



Hi, and welcome back. I'm Dawa Tarchin Phillips. This is a series on the three pillars of awakening. Today we're going to be talking about meditation. Meditation is for anyone who wishes to develop the awakened qualities of body and mind. We practice meditation to achieve realization and to come to a deep understanding of who we are, where we are, and what is going on.

The aim of meditation is the cultivation of realization. To develop on the path of awakening, we have to integrate different parts of ourselves. For instance, we develop meditation with the body by bringing it into a specific meditation posture.

There are a variety of meditation postures, but they all include sitting, standing, or lying down in a way that allows us to pay focused attention. As we mentioned before, there is a relative and an absolute aspect of meditation. In the relative sense, meditation just means to initiate and cultivate focus, attention, and awareness. In the absolute sense, meditation means the ability to stabilize a particular view of the nature of reality on a moment-by-moment basis. During meditation, we are developing realization, and in the process of developing realization, we have all kinds of experiences, but the experiences are not the main part of the meditation. The main part of the meditation is to develop realization.

There are mundane and supermundane meditations. Mundane meditations directly cultivate the qualities that pertain to the eight worldly dharmas that I mentioned last week. Supermundane meditations help us develop a deeper realization of the nature of reality.

There are two kinds of meditation techniques that you learn when you begin your training in meditation. The first technique is called *shamatha* meditation. Shamata meditation is the ability to develop a stable mind, or a calmly abiding mind. It is taught in many Buddhist traditions; you can probably attend a course on shamatha meditation in every Buddhist center that you can visit.

The second kind of meditation is called *vipassana* or *vipashyana* meditation, or insight meditation. Insight meditation is a progressive path. It is an investigative method of meditation that helps you to develop discernment and look more closely into the nature of the perceiver and the perceived. But to practice insight meditation, you have to first learn how to be more stable in your body and mind, or how to abide more calmly in your body and mind. That is why shamatha



is taught first and vipashyana second, and also why the two inform each other. The more deeply you develop the shamatha practice, the more deeply you can develop the vipashyana practice. Out of the deepening out of your vipashyana insight, then a deeper level of peace, calm, and stability also emerges. In this way, these two practices inform and reinforce each other.

In the Vajrayana tradition, there are additional meditations that include practices such as visualizations of mandalas, recitation of mantras, and also different mudras, hand gestures. But overall, all these meditations have one thing in common. They are meditations by which we continue to dissolve the two kinds of veils—of knowledge and emotion—that I mentioned in the first session of this series. A variety of obstacles arise on the path of meditation. The first of these obstacles is craving, a strong sense of desire and attachment in the body and mind that makes it difficult for us to calm down or to stabilize our attention and our meditation.

The second kind of obstacle is ill will. When we harbor a grudge, anger, or resentment, we have a hard time calming down and relaxing due to the amount of malice in our system. Another obstacle is drowsiness when we are too sleepy, dull, or exhausted. Then as well, we have a difficult time meditating. Agitation is another obstacle. When the mind is too restless and agitated, we also have a hard time meditating.

Doubt is a powerful obstacle to meditation. It is a fundamental state of mistrust, hesitation, and tension around relaxing and getting to know our true nature in a deeper sense through meditation. To develop your meditation practice, you engage in this natural process of dissolving confusion and emotions, particularly strong, afflicting, or negative emotions; and of simply growing up, of ripening and maturing in your understanding, and integrating more of your own wisdom into your relationship with yourself, others, and the world.

Finally, based on that development, cultivating more of your ability to serve through these qualities that are arising, that are emerging, based on your growing meditation practice. To summarize, the second principle of awakening, meditation, is about the cultivation of calm abiding and the ability to develop penetrating insight, so that we develop a deeper sense of realization about the nature of the perceived and the perceiver. During the next segment, we're going to be talking about the principle of action, the third principle.