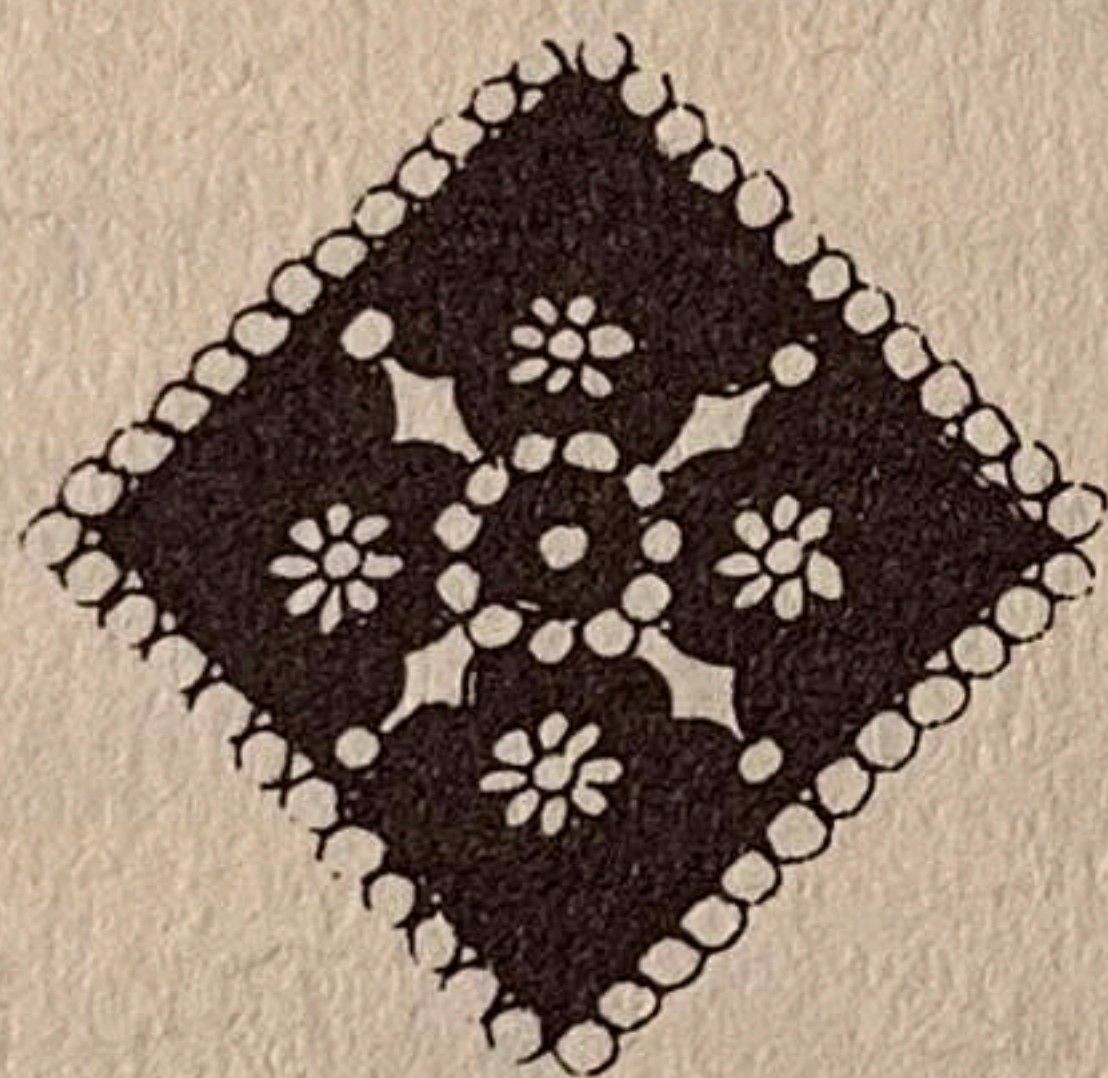


AN  
INTRODUCTION  
TO MEDITATION



