DZA KILUNG RINPOCHE

the relaxed mind

A SEVEN-STEP METHOD
FOR DEEPENING
MEDITATION PRACTICE

The Relaxed Mind

A Seven-Step Method for Deepening Meditation Practice

DZA KILUNG RINPOCHE

EDITED BY Brian Hodel
FOREWORD BY Tulku Thondup
ILLUSTRATIONS BY Janice Baragwanath

SHAMBHALA
Boulder
2015

Shambhala Publications, Inc.
4720 Walnut Street
Boulder, Colorado 80301
www.shambhala.com

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Printed in the United States of America

♾ This edition is printed on acid-free paper that meets the American National Standards Institute Z39.48 Standard.
♻ This book is printed on 30% postconsumer recycled paper.
For more information please visit www.shambhala.com.

Distributed in the United States by Penguin Random House LLC
and in Canada by Random House of Canada Ltd

Designed by Katrina Noble

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Rinpoche, Kilung.
The relaxed mind: a seven-step method for deepening meditation practice / Dza Kilung Rinpoche; foreword by Tulku Thondup; illustrations by Janice Baragwanath.
pages cm
ISBN 978-1-61180-282-5 (paperback)
1. Mind and body. 2. Meditation—Buddhism. I. Title.
BF161.R56 2015
294.3'4435—dc23
2014048119

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

Dza Kilung Rinpoche is the fifth incarnation of Dza Kilung Jigme Ngotsar, one of the four principle disciples of the illustrious adept Rigdzin Jigme Lingpa, the discoverer of the *longchen nyingthig* teachings of the *dzogpachenpo* tradition. After completing decades of studies and meditations in Tibet and India, Rinpoche has been tirelessly sharing the undiluted nectar-like wisdom of his unique lineage to all who are receptive in both the East and the West.

In *The Relaxed Mind,* Rinpoche meticulously synthesizes instructions on the crucial steps of training the mind—starting with how to sit, breathe, and focus the mind correctly, up to how to free all of the mind's concepts in order to awaken its enlightened nature.

Mind, or consciousness, is who we are. The body, while precious, is but a guesthouse for us to reside in while we are alive. After death, whether we will have a happy or unhappy rebirth depends on the positive and negative habitual tendencies that we generated in our mind stream and expressed physically during our lifetime. If our mind is peaceful, kind, and respectful, then (and only then) will our physical expressions spontaneously become meritorious deeds. We will then become a source of benefit for others. If we perfect virtuous thoughts, our suffering will cease, and the wisdom nature of our mind will awaken. Therefore, mindfully training the mind through the right steps as taught in this book is essential. In the *Cheddu Jope Tsom,* the Buddha said,

You will enjoy happiness if you preserve mindfulness
In the disciplines of taming your mind.
Those who safeguard their minds
Will certainly attain the cessation of suffering.

The Relaxed Mind is a treasure that presents the indispensible stages of the Buddhist training of the mind. It takes us from the beginning steps on the meditation journey all the way to final realization, the perfection of the enlightened nature of the mind. This book has it all. There is no need to look for other trainings. As Shantideva says, "What is the use of various disciplines, other than the one that trains the mind?"

—Tulku Thondup

EDITOR'S PREFACE

I remember, vividly, the first time I tried to meditate. It was decades ago, when there were few books on meditation available in the West. I had found one that taught the basics of concentration, and my yoga teacher gave me some cursory advice. It all sounded very cool. So one afternoon I sat cross-legged on a puffy green sofa with my back more or less straight, closed my eyes, and peered into my mind.

Suddenly I found myself engulfed by the noise of jackhammers and buzz saws. Where was I? Had I poked my head into the middle of a hornets nest? I couldn't keep still and started sweating, like a child in the dentist's waiting room. Passing through a kaleidoscope of thoughts and emotions—some connected, others totally disjointed—my "meditation" resembled a roller coaster ride!

My session didn't last long, and I wasn't very happy or encouraged by the experience, but one very good thing happened, although I didn't realize its value till much later: I recognized that this cacophony was not abnormal—a rare event brought on by fatigue or indigestion or an argument with a friend. This was the ordinary world of my mind and emotions. This was going on in me all the time. Only now had I stopped to listen. And I had a vague sensation, a very creepy feeling, that all my life I had been a prisoner of my compulsions.

