

# Pristine Awareness - Foundation for Buddhist Practice

## Five Year Practice Program – The Path of Joy and Ease

Our formal five-year practice program is focused on recognising and abiding in the natural state, which is spacious awareness alive with Bodhichitta. The destination for all those practicing in the Nyingma tradition is Dzogchen. The Vajrayana vehicle consisting of ngondro followed by generation and completion practices (dzogrim & kyerim) prepares the practitioner for Dozgchen. This program has the same aim though does not follow the same trajectory. This program is based on the profound concept of *natural unfolding* – that by engaging in simple, essential practices all the realisations of the “higher” teachings such as Mahamudra and Dzogchen evolve naturally and effortlessly. These simple practices include Shamatha, Vipashana, The Path of Joy and Ease and Guru Yoga. This program is the condensed essence of the Dharma and is a parallel path to that of Dzogchen, leading to the same result, the self-perfected natural state.

With regard to one of our main practices, Shamata meditation, the extraordinary Jamgon Mipham Rinpoche wrote:

Even without other modes of introduction from the guru, these pith instructions of mind resting upon itself offer a simple way to calm the mind that has none of the dangers associated with the forceful manipulation of energy. If you are able simply to place the mind upon itself in this way, workable concentration will be won swiftly and with little difficulty. Here there is no need for meditation upon subtle bindus/drops in the heart, nor upon letters, nor any shape and form for that matter. Nor is there a need to manipulate the breath.<sup>1</sup>

In this quote Mipham Rinpoche is stating that shamata done in a certain way brings about the same outcomes of so-called “higher” yogic practices such as tsa lung, trulkhor and tummo and the same realisations that arise from generation and completion stage practices that involve visualisation and mantra recitation. He goes on to write that this simple practice combined with devotion will lead to ‘an experience of the empty clarity of the great Natural State—the spontaneous, self-emergent wisdom, which is the meaning of the Luminous Great Perfection’.<sup>2</sup> Here Mipham Rinpoche is clearly saying that this simple practice can lead to the realization of Dzogchen.

It’s important to note that devotion can be toward any or all of the three gems, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha, or their embodiment the Lama or Guru. Devotion towards the Dharma is an appropriate alternative to devotion to a Guru. By Dharma we mean both the teachings

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<sup>1</sup> Jamgon Mipham Rinpoche, *Profound Shamata Instruction*, translated by Sean Price, 2019, p.3.

<sup>2</sup> Jamgon Mipham Rinpoche, *Profound Shamata Instruction*, translated by Sean Price, 2019, p.4.

and the practice, but there should be an emphasis on the practice. Devotion to the Dharma begins as confidence in the practice or trust that the practice will lead to our liberation from suffering and enlightenment. That confidence evolves into devotion. What does devotion to Dharma practice look like? It is simply to love the practice, to deeply appreciate it, and to experience great joy that we have the opportunity to practice. We also experience great joy in the doing of the practice.

Dudjom Rinpoche pointed to this natural unfolding with relation to Guru Yoga when he taught that practitioners who ‘give themselves wholeheartedly, with devotion, to an authentic Diamond Master’ will obtain the supreme and common accomplishments ‘even if they have no other methods’.<sup>3</sup> This is a very clear statement that awakening can and does unfold from this one simple practice of Guru Yoga. He said this was possible even ‘without depending on anything else’.<sup>4</sup> In other words no other practices are needed, though some make powerful supports. This quote by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche makes this even clearer:

There may be very high practices, like *trekcho* and *thogal* in the Dzogpa Chenpo, but for us to practice these at this point would be like giving solid food to a very young baby. He would not be able to assimilate the food, and it would just cause him harm. If we were to try now to practice those advanced teachings, they would just be wasted. Through the blessings that come from genuine endeavor in the practice of this Guru Yoga, on the other hand, the realization of Dzogpa Chenpo will arise by itself from the depths of our being like morning sun, and the meaning of the practice of *trekcho* and *thogal* will dawn within us.<sup>5</sup>

