“The Way of Śamatha: Soothing the Body, Stilling the Mind, and Illuminating Awareness”  
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Introductory Themes:

- H.H. The Dalai Lama: “I believe that the very purpose of our life is to seek happiness. Whether one believes in religion or not, whether one believes in this religion or that religion, we all are seeking something better in life. So, I think, the very motion of our life is towards happiness.”
- Two kinds of happiness
  - Hedonic pleasure, derived from what we can get from the world ~ hunter-gatherer approach
  - Genuine happiness, derived from what we bring to the world ~ cultivator approach, cultivated through ethics, mental balance, and wisdom
- Etymologies of bhāvana, samādhi, and śamatha, the relation between them, and their role in the cultivation of mental balance and inner well-being, beginning by overcoming obsessive, compulsive, delusional ideation
- Buddha: “I thought of a time when my Sakyan father was working and I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree: quite secluded from sensual desires disengaged from unwholesome things I had entered upon and abode in the first dhyāna, which is accompanied by coarse and precise investigation, with well-being and bliss born of seclusion. I thought: ‘Might that be the way to enlightenment?’ Then, following that memory, there came the recognition that this was the way to enlightenment.”
- Dhammapada III: 33 – 34: “The wise one straightens the fluttering, unsteady mind, which is difficult to guard and hard to restrain, just as a fletcher straightens an arrow-shaft. Like a fish that has been taken out of its watery abode and thrown onto dry land, this mind flutters and trembles when it is removed from the abode of māra.”

William James (1842–1910) on Attention:

- Attention and the World of Experience
  - “The subjects adhered to become real subjects, attributes adhered to real attributes, the existence adhered to real existence; whilst the subjects disregarded become imaginary subjects, the attributes disregarded erroneous attributes, and the existence disregarded an existence in no man’s land, in the limbo ‘where footless fancies dwell.’... Habitually and practically we do not count these disregarded things as existents at all... they are not even treated as appearances; they are treated as if they were mere waste, equivalent to nothing at all.”
  - “Each of us literally chooses, by his ways of attending to things, what sort of a universe he shall appear to himself to inhabit.”
- Attention & Education:
“The faculty of voluntarily bringing back a wandering attention, over and over again, is the very root of judgment, character, and will...An education which should improve this faculty would be the education par excellence. But it is easier to define this ideal than to give practical directions for bringing it about.”

In education, “the power of voluntarily attending is the point of the whole procedure. Just as a balance turns on its knife-edges, so upon it our moral destiny turns.”

- Attention, Personal Development, & Ethics
  - A person “who has daily inured himself to habits of concentrated attention, energetic volition, and self-denial in unnecessary things...will stand like a tower when everything rocks around him, and his softer fellow-mortals are winnowed like chaff in the blast.”
  - James comments that geniuses are commonly thought to excel in their capacity for sustained voluntary attention; but he quickly adds, “it is their genius making them attentive, not their attention making geniuses of them.”

- On the Possibility of Developing Sustained Voluntary Attention
  - “There is no such thing as voluntary attention sustained for more than a few seconds at a time. What is called sustained voluntary attention is a repetition of successive efforts which bring back the topic to the mind.”
  - “The possession of such a steady faculty of attention is unquestionably a great boon. Those who have it can work more rapidly, and with less nervous wear and tear. I am inclined to think that no one who is without it naturally can by any amount of drill or discipline attain it in a very high degree. Its amount is probably a fixed characteristic of the individual.”

I. Samatha with a Sign: Mindfulness of Breathing
   A. “Just as in the last month of the hot season, when a mass of dust and dirt has swirled up, a great rain cloud out of season disperses it and quells it on the spot, so too concentration by mindfulness of breathing, when developed and cultivated, is peaceful, sublime, an ambrosial dwelling, and it disperses and quells on the spot unwholesome states whenever they arise.”
   B. Analogy of keeping a wound clean: exploring the healing and balancing capacity of the body-mind
   C. “Breathing in long, one knows, ‘I breathe in long. Breathing out long, one knows, ‘I breathe out long.’ Breathing in short, one knows, ‘I breathe in short.’ Breathing out short, one knows, ‘I breathe out short.’ One trains thus: ‘I shall breathe in, experiencing the whole body. I shall breathe out, experiencing the whole body. I shall breathe in, calming the composite of the body. I shall breathe out, calming the composite of the body.’ Thus, one trains.”
   D. The Perfection of Wisdom Sutra in Ten Thousand Stanzas: “Śāriputra, take the analogy of a potter or a potter’s apprentice spinning the potter’s wheel: If he makes a long revolution, he knows it is long; if he makes a short
revolution, he knows it is short. Śāriputra, similarly, a Bodhisattva, a great being, mindfully breathes in and mindfully breathes out. If the inhalation is long, he knows the inhalation is long; if the exhalation is long, he knows the exhalation is long. If the inhalation is short, he knows the inhalation is short; if the exhalation is short, he knows the exhalation is short. Śāriputra, thus, a Bodhisattva, a great being, by dwelling with introspection and mindfulness, eliminates attachment and disappointment towards the world by means of non-objectification; and he lives observing the body as the body internally."