The sequence of seven meditations presented here is a pathway to inner freedom. It is based on practices from Tibetan Buddhism,

but you don't need to be a Buddhist to train in them. They could be helpful for anyone's life and spiritual development, whether that person adheres to a specific religious tradition or not. They were created for Westerners, although it might be better to say "for modern people," since Western culture has spread everywhere and mixed with all cultures.

The author, Kilung Rinpoche, hails from the highest and most isolated reaches of Tibet. There he grew up in an environment free from most of the distractions we experience in modern life. Therefore, when he came to the West, encountered its engrossing complexity, and began teaching here, he was not completely surprised to discover that most of his students were unable to relax deeply enough to penetrate to the heart of meditation. Also, for that same reason, they couldn't detect the subtle differences and interconnections between traditional meditation techniques: techniques that should eventually lead to the deepest relaxation of all—enlightenment. The speed, stress, and anxiety that pervade our society naturally influence those of us who practice meditation. We are held tightly in its thrall. So in divising this system of seven meditations, the development of deep relaxation was paramount.

These seven meditations were presented to Kilung Rinpoche's students on a weekly basis in a yearlong cycle. The results were so positive that his students have continued to receive and practice them enthusiastically year after year. The topics and practices repeat, but the experience is continually refreshed and deepened. This brings us to an important question: to achieve deep realization through this system, are the oral instructions of a meditation master required? Almost all viable and authentic meditation manuals available today, coming from the main contemplative traditions, are meant to complement the detailed instructions of a teacher. Most often they are arranged such that an abundance of moral and philosophical topics are listed, followed by brief and

general instructions on meditation. The teacher is expected to unpack it and fill in the blanks.

This book is different. Most meditators don't have access to a qualified meditation teacher or don't have the time to attend teachings regularly. They rely on books—books that often leave them wondering, "How does all of this fit together? How do I organize my meditation into a workable spiritual path?" and sometimes, after a while, "Why do I feel stuck?" *The Relaxed Mind* is drawn directly from Kilung Rinpoche's oral instructions, where he is able to track and find solutions to the often subtle problems that occur for students at each step along the path. Here meditation comes first, with any philosophical or technical topics and definitions kept to a minimum and introduced briefly, *in context* with the meditations for which they are relevant. (Two additional sections, Reflection I and II, are interspersed within the sevenfold sequence to explain these philosophical matters in greater detail and provide background.)

The true experience of meditation has a special feeling, so it is extremely important to avoid its being taken over by the atmosphere of outlines, goals, and expectations common to the endeavors we ordinarily engage in—our projects, work, hobbies, and so on. *The Relaxed Mind* is presented in a manner that avoids this, so the meditator who follows this practical yet nuanced guidebook can achieve a great deal unaided. Of course, the instructions of a qualified master are of great help and, for most of us, essential for achieving the very highest realizations. But the sincere and dedicated student can go far using this guide.

Relaxation, Simplicity, and Modern Life

The key to meditation is the mind. Each of these seven meditations is a different way of viewing the mind and relaxing it. The mind can be described in many ways. But it can only be understood by

personal exploration—by seeing it directly and recognizing its true nature. Realizing the true nature of the mind, which is the doorway to enlightenment, can occur at any stage, and the stability of this understanding and experience is the goal of this guidebook. If this seems overly ambitious, the author continually reminds us that this enlightened nature is our true identity and not something that has to be acquired. It is like the sun—always there, brightly shining, primordially pure—but our habits, like clouds hiding the sun, block it out. The sun has not changed. At the moment, we just can't see it. Our busy minds mask the utter simplicity of our true nature. Certainly the release of stress and anxiety is a welcome side effect of genuine meditation, but the aim of complete peace and freedom—of enlightenment itself—is never to be forgotten.