By relying on the principle of natural unfolding we are able to bypass the many complicated and sometimes arduous preliminaries normally associated with higher-level tantric Buddhism. Although participants are free to engage in other Buddhist practices the program will work best with as simple a practice schedule as possible. The program is framed by the structure of View, Meditation and Conduct. This five year program is not a tantric or esoteric one, but one inspired by the simplicity and openness of the Dzogchen and Mahamudra traditions that emphasise the opening of the heart. Nyoshul Khenpo Rinpoche explains this further:

According to Dzogchen, and the special approach of the great Dzogchen master Sri Singha, there is a way of recognizing the nature of mind solely through devotion. There are cases of practitioners who simply through their heartfelt devotion attained realization, even though their teacher had already passed away or was nowhere near them physically. Because of their prayers and devotion, the nature of mind was introduced. The classic example is that of Jigme Lingpa and his consuming devotion for Longchen Rabjam.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Dudjom Rinpoche, *A Torch Lighting the Way to Freedom*, Shambhala Publications, 2016, P. 260.

<sup>4</sup> Dudjom Rinpoche, *A Torch Lighting the Way to Freedom*, Shambhala Publications, 2016, P. 260.

<sup>5</sup> Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, *The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel*, Shambhala Publishing, 1999, pp. 92-93.

<sup>6</sup> Nyoshul Khenpo Rinpoche quoted in Marcia Binder Schmidt (ed.) *Dzogchen Essentials: The Path that Clarifies Confusion*, Rangjung Yeshe Publications, 2004, p. 136.

The alternative to opening the heart through devotion is opening the heart through the Path of Joy and Ease, which then leads to the natural unfolding of the other of the Four Immeasurables: Love, Compassion and Equanimity. A being who has attained the Four Immeasurables is a Buddha. The five year practice program offers both these streams, The Path of Joy and Ease and the path of devotion or Guru Yoga. Participants can engage with one stream or, preferably, both.

It is not widely known that there are multiple approaches to the self-perfected natural state (Dzogpachenpo) or awakening (Bodhicitta). All of these approaches are different yet equal. The three main approaches are:

1. The tantric pathway consisting of a foundation of ngondro followed by three roots practice (generation and completion stage) followed by trekcho and togyal. This is currently the most common pathway.
2. The devotional pathway consisting of shamata and guru yoga as the foundation in which the realisations of trekcho and togyal unfold naturally.
3. Meditation pathway consisting of shamata, the Four Applications of Mindfulness and contemplation of the Four Immeasurables followed by trekcho and togyal teachings (if/as needed).

The Path of Joy and Ease Five Year Program is a unique combination of the second and third pathways. Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche, when asked what practitioners could do as a foundation for Dzogchen if they didn't want to take the ngondro pathway, said that they should follow pathway three.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, Thich Nhat Hanh also taught that shamata, the Four Applications of Mindfulness and contemplation of the Four Immeasurables were the essential Dharma practices. Indeed, one of the earliest of the Buddhist sutras, the *Rhinoceros Sutra*, extols everything that is needed to achieve awakening as originally taught by the Buddha. That sutra has a heavy emphasis on renunciation, right view (impermanence, emptiness and suffering of samsara) and the Four Immeasurables. This program is faithful to that early Buddhist tradition.

Furthermore, Westerners tend to meet with the Dharma later in life and may not have the time to complete the tantric pathway with ngondro etc. The great Dzogchen master Yangthang Rinpoche was asked about this by a woman in her mid-50s. His response was that, given her age, she should focus on Dzogchen even if she hadn't finished the tantric preliminaries (ngondro). Therefore, those of us who are 50 or older should definitely heed this advice.<sup>8</sup> Lama B Alan Wallace has noted that if a practitioner has no desire to do ngondro and no faith in that practice then there would be no benefit in them following that pathway. Therefore, people with no desire or faith in tantric practice or ngondro should

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted by B Alan Wallace, 'Commentary on The Fine Path of Liberation by Sera Khandro', <https://youtu.be/d9RuPg3PEmQ>

<sup>8</sup> Quoted by B Alan Wallace, 'Commentary on The Fine Path of Liberation by Sera Khandro', <https://youtu.be/d9RuPg3PEmQ>

follow pathways two or three. The program we have designed is perfect for those who are older or who have challenges such as illness, as well as for those who have no faith in complex tantric practices.