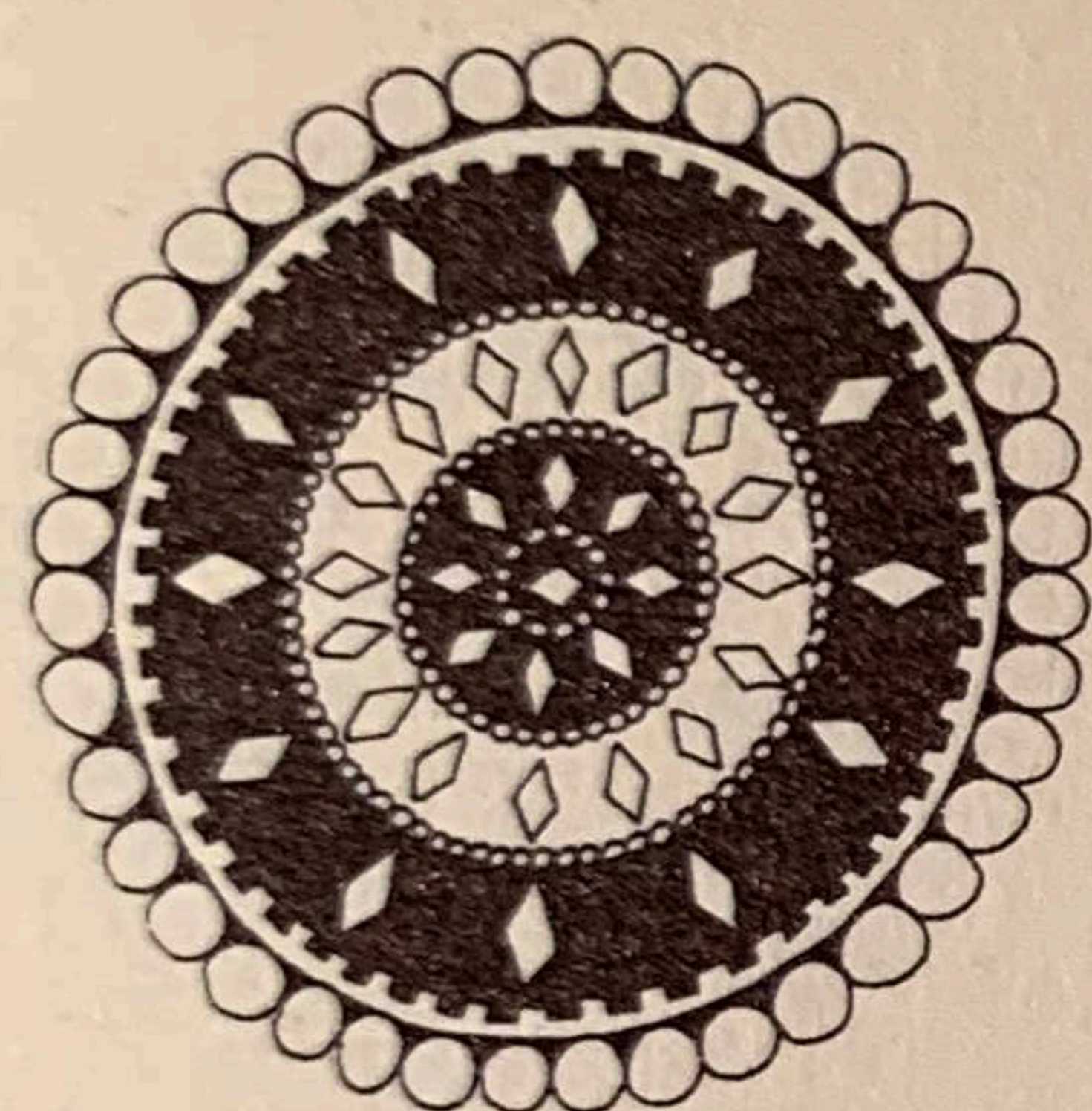
From the teachings of  
Namgyal Rimpoche