The essence of these seven meditations is relaxation—relaxing our minds and opening up to allow clarity and simplicity to emerge naturally. You will see that word—*relax*—repeated over and over here. You will also find yourself encouraged to *completely open, rest, focus gently, balance,* and to *not judge,* again and again. That's because even though there are seven successive meditations, this is not entirely a step-by-step instruction manual. Many things overlap. As you go through the chapters and engage with the meditations, these repeated words will take on greater meaning. The experience of these meditations moves like a spiral, with similar themes and instructions gaining added significance as you move higher and higher in the sequence. Overall it's a gradual process of enrichment, but deep insights can occur at any point because that depth is in us from the beginning.

The key to relaxation is simplicity. How is relaxation possible if we have to deal with a multitude of details? In order for the reader to absorb the essential quality of each of these styles of meditation without having to wade through a prolonged study of Buddhist philosophy, Kilung Rinpoche is providing a shortcut. That doesn't mean these meditations are like fast food—conve-

nient but without much nutritional value. Rather, they provide the essence—the key points of the meditations from which they were derived—and genuine and profound qualities will emerge from practicing them.

But even so, isn't this all rather daunting? You may wonder, "Where will I find the time?" As a meditation teacher with students in the United States, Europe, and South America, as well as in Asia, it became obvious to Kilung Rinpoche that modern life leaves many of those interested in meditation with little time to practice. However, beyond formal meditation—where we are sitting quietly—Buddhism and other contemplative traditions have always spoken of the importance of integrating meditation into daily life. Meditation should be part of life, and these seven meditations provide a bridge between formal meditation and meditation-in-action. So if one has little time to be on the cushion, that can be made up for during the course of a normal day—at work, at play, while eating, while walking, everywhere. And the more frequent and stable one's meditation in life becomes, the better it will be in formal meditation. They reinforce one another and are of equal importance.

The Unraveling of Mysteries

There is only one way to know a cake, and that is to taste it. The same is true of the mind: a lot can be said about it, but its essence cannot be captured in words. You have already read some rather mysterious words—*true nature of the mind, primordially pure, enlightenment*—and some of the instructions that follow may not seem obvious at first because meditation always presents something fresh and new. Even experiences that can be expressed with the same words are never identical.

Therefore, ease into each meditation gradually, and allow any instructions or commentaries that seem mysterious to percolate in

the back of your mind. As they sink in, you will begin to recognize their meaning through your own insights. For example, a short mantra—OM, AH, HUNG—is introduced in the first meditation and elaborated on in each succeeding chapter. (Buddhist mantras are chanted phrases that carry important symbolic meaning and also, at times, provide benefit through their sound alone.) It seems rather straightforward at first—perhaps only a way of relaxing the mind and body as a preparation for meditation. But the meaning of these three words will take on greater and greater significance, embodying much more than a relaxation technique. At some point it may seem quite mysterious, but with patience, over time you will understand and *feel* the deeper meanings of OM, AH, HUNG. The same goes for *the mind's true nature* and other words used to describe ever-deepening meditational experience—including the word *relaxation*.

There are two basic ways to present a topic: The information can be broken into subtopics and these then used as building blocks to create an outline—one thing following another in a logical sequence. Or the material can be presented more organically, like the many strands of a rope or cable, each contributing to a unified whole. The oral teachings of Kilung Rinpoche have that organic quality. He approaches the pathway of meditation from many angles—repeating similar advice each time with a slightly different nuance, gradually filling in important details that reveal subtle connections and add color to an evolving understanding of a particular meditation or of meditation as a whole. The nonlinear character of his presentation of these seven meditations is peppered with reminders, explanations, advice, humor, and enthusiam—all of it directed to counteracting our habitual patterns so that we can unravel the mystery of our minds through our practice. This quality has been preserved as much as possible in this guidebook.

As you read through the seven meditations and try out each of them, keep the following in mind: effective meditation and its

results may not come quickly. In fact, patience is a key element in meditation, allowing qualities that we already have to emerge as our impatience for results subsides. That impatience is one of the main blockages to depth and stability in meditation. And impatience is closely linked to expectations. If we are wishing for results as we enter meditation, we will merely add to our distractions. Rather than adding more, here we are trying to do less. So don't worry about having a "good" meditation session or a "bad" one. Also, make meditation a habit and practice regularly, whatever the frequency you are able to establish. Remember that the habit of meditation is going against lifelong patterns of distraction and agitation, tendencies that the rapid pace of modern life has deeply engrained within us.