E. *The Sutra of the Ten Wheels of Kṣitigarbha*: “How do you correctly note, with the power of mindfulness, the in-and-out movement of the breath? You count them correctly.”

F. *The Primary Tantra of Mañjuśrī (Mañjuśrīmūlatantra)*: “By resorting to mindfulness of the respiration, ideation is calmed. Since the mind is completely inflamed, fasten it firmly to one meditative object.”

G. The challenge to egolessly attend closely to the breath, then the mind, then awareness, freeing oneself from the addiction to doing

H. The feedback nature of mindfulness of breathing

I. The preliminary sign, acquired sign, and counterpart sign in the development of mindfulness of breathing

J. Buddha: “And what monks, is the faculty of sati? Here, monks, the noble disciple has sati, he is endowed with perfect sati and introspection, he is one who remembers, who recollects what was done and said long before.” (*Saṃyutta Nikāya* V 197-8)

K. Nāgasena: “Sati, when it arises, calls to mind wholesome and unwholesome tendencies, with faults and faultless, inferior and refined, dark and pure, together with their counterparts…sati, when it arises, follows the courses of beneficial and unbeneficial tendencies: these tendencies are beneficial, these unbeneficial; these tendencies are helpful, these unhelpful. Thus, one who practices yoga rejects unbeneficial tendencies and cultivates beneficial tendencies.” (*Milindapañha* 37-38)

L. Buddhaghosa: “By means of [sati] they [i.e., other mental processes] remember, or it itself remembers, or it is simply just remembering, thus it is sati. Its characteristic is not floating; its property is not losing; its manifestation is guarding or the state of being face to face with an object; its basis is strong noting or the close applications of mindfulness of the body and so on. It should be seen as like a post due to its state of being set in the object, and as like a gatekeeper because it guards the gate of the eye and so on.” (*The Path of Purification*, XIV, 141)

M. Buddha: “Herein a monk should constantly review his own mind thus: ‘Does any excitation concerning these five cords of sensual pleasure ever arise in me on any occasion?’ If, on reviewing his mind, the monk understands: ‘Excitation concerning these five cords of sensual pleasure does arise in me on certain occasions’ then he understands: ‘Desire and lust for the five cords of sensual pleasure are not abandoned in me.’ In this way he has introspection of that. But if, on reviewing his mind, the monk
understands: ‘No excitation concerning these five cords of sensual pleasure arises in me on any occasion,’ then he understands: ‘Desire and lust for the five cords of sensual pleasure are abandoned in me.’ In this way he has introspection of that.” (Majjhima Nikāya 122 15)

N. Asaṅga: “Mindfulness and introspection are taught, for the first prevents the attention from straying from the meditative object, while the second recognizes that the attention is straying.”

O. Asaṅga: “What is mindfulness? The non-forgetfulness of the mind with respect to a familiar object, having the function of non-distraction.” [Abhidharmasamuccaya, Pradhan, ed., p. 6.6.]

P. Śāntideva: “In brief, this alone is the definition of introspection: the repeated examination of the state of one’s body and mind.”

Q. The Three Trainings and the Eightfold Noble Path
   1. Ethics: right livelihood, right action, and right speech
   2. Mental Balance: right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration
   3. Wisdom: right intention and right view

R. Buddhaghosa: Once you have achieved the actual state of the first dhyāna, samadhi can be sustained “for a whole night and a whole day, just as a healthy man, after rising from his seat, could stand a whole day.” (The Path of Purification, 126)

S. With the achievement of the first dhyāna, one accesses the bhavanga (ground of becoming), a naturally pure, unencumbered, luminous state of consciousness. It manifests when awareness is withdrawn from the physical senses and when the activities of the mind, such as discursive thoughts and images, have subsided. This happens naturally when one falls into dreamless sleep and in the last moment of one’s life.