Participants in the program will be supported by focused teaching and individualised practice guidance. Guest Lamas will contribute to the teaching program from time to time. After completing this five year program, participants will have firmly established themselves on the path to awakening. The practice program leaders, Pema Düddul and Jamyang Tenphel, see themselves as simple conduits for the teachings and compassion of their heart masters – Kyabje Togden Amtrin and Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche. Any benefit to the participants from doing the program is a result of the blessings of these Lamas and the participants' other teachers.

The practice commitment for this program is an hour per day of meditation and contemplation as well as attendance at an online weekend retreat each year. Participants are also encouraged to do at least one at home retreat of at least 24 hours duration per year. Graduation from year to year is not based on tests or completion of accumulations but on time and an interview with the program leader/s.

LEVEL/YEAR	VIEW	MEDITATION/PRACTICE	CONDUCT/ETHICS	RETREAT	Live Teachings
<b>Level 1: Resting in Stillness</b>	Based on: 1. Dudjom Rinpoche's <i>Play of Thought</i> ; 2. <i>Stilling the Mind</i> – Dudjom Lingpa's Shamata instructions (trans. B. Alan Wallace) 3. Mipham Rinpoche's <i>Profound Instruction on Shamata</i> . 4. Sections of <i>Resting in Stillness</i> by Jamyang Tenphel & Pema Düddul; 5. Sera Khandro's <i>The Fine Path to Liberation</i> . 6. <i>The Seven Mind Trainings</i> by Longchenpa. <b>Fundamental concepts:</b> impermanence, samsaric suffering,	1. <b>Shamata</b> or Silent Sitting. Gentle awareness of object, either the breath or another object. 2. Path of Joy and Ease 3. Foundational Contemplations (impermanence, suffering, emptiness, Bodhicitta, Buddha Nature and cause and effect). Optional practices: Guru Yoga, sky gazing, Ngondro.	1. Upasaka/Upasika ethical precepts. 2. Lojong teachings (developing a compassionate heart/mind). Participants will read and contemplate Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo's book <i>The Heroic Heart</i> . 3. Contemplation and application of the Six Paramitas. 4. Wearing meditation shawl of red or maroon during practice and at teachings.	<i>The Play of Thought</i> Weekend Retreat	1. The Path of Joy and Ease; 2. Awakening the heart; 3. Bodhicitta: Ground, Path and Fruit; 4. Developing Confidence in Buddha Nature.

	liberation, Buddha Nature.				
<p><b>Level 2: Cultivating Clear Seeing</b>  <i>Pre-requisite: 12 months of Shamata at least 20 minutes a day; Lung or transmission for texts.</i><sup>2</sup></p>	<p>Based on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dudjom Rinpoche's <i>Play of Thought</i>;</li> <li>2. <i>Fathoming the Mind</i> – Dudjom Lingpa's Vipashana instructions (trans. B. Alan Wallace);</li> <li>3. Padmasambhava's <i>The Refined Essence of Oral Instructions</i> (transmission and teaching given by NKLR);</li> <li>4. Sections of <i>Resting in Stillness</i> by Jamyang Tenphel and Pema Düddul;</li> <li>5. Sections of <i>Luminous Awareness</i> by Pema Düddul;</li> <li>6. <i>Retreat</i> by Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo.</li> </ol> <p><b>Fundamental concepts:</b> Non-self, emptiness, illusory</p>	<p>1. Silent Sitting and <b>Vipashana</b>. Looking into thoughts and sensations: from whence do they arise, where do they abide, where do they go?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Path of Joy and Ease</li> <li>3. Foundational Contemplations + Tsewa (contemplations on love).</li> <li>4. Guru Yoga. Relying on devotion to invigorate and deepen the practice.<sup>1</sup></li> <li>5. Four Applications of Mindfulness.</li> </ol> <p>Optional practices: sky gazing, Ngondro, Illusory Form Practice.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Upasaka/Upasika ethical precepts.</li> <li>2. Lojong teachings (developing a compassionate heart/mind). Participants will read and contemplate Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo's book <i>The Heroic Heart</i>.</li> <li>3. Genyen vows while on retreat (8 precepts).</li> <li>4. Contemplation and application of the Six Paramitas.</li> <li>5. Wearing meditation shawl of red or maroon during practice and at teachings.</li> </ol>	<p><i>Cultivating Clear Seeing</i>  Weekend Retreat</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Four Applications of Mindfulness;</li> <li>2. Tsewa (Boundless Love);</li> <li>3. Freedom from Illusion;</li> <li>4. Refined Essence of Oral Instructions (guest teacher - NKLR)</li> </ol>