Further Benefits

Life is changing all the time. This is an obvious fact and a central theme of Buddhism, where it is called *impermanence.* Being afraid of change isn't going to be of any help. If we can relax in meditation and abide openly with our thoughts and feelings, we can be in a better position to protect ourselves from life's hard knocks and deal wisely with its varied challenges. This includes the challenges of physical illness. Meditation has been scientifically proven to have healing properties. For example, Dr. Herbert Benson, one of the pioneers of mind-body medicine and the discoverer of the relaxation response, has based many of his insights on scientific research into meditation. A relaxed balance between body and mind removes or reduces the stress that causes or intensifies many illnesses.

Because these seven meditations are based on the key points of traditional Tibetan Buddhist practice, they are appropriate for those who have been meditating for a long time, as well as for those who have never practiced meditation at all. The new

meditator will find here a welcoming pathway into deeper and deeper experience and understanding, and the seasoned practitioner will be able to continue with added ease, assurance, and relaxation.

INTRODUCTION

The Value of Meditation

Day by day, the world we all share is getting smaller and busier. Because of this, more and more problems trouble us inside and out—in our minds, with their thoughts and emotions, and in the fast-paced environment of our daily lives. Pressured by it all, our behavior is often contrived. We don't let things happen naturally. The feeling of freedom is lacking. We aren't fully comfortable or satisfied with samsara, the world as experienced by beings due to our obscured mental patterns and perceptions—this mind-created world of ours.

We need to create for ourselves a meaningful way of life where both our inside and outside worlds are happy and in harmony. Many of these problems can be reduced and even solved when we empower ourselves with spiritual practices, such as meditation. Not only does meditation release stress—it can also cure unhappiness and depression. Meditation can help us to correct these imbalances and move forward in life.

When the material side of life is going well, we may think there is no suffering, but that's not true. As long as our minds work in the normal way, materialism may help a little with the suffering and difficulties that appear, but not much and not for long. We need to rely on inner strength , which is inner happiness. And once we begin to discover that through meditation, we need to sustain it and strengthen it so that we are always nourishing ourselves. I think it is

essential for the development of genuine happiness that we never forget this inner key even when outer conditions are excellent. That is because everything is impermanent. It's as the Buddha said, "Nothing remains without change."* We may develop a strong spiritual practice and then, when outer circumstances go well, tell ourselves, "Well, I don't need that anymore." Or we may become lazy, weakening our practice. But whatever outer conditions come our way, they can and will change.

In Buddhism it is said that nothing is permanent. But if anything can come close to being permanent, it would be the inner happiness I speak of. That is more reliable than outer circumstance because it stays with our heart-mind. *Heart-mind* is an important term used throughout this book. It is a synonym for *the human spirit*—the energy center of goodness, positivity, and wisdom—and can be likened to the common English term *heart of hearts,* as in "How do you feel about that in your heart of hearts, in your deepest intuition?" The physical location of this mind—which is not to be confused with the brain (although the two are related)—is the center of the chest. The true, inner meaning of *heart-mind* has to be learned through experience and intuition. Once we really get to know this inner happiness, it is not easily lost. No one can take it away from us. Therefore we can call this inner, or total, freedom.

Developing our meditation practice is like having a garden. Creating the garden—choosing the location, gathering the soil and other materials—is one thing. Maintaining it with constant care is another. When the two come together, you have an excellent result—a garden that produces something of beauty and value. Therefore, I encourage you, if you have the opportunity, to practice meditation daily. At some point your practice will

* Anguttara Nikaya 3.65, from *An Anthology from the Anguttara Nikaya,* vol. 3 of Thanissaro Bhikkhu, trans., *Handful of Leaves* (Valley Center, CA: Metta Forest Monastery, 2003).

feel effortless and natural because you are becoming accustomed to it.