T. The five dhyāna factors remove the five obscurations
   1. The factor of single-pointed attention removes the obscuration of sensual craving.
   2. The factor of well-being removes the obscuration of malice.
   3. The factor of coarse examination removes the obscurations of laxity and dullness.
   4. The factor of bliss removes the obscurations of excitation and anxiety
   5. The factor of precise investigation removes the obscuration of uncertainty.

U. Water similes of the five obscurations
   1. Sensual craving is like water mixed with various colors.
   2. Malice is like boiling water.
   3. Laxity and dullness are like water covered over by moss.
   4. Excitation and anxiety are like agitated water whipped by the wind.
   5. Uncertainty is like turbid, muddy water.
V. Buddha: “So long as these five obscurations are not abandoned one considers oneself as indebted, sick, in bonds, enslaved and lost in a desert track.” (Sāmaññaphala Sutta in Dīgha Nikāya I 73)

W. The Buddha likens śamatha to a great warrior and vipaśyanā to a wise minister. (Samaññaphala Sutta in Dīgha Nikāya IV 194-195)

X. Vimuttimagga (by Arhat Upatissa, 1st c. C.E.): the standing and walking postures are particularly suitable for lustful natured personalities, while sitting and reclining are more appropriate for anger-natured personalities. [Ehara, N.R.M. et al. tr., The Path of Freedom (Vimuttimagga), Kandy: BPS, 1995, 61]

Y. Buddhaghosa’s Visuddhimagga (430 C.E.): Whichever posture is effective for developing concentration is the one to be adopted. (128)

Introspection in Western Psychology:

• William James: “Psychology is the Science of Mental Life, both of its phenomena and their conditions. The phenomena are such things as we call feelings, desires, cognitions, reasonings, decisions, and the like…”

• William James: “Introspective Observation is what we have to rely on first and foremost and always. The word introspection need hardly be defined—it means, of course, the looking into our own minds and reporting what we there discover. Everyone agrees that we there discover states of consciousness.”

• Challenges for introspection:
  o Unstable and impossible to verify
  o Useful for understanding only meditative states, not ordinary or pathological mental states
  o Subject to contamination by theory
  o Subject to phenomenological illusion
  o Subject to concealment and misrepresentation by unconscious mental processes and motivations
  o Subject to distorting influence of observation on the observed mental processes

• John B. Watson (1878–1958): Psychology must “bury subjective subject matter [and] introspective method” and it must “never use the terms consciousness, mental states, mind, content, introspectively verifiable, imagery, and the like.”

• B. F. Skinner (1904–1990): “To agree that what one feels or introspectively observes are conditions of one’s own body is a step in the right direction. It is a step toward an analysis both of seeing and of seeing that one sees in purely physical terms. After substituting brain for mind, we can then move on to substituting person for brain and recast the analysis in line with the observed facts. But what is felt or introspectively observed is not an important part of the physiology which fills the temporal gap in a historical analysis.”

• Neuroscientist Cristof Koch: “Are they really one and the same thing, viewed from different perspectives? The characters of brain states and of phenomenal states appear too different to be completely reducible to each other.”

• William James: “Psychology, indeed, is today hardly more than what physics was before Galileo.”
II. Settling the Mind in Its Natural State from Lerap Lingpa’s (1856-1926) commentary on The Heart Essence of Vimalamitra:

“Simply hearing the guru’s practical instructions and knowing how to explain them does not liberate your own mind-stream, so you must meditate. Even if you spend your whole life practicing a mere semblance of meditation—meditating in a stupor, contaminated with compulsive ideation, and taking many breaks during your sessions due to being unable to control mental scattering—no good experiences or realizations will arise. So it is important during each session to meditate according to the guru’s oral instructions.

In solitude sit upright on a comfortable cushion. Gently hold the vase breath until the vital energies converge naturally. Let your gaze be vacant. With your body and mind inwardly relaxed, and without allowing the continuum of your consciousness to fade from a state of limpidity and vivid clarity, sustain it naturally and radiantly. Do not contaminate it with many critical judgments; do not take a shortsighted view of meditation, and avoid great hopes and fears that your meditation will turn out one way and not another. At the beginning have many daily sessions, each of them of brief duration, and focus well in each one. Whenever you meditate, bear in mind the phrase “without distraction and without grasping,” and put this into practice.

