Mind" in the Juniper tradition. Thank you very much.