I further encourage you to practice any kind of meditation or yoga or healing tradition that brings you into contact with your inner being. I feel this is truly helpful not only for the individual but for the world as a whole. There was a time, perhaps one hundred years ago, when your location on our planet made a difference in terms of the kind of life you had. If you had the means, you might easily find a place that was peaceful and less distracting. But today, with the expansion of technology, trade, business, transportation, and so on, all places are becoming similar—and very busy. Now we must look for peace on the inside. And I think finding that is the greatest gift we can give to ourselves and to others. Meditating daily can help improve our health and our lifestyle, not to mention spiritual qualities and our understanding of the nature of our minds.

The Buddha's teachings state that everything of importance is learned by knowing the nature of the mind. *Nature of mind* is synonymous with *buddha-nature, primordial consciousness,* and other terms, and refers to the ultimate, pure nature of awareness. We can achieve that by really looking into our own being without distraction for even a few moments every day. You don't need to live in isolation. You don't need to leave behind your society, family, and work. Your mind can be OK—happy and at peace—in the midst of spirited children, ringing telephones, or noisy neighbors. You can develop that inner resilience by finding a few minutes from time to time where you can simply feel inner quiet, with the mind totally opened for whatever arises. Allow yourself to be comfortable, to be open to whatever is happening, for just a few minutes. As the Sufi poet Jalal al-Din Rumi wrote: "Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself."

That small gesture is really powerful. Because we have been so constantly busy and engaged with one thing or another, we have

a great hunger for this soothing source of nourishment. With this spiritual energy, we are feeding ourselves in a special way. It would be great if you could nourish yourself in this way for longer periods each day, but if you have only five or ten minutes to spare, that helps a lot. You don't have to be an "excellent meditator" to start with. All you need to do is have your heart and mind make the following agreement: "Let's rest. There's no reason right now to wander around following thoughts or to be worrying. Let's be relaxed and open." There's not even any need to shut down your thoughts. Just be there with them, but not overly concerned or engaged. Let there be total openness, and just relax within that.

A Closer Look

The main idea of Buddhist meditation is to tame the mind. Human beings have powerful minds—tremendous intellectual ability—but, at the same time, this can bring many complications. That's because often we don't recognize or appreciate the good and positive aspects of our lives. We have within each of us loving-kindness and compassion—an open, genuine heart that embraces self and others. If our powers included knowledge of our minds and skill in using that knowledge, this would make our lives quite different. Meditation helps us to recognize and activate those positive qualities, and through meditation eventually these become part of daily life. Once we understand that these good qualities are always with us, we begin to rejoice in our life—we appreciate it more—which encourages us to be even more positive. So our mind can become more wise and aware through meditation. We become connected with the joy and contentment we are longing for.

The key to all of this is relaxation. In this twenty-first century, the outer, material world is moving very fast; the speed of change is very high. We are all affected by this, especially with a feeling

that we are always a little behind—that we constantly must be catching up to that speed or we will fall further behind. There is a general sense of hurry and anxiety; our sense of self—our ego—strives so hard to keep up that little attention and value is given to our inner world.

On the one hand, it would seem that the modern technological development that is driving all of this is very skillful and promising, but I think it presents a big challenge. The proof of this is that we are suffering so much. We don't need the daily news to remind us of this fact. In our own minds, we are feeling dissatisfaction and longing for something that outer developments aren't giving us. Our minds have been left behind, and we are left hoping for something better.

Here's one common example: We take vacations. The idea is to get away from the workplace and free from all the busyness of our normal, work-driven lives. But when we arrive at our vacation spot—the beach, the mountains, the forest—the mind is still busy. Since *it* is not on vacation, neither are we. We've all had similar experiences, and perhaps we have noticed that due to the rapid pace of modern life, our minds are often wild and unruly. At certain times we may wish that our minds would be focused and calm, but like a naughty child, the mind is all over the map. The training we receive in meditation can enable us to achieve a very useful balance between concentration and relaxation.