As you gradually familiarize yourself with the meditation, increase the duration of your sessions. If dullness sets in, enhance your awareness. If there is excessive scattering and excitation, loosen up. Determine in terms of your own experience the optimal degree of mental tension as well as the healthiest diet and behavior.

Excessive, imprisoning constriction of the mind, loss of limpidity due to lassitude, and excessive relaxation resulting in involuntary vocalization and eye-movement are faults. It is a hindrance to talk a lot about such things as extrasensory perception and miscellaneous dreams or to claim, “I saw a deity. I saw a ghost. I know this. I’ve realized that.” and so on. The presence or absence of any variety of pleasure or displeasure, such as a sensation of motion, is not uniform, for there are great differences in the dispositions and faculties from one individual to another.

Due to settling the mind in its natural state, there may arise sensations such as physical and mental wellbeing, a sense of lucid consciousness, the appearance of empty form, and a non-conceptual sense that nothing can harm the mind, regardless of whether or not ideation has ceased. Whatever kinds of mental imagery occur—be they gentle or violent, subtle or gross, of long or short duration, strong or weak, good or bad—observe their nature, and avoid any obsessive evaluation of them as being one thing and not another. Let the heart of your practice be consciousness in its natural state, limpid and vivid. Acting as your own mentor, if you can bring the essential points to perfection, as if you were threading a needle, the afflictions of your own mind-stream will be inhibited, you will gain the autonomy of not succumbing to them, and your mind will constantly be calm and dispassionate. This is a sound basis for the arising of all samādhis of the stages of generation and completion.
This is like tilling the soil of a field. So from the outset avoid making a lot of great, exalted, and pointless proclamations. Rather, it is crucial to do all you can to refine your mind and establish a foundation for contemplative practice."

*The Vajra Essence* on the Substrate and Substrate Consciousness:

- “The rope of mindfulness and firmly held attention is dissolved by the power of meditative experiences until finally the ordinary mind of an ordinary sentient being, as it were, disappears. Consequently, discursive thoughts become dormant, and moving thoughts vanish into the space of the mind. One slips into the vacuity of the substrate, in which oneself, others, and objects vanish. Clinging to the experiences of vacuity and luminosity while looking inwards, the appearances of oneself, others, and objects vanish. That is the substrate consciousness…one has come to the essential nature of the mind.”
- “The substrate consciousness, of the nature of vacuity and luminosity, abides as the cause of everything that is emanated. The mind that emanates from that presents forms, which are stabilized by a continuous stream of consciousness.”
- “Someone with an experience of vacuity and clarity who directs his attention inward may bring a stop to all external appearances and come to a state in which he believes there are no appearances or thoughts. This experience of radiance from which one dares not part is the substrate consciousness.”
- “When you fall asleep, all objective appearances of waking reality, including the physical world, the beings who inhabit it, and all the objects that appear to the five senses, dissolve into the vacuity of the substrate, which is of the nature of space, and they emerge from that domain.”
- “When the natural glow of pristine awareness that is present in the ground—the dharmakāya in which the five facets of primordial consciousness are simultaneously perfected—dissolves into its inner luminosity, it is called unobscured primordial consciousness. Ignorance of this nature is determined as the cause of delusion. How? Mere ignorance of the nature of the play of the all-pervasive ground acts as the cause. As that becomes somewhat fortified, it dwells as the true substrate, which is immaterial like space—a blank, unthinking void. Entering that state corresponds to states such as fainting, abiding in meditative absorption, entering a trance induced by dhyāna, becoming engulfed by deep sleep in the substrate (in which appearances have dissolved into absolute space), and reaching the point of death, in which appearances have vanished. That is called the true substrate. Free of clinging to the experiences of the intellect and mentation, one is absorbed in a ground that is empty of matter.”
- From that state arises radiant, clear consciousness itself as the basis of the emergence of appearances; that is the substrate consciousness. Moreover, no objects are established that are not its own luminosity, and while it can give rise to all kinds of appearances, it does not enter into any object. It is like the ability of planets and stars to appear in limpid, clear water; like the ability of reflections to appear in a limpid, clear mirror; and like the animate and inanimate world appearing in limpid, clear space. In the same way, appearances can emerge in the empty, clear, substrate consciousness.
• From that state arises the consciousness of the mere appearance of the self called I. The self is apprehended as being here, so the ground appears to be over there, thus establishing the appearance of immaterial space. As that becomes entrenched, it is made manifest, and so-called mentation arises—which is the basis for the emergence of appearances—and the aspect of luminosity is revealed. From that the five types of objects of appearance arise, and reifying them, there is clinging and delusion.”