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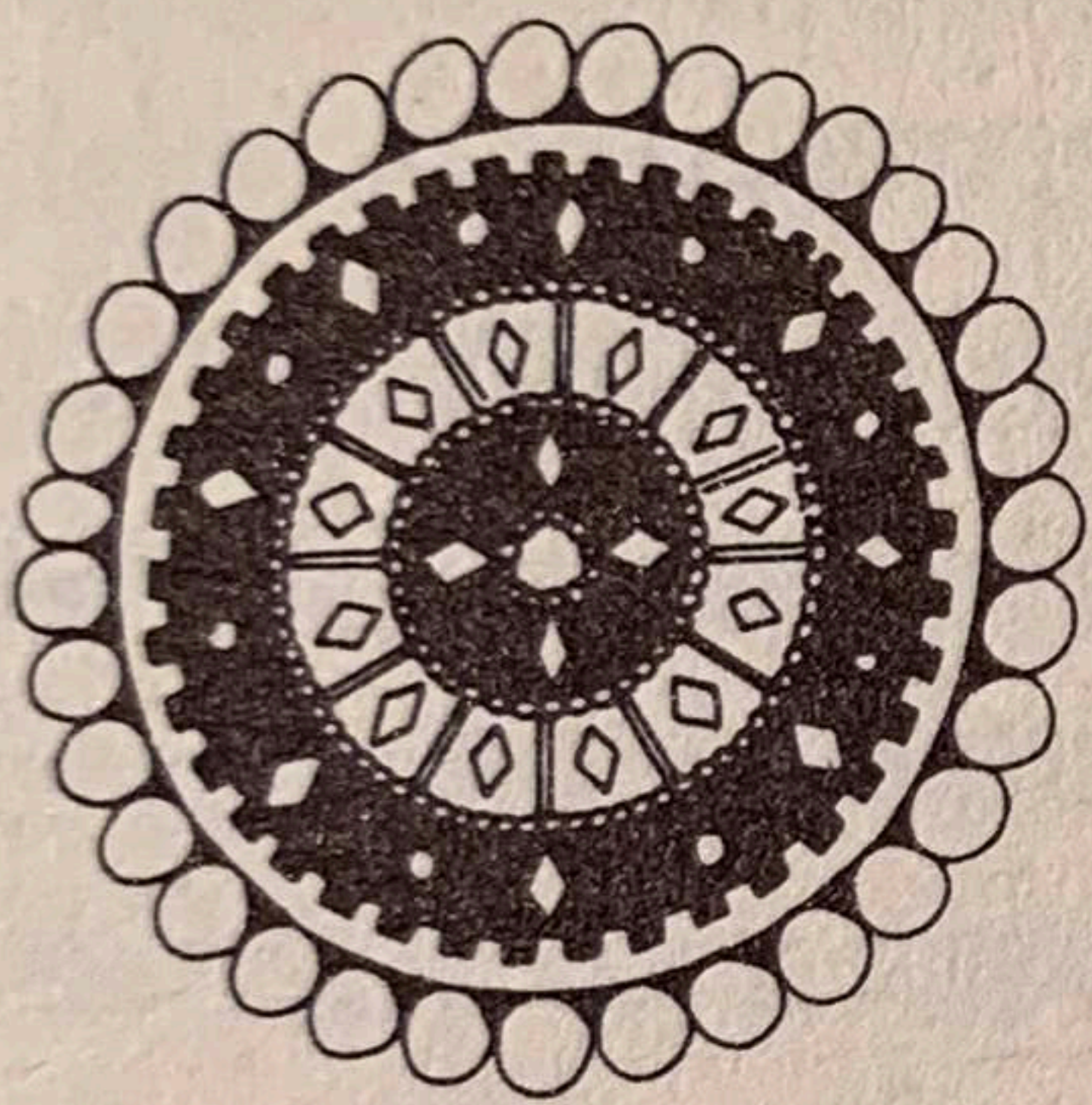
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# THE SEVEN TYPES OF MEDITATION



There are, classically, seven basic types of meditation and any meditation exercise you may do will fit into one or more of these categories. The seven types of meditation are:

- breathing
- visualization
- point (or chakra)
- sound (mantra)
- movement (mudra)
- devotional
- direct essence of mind

The first six of these are classified as *Samatha* (sam-a-tā) or Tranquillity meditations, while the seventh is *Vipassanā* (we-pass-a-nā) or Insight meditation. The difference between the two types of meditation is that the former lead to blissful absorption on the object of meditation (a state called *Jhāna*), while the latter results in the direct seeing of the nature of mind, and therefore leads to knowledge. In fact, the two types of meditation are not separate, except in their early stages, as all the samatha meditations are designed to pass into insight. Samatha is involved with the calming of the mind so that when knowledge does come through it can be faced without a

buffer and the consciousness does not rebound into psychically unwholesome states. All Buddhist meditations end in Insight, and the permanent calm that is finally won through meditation is called Nirvāna.