Meditation is good for people of any age group. For the young, although their practice may not be profound in the beginning, they are planting important seeds that will bear fruit later if they make meditation a habit. It is especially challenging for teenagers who—as I remember well from my own youth—have enormous energy and drive to learn about and experience everything they can. But similarly, for adults, meditation can provide a new angle for viewing the complexities of making a living and being part of a growing family. And for older folks, meditation can at the very

least be a useful tool for dealing with long-term, well-entrenched habits that may have evolved into difficult problems. There is no guarantee that the comforts of retirement—free time and a pleasant environment—will give us the happiness and peace of mind we yearn for. Meditation can provide the relaxation and insight we need to understand our mental and emotional situations. When we look inward, if the mind can relax, even for an active young person, this makes life very different. Things can be done more wisely, more positively.

My intention is that everyone who wishes to should be able to get something that applies positively to their life from these seven meditations. This is based on my belief that meditation is not only for monks and nuns in monasteries and ascetic yogis and yoginis practicing in frigid mountain caves. As human beings all of us have minds of the same general nature and complexity, including the drives of our egos, our desires, and our wish for happiness. If we become accustomed to meditation through consistent practice, there will come a time when happiness will arise naturally and effortlessly during our off-the-cushion activities. But if we don't make some effort, the effect of meditation will never become consistent. By practicing over the long term and becoming accustomed to it, we may find that just hearing the word *meditation* will cause the mind to enter into the qualities, wisdom, and energy of our practice, just as striking a match causes a flame to illuminate space in an instant.

Once meditation becomes a part of your life, you may notice that the practice radiates positivity to others—its gentleness and peacefulness influences the whole environment. This effect is especially powerful when you sit together with other meditators. Intentionally or not you will definitely be benefiting others. You may have noticed a more negative example of this effect: If you are in a public space, such as on a bus or at a park, and

you see someone yelling or fighting, everyone in the immediate environment gets anxious, nervous, and tense. Even if there is no reason to be afraid, you become fearful. Just as such negative vibrations radiate from aggressive thoughts and activities, positive influences arise from the peaceful and loving attitudes generated in meditation. If we want peace on earth and to heal the environment, first we must look inward and heal ourselves, and then expand this positive influence outward. The powerful energy from a group of meditators can help heal the earth and bring happiness to all sentient beings.

Launching into Practice

As for the actual practice of meditation, once you get into any of the seven meditations below, I suggest that you follow this advice coming from the Tibetan Buddhist tradition: "short periods, many times." At least at the beginning, keep your sessions short, but numerous. If a person can do ten five-minute sessions each day, that is fine. You can also do short sessions during your daily routine—during breaks or idle moments at work, or on your bus to and from school if you are a student. You don't have to sit erect, looking like a buddha. ("Look! Today we have a buddha on the bus.") In that case you might feel a little embarrassed, thinking, "I'm not a buddha yet; I'm still George." That's right; you're definitely still George. But your mind is different today. Why? Because normally George is worried about getting home on time or not missing his stop. But today he's a bit more relaxed, not worrying about the bus ride home—he's more calm and peaceful inside.

I am a Buddhist practitioner of meditation and a Tibetan lama born and raised high in the Himalayan mountains. I have been living and traveling here and there in the West for about fifteen years, and although I have based these seven meditations on the

Buddhist tradition, they are specifically created for and dedicated to modern meditators. I expect you are very comfortable with instructions laid out sequentially in numbered chapters—distinguishing the seven meditation styles—but it is important to know that there are significant threads that run through them all. As mentioned previously, they are not really so separate. First of all they are progressive in that the first chapter is a preparation for the second, and the second for the third, and so on. At the same time, if you find one of the meditation styles especially appealing to you, there is nothing wrong with sticking to that one. Later you may wish to explore some of the others.

It can also be useful to go through the seven meditations in sequence, at least initially—gaining a little bit of knowledge and experience with each. This is because there are several themes or skills that are common to each that can be developed further and further from one meditation to the next. One of these is the gradual taming of the restless, wild, and "naughty" mind so that it becomes more focused. Another is to develop a relaxed mind—a big part of the process of taming the mind and the one that is the most important. You may find that as you go through the sequence, it will require less and less effort to attain this relaxation and focus. Finally the mind may become wise, and there will be no need for any remedies to mental distraction and turbulence. This would be the recognition of the mind's nature, the nature of awareness—the awakened state.