III. Śamatha without a Sign (From Padmasambhava’s Natural Liberation, revealed by Karma Lingpa, 1326–1386)

“According to the custom of some teaching traditions, you are first introduced to the view, and upon that basis you seek the meditative state. This makes it difficult to identify pristine awareness. In this tradition, you first establish the meditative state, then on that basis you are introduced to the view. This profound point makes it impossible for you not to identify pristine awareness. Therefore, first settle your mind in its natural state, then bring forth genuine śamatha in your mind-stream, and reveal the nature of pristine awareness…

While steadily gazing into the space in front of you, without meditating on anything, steadily concentrate your consciousness, without wavering, in the space in front of you. Increase the stillness and then relax again. Occasionally seek out “What is that consciousness that is concentrating.” steadily concentrate again, and then check it out again. Do that in an alternating fashion. Even if there are problems of laxity and lethargy, that will dispel them. In all your activities rely upon unwavering mindfulness. Do that for one day.

Then position your body like before. Cast your gaze downwards, gently release your mind, and without having anything on which to meditate, gently release both your body and mind into their natural state. Having nothing on which to meditate, and without any modification or adulteration, place your attention simply without wavering, in its own natural state, its natural limpidity, its own character, just as it is. Remain in clarity, and rest the mind so that it is loose and free. Alternate between observing who is concentrating inwardly and who is releasing. If it is the mind, ask: what is that very agent that releases the mind and concentrates the mind? And steadily observe yourself. Then release again. By so doing, fine stillness will arise, and you may even identify pristine awareness. Do that, too, for one day.

Then do as before. Now alternately sharply focus your attention, wholly concentrating it without wavering, and then gently release it, evenly resting it in openness. Again concentrate, and again release. In that way, meditate with alternating focus and release. At times, steadily direct your attention up into the sky. Steadily focus your awareness with the desire to be without anything on which to meditate. Relax again. At times, steadily, unwaveringly, direct your awareness into the space on your right; at times, direct it to the left; and at times, direct it downwards. During each session, rotate the gaze around in those directions.

Occasionally inquire, “What is that awareness of the one who is focusing the interest?” Let the awareness itself steadily observe itself. At times, let your mind come to rest in the center of your heart, and evenly leave it there. At times, evenly bring your
mind into the expanse of space and leave it there. Thus, by shifting the gaze in various, alternating ways, the mind settles in its natural state. As indications of this, if awareness remains evenly, lucidly, and steadily wherever it is placed, śamatha has arisen.

If awareness becomes muddled and without mindfulness, that is the problem of laxity, or dimness; so clear it up, inspire it, and shift your gaze. If it becomes distracted and excited, it is important that you lower your gaze and release your awareness. If samādhi arises in which there is nothing of which you can say, “This is meditation,” and “This is conceptualization,” this is the problem of oblivion, so meditate with alternating concentration and release, and recognize who is meditating. Recognize the flaws of śamatha, and eliminate them right away.

Flawless śamatha is like an oil-lamp that is unmoved by wind. Wherever the awareness is placed, it is unwaveringly present; awareness is vividly clear, without being sullied by laxity, lethargy, or dimness; wherever the awareness is directed, it is steady and sharply pointed; and unmoved by adventitious thoughts, it is straight. Thus, a flawless meditative state arises in one’s mind-stream; and until this happens, it is important that the mind is settled in its natural state. Without genuine śamatha arising in one’s mind-stream, even if pristine awareness is pointed out, it becomes nothing more than an object of intellectual understanding; and one is left simply giving lip-service to the view, and there is the danger that one may succumb to dogmatism. Thus, the root of all meditative states depends upon this, so do not be introduced to pristine awareness too soon, but practice until there occurs a fine experience of stillness.”