	nature of perception, fundamental goodness,.				
<p><b>Level 3: Cultivating Awareness</b>  <i>Pre-requisite: 12 months of Vipassana meditation at least 20 minutes a day; Lung or transmission for texts<sup>2</sup>; Signs of accomplishment in meditation.</i>  <b>Note: We remain at this level for 24 months.</b></p>	<p><b>Full details released on entering this level</b></p> <p><b>Fundamental concepts:</b> true nature of mind, unadorned awareness.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Silent Sitting and <b>Trekcho</b> (transmission and teaching by NKLR or NDR). Looking into the nature of the mind itself: What is its shape, colour, texture? From whence does it arise, where does it abide, where does it go?</li> <li>2. Path of Joy and Ease</li> <li>3. Foundational Contemplations + Nyingje (contemplations on compassion).</li> <li>4. Guru Yoga. Relying on devotion to invigorate and deepen the practice.<sup>1</sup></li> <li>5. Sky gazing or darkness meditation.</li> </ol> <p>Optional practices: Ngondro, Illusory Form Practice.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Upasaka/Upasika ethical precepts.</li> <li>2. Lojong teachings (developing a compassionate heart/mind). Participants will read and contemplate Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo's book <i>The Seven Point Mind-Training</i>.</li> <li>3. Contemplation and application of the Six Paramitas.</li> <li>4. Genyen vows while on retreat (8 precepts).</li> <li>5. Wearing meditation shawl of red or maroon during practice and at teachings.</li> <li>6. Wearing meditation skirt of maroon during practice and at teachings.</li> </ol>	<p><i>Insight into the Nature of Mind</i>  Weekend Retreat</p>	<p><i>To be Announced</i></p>
<p><b>Level 4: Resting in Awareness</b>  (Pre-requisite: 24 months at level 3;</p>	<p><b>Full details released on entering this level</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Silent Sitting. Remaining in the true nature of experience and resting in the true nature of mind.</li> <li>2. Path of Joy and Ease</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Upasaka/Upasika ethical precepts.</li> <li>2. Lojong teachings (developing a</li> </ol>	<p><i>Resting in Naked Awareness</i></p>	<p><i>To be Announced</i></p>

Lung or transmission for texts <sup>2</sup> ; Direct introduction to the true nature of mind by a qualified Lama)	<b>Fundamental concepts:</b> self-liberation of mental phenomena, non-meditation, unadorned primordial awareness.	3. Foundational Contemplations + Tangnyom (contemplations on equanimity/evenness). 4. Guru Yoga. Relying on devotion to invigorate and deepen the practice. <sup>1</sup> 5. Sky gazing or darkness meditation. Optional practices: Ngondro, Illusory Form Practice.	compassionate heart/mind). Participants will read and contemplate Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo’s book <i>The Seven Point Mind-Training</i> . 3. Contemplation and application of the Six Paramitas. 4. Genyen vows (8 precepts) at all times. 5. Wearing meditation shawl of white during practice and at teachings. 6. Those wishing to do so can take Ngakma/Ngakpa ordination and wear a white skirt during practice and at teachings.	Weekend Retreat	
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1. In the Pristine Awareness practice mandala the gurus are Shakyamuni Buddha, Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyal, Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche (Jigdral Yeshe Dorje), Kyabje Togden Amtrin, His Holiness Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo, Ngakpa Karma Lhundup Rinpoche, Dungse Namgyal Dawa Rinpoche or any qualified Lama or teacher for whom you have trust and confidence.
2. Transmissions for texts will be provided primarily by qualified Lamas such as Ngakpa Karma Lhundup Rinpoche and Dungse Namgyal Dawa Rinpoche.
3. Dzogchen transmissions and teachings will be given by Ngakpa Karma Lhundup Rinpoche.