Since these seven meditations have been presented to my students in a yearlong cycle, you may find it helpful to follow this sequence so that each meditation sinks in and you become thoroughly familiar with them all. The first meditation (emphasizing the physical aspect of meditation—feeling the body) lasts one month. The second (calm abiding meditation) is for two months. The third (refined basic sitting meditation)—one month. Insight

meditation (*vipassana*) lasts two months. The fifth (open heart-mind meditation) goes for two months. The sixth (pure mind meditation) is also two months, as is the last (nonconceptual meditation). Of course you may take longer with each if you like.

You may be curious to know the source of these seven meditations. Tibetan Buddhism combines the early Theravada (Hinayana) Buddhist tradition, which emphasizes enlightenment for the individual; the later Mahayana tradition, where the practitioner seeks enlightenment motivated by the wish to release all beings from the sufferings of samsara; the Vajrayana, which sees all experience as pure and enlightened in nature; and *dzogchen,* which stresses one's resting in primordial awareness—the awakened state of a buddha. The first four of the seven meditations are drawn from the Theravada tradition. The fifth is more in the Mahayana style, the sixth in Vajrayana, and the seventh is an introduction to dzogchen meditation.*

Generally speaking, the first through the fourth meditations (Part One) are designed to settle the mind—which is normally so very busy—in order to connect with the inner environment. In each of these initial meditation styles, the mind becomes gradually more focused. The last three meditations (Part Two) emphasize the inner qualities of mind and feeling, teaching one to rest there without mental fabrication. If you have moved too quickly through the meditations of Part One and upon entering Part Two you wonder, "Why is the author repeating himself here, giving similar instructions?" you might want to spend more time on the initial meditations. The words may be similar, but the meditations in Part Two are much more subtle and require the experience of Part One to be understood fully.

* Dzogchen, translated as "the Great Perfection" (and also called *ati-yoga*), is a swift, direct path to enlightenment based on recognizing the nature of mind—the purity of awareness. It is considered part of the Vajrayana tradition of Buddhism.

A Brief Description of the Seven Meditations

1. First Meditation: Basic Sitting Meditation Coarse Level (Tibetan: *shad-gom*). Joining mental and physical awareness in meditation. Meditation isn't for the mind alone. Here we bring mind and body together in relaxation and learn meditation postures, all as a preparation for the succeeding chapter on calm abiding.
2. Second Meditation: Calm Abiding (Tibetan: *shi-ney,* Sanskrit: *shamatha*). Using an object of attention to free ourselves from the disturbances of thoughts and to reach a state of calm.
3. Third Meditation: Arriving at Clarity—Refined Sitting Meditation. Calm evolves into clarity, relaxation, energy, and inspiration.
4. Fourth Meditation: Insight Meditation (Pali: *vipassana,* Tibetan: *lhag-tong*). Seeing beneath the surface to our inner nature to the nature of all phenomena. Seeing things as they really are.
5. Fifth Meditation: Open Heart-Mind Meditation (Mahayana approach). Viewing the internal and external more widely. As a basis for unbiased compassion, cultivating boundless equanimity in place of grasping at the duality of self and other. The wide-open experience of spaciousness.
6. Sixth Meditation: Pure Mind Meditation (Vajrayana approach). Opening up even more to create a harmonious and impartial balance between dualities, we transcend ingrained habitual patterns that are inconsistent with the pure nature of reality.
7. Seventh Meditation: Nonconceptual Meditation (introduction to dzogchen). Allowing the mind to rest in the unmodified natural state of one's own heart-mind. Resting effortlessly in the nature of the mind. The experience of transcendent knowledge: primordial purity.

PART ONE

Each meditation chapter begins with an introduction to the style, followed by an overview where the main elements and, sometimes, related topics are fleshed out. The latter part of the chapter contains a description of the actual meditation and more specific instructions. A list of short suggestions is then given, which the meditator can either memorize or refer to during the session as a reminder and as encouragement. The chapters end with a "Questions and Answers" section taken from recordings of Kilung Rinpoche's guided meditations with his students.