Of the two approaches of seeking to meditate on the basis of the view and seeking the view on the basis of meditation, the following accords with the latter approach. On a comfortable cushion for the cultivation of dhyāna, assume the sevenfold posture and with the nine-fold breathing clear out stale vital energies. Carefully distinguish between the radiant purity of awareness and its defilements, and with a pristinely virtuous mind begin by taking refuge and cultivating bodhicitta. Meditate on the profound path of guru yoga, and after making hundreds of heartfelt supplications, let the guru dissolve into yourself.

Do not modify the nature of evanescent appearances with thoughts such as hopes and fears, but rest for a while in unwavering meditative equipoise. This is not a state in which your attention is blanked out, as if you had fainted or fallen asleep. Rather, post the sentry of undistracted mindfulness and focus introspection on the movements of awareness. Focus closely on its nature of cognizance and luminosity, observing it nakedly. Whatever thoughts arise, recognize each one. Alternatively, like a participant in a duel, completely cut off any thoughts as soon as they arise. When there is stillness after they are gone, relax loosely, but without losing mindfulness. As it is said, “Focus closely and relax loosely—in that way the mind is settled.” Relax without wandering, as the saying goes, “When the mind that is tangled up in activity loosens up, it undoubtedly frees itself.”

Whenever thoughts arise, if their nature is observed, they naturally disappear and a clear vacuity arises. Likewise, if the mind is examined when it is still, a vivid, unobscured, luminous vacuity is perceived, and this is known as “the fusion of stillness
and motion.” Whatever thoughts arise, do not block them, but recognizing their
movements, focus on their nature—like a bird that was caged on a ship. Sustain your
awareness as in the saying, “Like a raven that flies from a ship, circles around, and
alights aboard once again.”

The nature of meditative equipoise is not obscured by anything, but is limpid and
clear. Not established as anything physical, it is a clear vacuity like space. Allowing
anything to arise, it is vividly awake. Such is the nature of the mind. This is superbly
witnessed with direct perception, yet it cannot be grasped as “this” or demonstrated with
words. “Whatever arises, rest loosely, without grasping”: nowadays, for the most part,
contemplatives of Tibet uniformly proclaim this as practical advice for achieving
enlightenment. However, I, Chökyi Gyaltsen, declare this to be an exceptionally skillful
method for novices to achieve mental stillness and to identify the relative nature of the
mind.

Merging the Mind with Space:

- **The Vajra Essence**: “First merge this mind with external space and remain in
  meditative equipoise for seven days. Then fix your attention on a stone, a stick, a
  physical representation of the Buddha, or a letter, and remain in meditative
  equipoise for seven days. Then imagine a clear, radiant, five-colored *bindu* at
  your heart, fix your attention on it, and remain in meditative equipoise for seven
days. For some, this places the mind in a state of bliss, luminosity, and vacuity.
  This experience, devoid of thought, like an ocean unmoved by waves, is called
  śamatha with signs.”
- **The Intent of Samantabhadra**: “There are two kinds of paths: individuals with
  supreme faculties proceed within themselves by way of the direct crossing-over,
  and individuals with middling or inferior faculties proceed gradually, in
  dependence upon the grounds and paths. To investigate this, first of all merge
  your mind with empty, external space and remain in meditative equipoise for
  twenty days. By so doing, the first type of individuals will perceive the originally
  pure essential nature of the primordial ground with the eye of wisdom, and they
  will identify this within themselves.”
- **The Method**
  - With each exhalation, release your awareness into the space of the mind,
    with no object and while releasing any thought that arises. With each
    inhalation refresh your awareness in the present moment, letting your
    awareness hold its own ground, illuminating and knowing itself.
  - Continue the oscillation, but independently of the rhythm of the breath.
  - Eventually, let your awareness nonconceptually come to rest in stillness,
    holding its own ground, simultaneously aware of itself, while merged
    inseparably with space without an object.
- **The Vajra Essence**: [In this way] “the rope of mindfulness and firmly maintained
  attention is dissolved by the power of meditative experiences, until finally the
  ordinary mind of an ordinary being disappears, as it were. Consequently,
  compulsive thinking subsides, and roving thoughts vanish into the space of
  awareness. You then slip into the vacuity of the substrate, in which self, others,
and objects disappear. By clinging to the experiences of vacuity and luminosity while looking inward, the appearances of self, others, and objects vanish. This is the substrate consciousness. Some teachers say that the substrate to which you descend is freedom from conceptual elaboration or the one taste, but others say it is ethically neutral. Whatever they call it, in truth you have come to the essential nature (of the mind).”