Jhāna means absorption and should not be confused with the experience of Nirvāna, which is something altogether different. Jhāna is still within the realm of Samsāra, or suffering, as it comes into being and must therefore pass away. To cling to a Jhāna is suffering; while you are in this state of absorption, everything is very calm and joyous, but if you come out of it and want to get back, that can be painful. Technically, Jhāna refers to a meditative state, a *jhāna-samādhi* (satori in Zen) marked by ecstasy and direct experiencing. Usually, a Jhāna is triggered by prior concentration on a form, either a set meditation object or simply something beautiful. Walt Whitman, the American nature-mystic and poet, experienced jhāna while contemplating a sunset. These types of jhānas are called *rūpa-jhāna* (rupa means 'form' in Sanskrit), whereas in an *arūpa-jhāna* nothing sets it off (a-rūpa means 'not-form', formless), they are more an uplift into the God presence, an idea, a concept without a boundary. In an *arūpa-jhāna*, the consciousness opens to experience space — eventually universally-encompassing space — before passing on to the experience of the Void, then to the Great Abyss, then to Neither-Perception-Nor-Non-Perception, and only *then* to the experience of Nirvāna, the Plenum Void.

*All form is there, but formless*

*All things are there, but insubstantial*

*Forming is emptying; emptying is forming*

*This is the Teaching of the Heart Sutra.*

So you can see that there is a great deal of difference between practising meditation — sitting there, doing the exercise; then perhaps undergoing an actual meditation experience; and the final awakening, *Sammā-Sambodhi*, the complete realization of what has been called Cosmic Consciousness.

When you begin in meditation you are actually practicing contemplation. Only later, when the mind opens, do you actually meditate and even then you are not meditating because there is no 'you' there at that moment to do anything.

But in the beginning you need lots of form, discipline, many questions posed. This is called the formal prayer level, and although the teacher knows that he is setting you an artificial task there is a good reason for it; the mind needs to be set off in a certain direction. At Mount Athos, a monastery on an island off the coast of Greece, prayers were said to the beat of the heart, the monks concentrating on the warmth and flickering of that chakra as they recited the Jesus Prayer. They would keep on this way for many months and with constant discipline until one day the heart would suddenly open and they would be overwhelmed by the experience of the Love of God. You too need this form and discipline to give stability to the mind, before the intuitive leap can be made.

You need to develop a high degree of patience (the third of the ten Pāramis or types of Morality in Buddhism) especially in the early stages of your work. You need discipline to avoid being drowned or eaten up by the Anima, the unconscious forces of the psyche. Form allows you to fence off areas so you can isolate certain topics for a greater depth of study. This is the Cancer principle, represented by the Chariot card in the Tarot, and also by the castle pictured in the Moon card of that deck. You need the vehicle, the raft, to take you to the other shore; form is your castle and without it you would become too vulnerable. But it is equally important to know at what point you can drop the form and abandon the raft. The moment you touch the other shore you no longer need it, in fact it would be just a burden on your back to try to carry it any further. That would be pointless. You have no time when God comes, you just know that the house must be abandoned for the straight ascent. The body will remain, however, so you can come back and share the experience with others. You will want the form again. This going out and the return is contained in and suggested by the mantra OM MANI PADME

HŪNG of Chenreizi, the Compassionate Bodhisattva of Tibet. The body is the temple with the jewel at its heart, and meditation is the way to realize the jewel while in the midst of this life.

Of course, you are all bound to awaken, the whole evolutionary push of the universe is driving you towards that. If you meditate for just one month in this lifetime you will achieve the awakening while in the Bardo state after death, but we want you to do this now so that you are able to help all beings through the awakened power of your compassion. You can attain the Path in just one week of full and complete awareness and it will come with calm and complete certitude. You need awareness above all, visualisation exercises alone will not do it. These are only an aid to garner concentration.

You must therefore view meditation as something important. Each time you meditate you hasten the moment of awakening just a little bit closer, whether you consciously know it or not. Each session of applied concentration brings its small but significant breakthroughs in consciousness and you will soon start to become aware of these. As your experience of meditation increases you will be able to sort out and classify the events and increase your understanding of dharma. Thus you will come to recognize the signs and stages of unfolding on the Path to Awakening.