1

FIRST MEDITATION

BASIC SITTING MEDITATION

Laying the Foundation—by Joining Mind and Body

This first meditation, focused on the body, is called *shad-gom* in Tibetan. *Shad* means "analytical," and *gom* stands for "meditation." The practice is analytical in the sense that one scans through or examines the mind and body to see that both are relaxed and at rest.

Here we unite mind and body. We may have gotten the idea that meditation is only for the mind. People sometimes assume that meditation means to reduce thoughts or work with thoughts—maybe by mentally observing the thoughts, by following them or some other object with attention. In such cases the mind may say, "Oh, I'm doing fine. I'm not distracted by anything, so I don't care about the body." But there is more to it than that. The mind must be deeply connected with the feelings of the body. They should be resting together in meditation.

This first level is called *coarse,* but only because the emphasis is on the physical—something we can touch and feel, our tactile sensations. Our body is a very important basis for all of our meditation practices. In reality there must be a balance between the two—the mind and the body. If the body and mind are divided—with the body by itself and the mind somewhere else—the body,

lacking the gentle presence of relaxation imparted by mindfulness,* can become very rigid, like a statue. The mind races off alone, and the body—unable to catch up—becomes tense.

When you sit down to meditate, it sometimes happens that your mind still has some unfinished business. It is best to finish up all mental preoccupations prior to entering meditation or, if you still have such thoughts lingering as you begin meditation, put them to rest as quickly as possible and gently bring your attention to your body and see how it feels. This determination and gentle attitude allows us to avoid the habit of rushing through things just to get them over and done with. In meditation, quality is more important than speed. This key point should never be forgotten. When the mind is present with the body, you feel differently from the way you normally feel seated at work or when eating and so forth. You become more relaxed, there is a feeling of rest, and a sense of blessing can appear to your awareness. When you experience relaxation and a vast sense of openness, this indicates that your mind and body are together, unified, and in harmony.

It is a good idea to establish a special space in your home or wherever you choose to meditate—a place with few distractions that you find comfortable and welcoming, an environment where you can cultivate this practice, making it a habit. This will help give you positive energy that will propel your practice. Take some time and care in choosing the type of cushion you will use. Then your meditation seat will have an attractive, desirable quality, as if it were telling you, "Hi. Maybe you would like to meditate for a few minutes? I have been empty for so long. I kind of miss you." In that way your environment makes a difference, giving you inspiration to develop your meditation practice. Having a regular time to meditate is another positive support.

* Mental presence: one is undistracted while being focused in a relaxed manner.

What Is Meditation?

What are we really doing when we begin meditating? We are transforming the busyness that is our normal mental state into relaxation. This is something we all need very much. As we begin we are not interested so much in controlling our minds. We are not criticizing our normal mental state, telling ourselves, "Oh, you naughty mind, you are so wild. You have to stop this!" We should be more relaxed and open and less concerned about having control. Therefore we start off gently, just bringing our mind back to the feeling of our body when it strays.

At this stage we are not dealing with complex procedures, such as concentrating on visualizations or even following our breath. We don't want to overload the mind with the kinds of details that we will encounter at more refined levels of meditation. The mind likes complications, and at first we may find it tempting to try out a more complex form of meditation. But soon the effort required will drain us of energy, and our interest in meditation will fade. Therefore, we begin by developing a solid and comfortable foundation related to meditating on the body. We are not in a hurry. We are resting in relaxation, unblocked, maintaining awareness of how the energy flows in the body.

Today, we in the modern world have access to many physical practices from various cultures that are quite beneficial for the body. Many of you practice yoga, tai chi, or some other form of physical fitness. From the Buddhist perspective, we have both the form and formless bodies. The form body is our ordinary physical body. The formless body, sometimes called the *subtle body* (which is similar to the meridians and chi of Chinese tai chi and acupuncture), cannot be seen but is a reflection of the energy of the body. If our ordinary form body is relaxed, the energy of the subtle body improves. Our subtle body is made up of channels, winds, and energies. These condition the energy flow in the body. We are not going deeply into