- The second and third of the four stages of Mahāmudrā practice, the first being “single-pointedness,” and the fourth being “non-meditation.”
- The venerable Domang Gyatral Rinpoche (Naked Awareness): the stage of the yoga of single-pointedness is as follows: “the first stage of single-pointedness occurs with the accomplishment of śamatha, wherein one single-pointedly attends to one’s own awareness, which is primordially unceasing and luminous.”
- The Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorjé (The Great Instructions) associates the small stage of the yoga of single-pointedness with the Mahāyana Path of Accumulation, the first of the five paths culminating in perfect enlightenment.
- The Lamp of Mahāmudrā by Tselé Natsok Rangdröl: “One-pointedness, the first yoga of Mahāmudrā, has three levels: small, medium and great. One-pointedness, for the most part, consists of śamatha and the gradual progression through the stages of śamatha with support, without support, and finally to the śamatha that delights the tathāgatas. During that process, grasping gradually diminishes.”
- Karma Chakmé (Naked Awareness): “Up until single-pointedness, primordial consciousness that realizes the path has not arisen, so that is not genuine meditative equipoise. Thus, as subsequent appearances do not appear as illusions, there is no genuine post-meditative state.”
- Mahāmudrā: The Ocean of Definitive Meaning by the Ninth Karmapa, Wangchuk Dorjé: “How then should one seek to realize śamatha? It is highly praiseworthy for someone to achieve śamatha at the threshold to the first dhyāna [within the form realm], as stated before. Failing that, one would do well to realize a single-pointed concentration in the desire realm.”
- The Vajra Essence: “Know that among unrefined people in this degenerate era, very few appear to achieve more than fleeting stability.”
- Asaṅga (“Third Stage of Yoga” in the Śrāvakabhūmi): “The entire continuum and flow of your attention, directed single-pointedly and internally focused in the śamatha on the mind, should sequentially be signless, devoid of ideation, and calm. When you achieve serenity of the mind in this way, signs, ideation, and secondary mental afflictions may appear, manifest, or become the object, because of forgetfulness or the fault of lack of habituation. Do not fall immediately under the influence of the faults that you have previously observed; but be without mindfulness and without mental engagement. That is to say, due to the absence of mindfulness and of mental engagement, when that object is dissolved and removed, the mind is placed in the absence of appearances.”
- Tsongkhapa (The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path): “Therefore, the śamatha that serves as the basis for vipaśyāna by which one achieves the ārya paths of all stream-returners and once-returners…is the threshold to the first dhyāna.”
• Tsongkhapa (*The Medium Exposition of the Stages of the Path*):
  o “At that time, while in meditative equipoise no appearances of your own body and so on arise, and there is a sense as if the mind has become indivisible with space. When rising from that state, there is a sense as if the body is suddenly coming into being.”
  o “All *samādhis* prior to the achievement of the *samādhi* of the threshold [to the first dhyāna] are single-pointed attention of the desire realm. So judging by the great treatises, there seem to be very few who achieve even śamatha.”

• Buddha: “For one who clings, motion exists; but for one who clings not, there is no motion. Where no motion is, there is stillness. Where stillness is, there is no craving. Where no craving is, there is neither coming nor going. Where no coming nor going is, there is neither arising nor passing away. Where neither arising nor passing away is, there is neither this world nor a world beyond, nor a state between. This, verily, is the end of suffering.” *Udāna* 8:3

• *The Vajra Essence*: “Leaving your body, speech, and mind in a state of inactivity is the unsurpassed, supreme technique for inserting the vital energy and mind into the central channel.”

• *The Vajra Essence*: “Motionlessly relax your body in whatever way is comfortable, like an unthinking corpse in a charnel ground. Let your voice be silent like a lute with its strings cut. Rest your mind in an unmodified state, like the primordial presence of space. Remain for a long time in these three ways of resting. This pacifies all illnesses due to disturbances of the elements and unfavorable circumstances, and your body, speech, and mind naturally calm down. The ultimate purpose of this practice is to experience the *dharmakāya*, free of activity.”

• H. H. the Dalai Lama (*Dzogchen*): “When you rest the mind, putting it out of work, the vital energies naturally become refined, and solely by non-conceptual meditation, you slip into the clear light with the mind and vital energies. This requires settling in complete inactivity, which is not easy!”