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Meditation

PRIMER

by Sokuzan

Dedicated to My Root Teacher  
*The Vidyadhara*  
*Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche,*  
*Dorje Dradul of Mukpo*

and

My Zen Master  
*Kobun Chino Roshi*

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## Introduction

This small book of talks arose because there seemed to be a need to express and repeat what shikantaza, or *just basically sitting*, is all about. Sometimes this *just basically holding still and looking* is preceded by creation or formation practices as in the Vajrayana Tibetan Buddhist traditions—creation/completion or forming complicated mandalas, images, deities, seed syllables, and doing mantras before one eventually dissolves those images back into oneself and rests in the completion stage called mahamudra or dzogchen.

In shikantaza, the creation part is your life—stories, images, and forms that you have been creating all day long. The completion stage is just observing, resting in space. You might need a lot more of this—just holding very still and seeing what arises without adding to it—very difficult to do because when we sit down and hold still, we see just how much we add. Rather than realize this as a necessary stage, we start to doubt ourselves thinking, “There’s something wrong. I need to do something differently. I need to do this. I need to do

that.”

From my point of view, having done both creation/completion stages in the Kagyu and Shambhala Tibetan traditions and shikantaza or zazen in the Soto Zen tradition, I feel that, though one may need to go to the creation/completion stages of the Vajrayana traditions, it may not always be necessary to do that. And only *you* will really know.

So this little book is meant to reinforce, repeat, and help you dig a nice, deep groove—in the awareness of how to do this, in the recipe of how to do this, in the protocol of how to do this. *Just simply sit and observe.*

Please enjoy these talks, and stay in touch.

~Sokuzan

March, 2014

## **Meditation Instruction**

*"Poem"*

Sit down  
or stand up.  
Walk around.  
Hate yourself.  
Love yourself.  
Ignore yourself.  
Eat candy.  
Judge your neighbor.  
Take off your clothes.  
Sing something.  
Eat something.  
Wring out your washcloth.  
Cancel your trip.  
Plan a meal.  
Plan to plan.  
Wreck your car.  
Lymph your node.  
Eat five radishes.  
Play the lottery.  
Like something.  
Hate something.  
Realize something.  
Jump right.  
Jump left.  
Stop jumping.  
Live normally.  
Live outrageously.  
Leave the room.  
Arm yourself.

Disarm yourself.  
Come to no conclusion.

Forget everything I said.

*Just Observe. . .*



## **Meditation Instruction #1**

### *“The Train of Thought.”*

Please face the wall.

Place your hands either on your knees or with the left hand on top of the right, thumbs just barely touching, forming an oval between your thumbs and first fingers. Either way is fine. Hold the back very, very straight without being rigid as if a string were pulling you upward by the top of your head—a very imaginative pull from the top of your head to straighten out your spine. Here again, not to be rigid but just to be very straight and very attentive to whatever is occurring in the body and the mind. Just observing.

Like sitting in a train station, you are watching the trains come and go—you could say, the “train of thought” coming and going. Don't board the train. And if you

find yourself spontaneously getting on the train of thought and going into a memory of the past, daydream of the future, judgments, evaluations, hope and fear, little stories about yourself and your life, about what you are doing, about what you should do, about what you should have done, what you shouldn't have done. *Please*, do not meddle with those stories. Don't stop them. Do not fuel them. And do not look away from them. Just observe. You are glued to that bench in the train station for a few moments. Just observe.

If you are holding extremely still, very still without being rigid, with all of your senses open, then for you personally, *you personally*—not the person next to you—whatever arises in your mind is exactly what you need to see *at this particular place* in your lifetime, this very moment in the whole process of birth, aging, sickness, and death. Just observe.

If you really see fundamentally not only on the cushion but in your everyday life, if you really see fundamentally

what this is, you will never make another decision again. You will never have a fork in the road. You will see completely and totally what it is you need to do at each moment. Without hope and fear. Completely. Thoroughly. You will be genuine. You will be yourself. Just observe. Do this for a few years. You can't change the course of a comet by blowing on it. You have to *be* the comet. You have to fully embody who you are—all of your negativity and all of your positivity, all of your thoughts, emotions, dreams, nightmares. Fundamentally and totally, *be genuine!* Don't deceive yourself. And when you deceive yourself, be aware that you are deceiving yourself.

Just observe. (Bell)

## Sokuzan's Basic Recipe

### *The Sitting Practice of Meditation or*

### Shikantaza: "Just Precisely This."

*After over forty years, my study and practice of sitting meditation can be distilled to just precisely this: "Sit down, and look at the mind. Strengthen the Awareness of that which sees—not that which thinks." Although I do not promise becoming more peaceful, less aggressive, more loving, less suffering, I can promise this: you will never regret the time you have spent sitting down and looking at your mind. Good Luck!*

#### **Ingredients:**

1 willing student who is inspired to see the truth for himself or herself  
1 hour, more or less, of time  
1 meditation cushion (or chair or bench)  
1 quiet place with a blank wall  
1 bell and striker (gong, glass of water and a spoon or chopstick, or other suitable instrument for initiating the sitting period; a snap of the fingers can also provide the starting and stopping sound)

#### *Optional:*

1 candle  
1 stick of incense

1. Light the candle and incense, if desired.
2. Bow to the cushion; turn and bow to the center of the room, the world.
3. Sit down on the cushion facing the wall.

4. All the senses are open—in particular the eyes.
5. Strike the bell.
6. Place your hands either on your knees or in cosmic mudra with the left hand on top of the right, thumbs just barely touching forming an oval between your thumbs and first fingers.
7. Hold the body very, very still, back straight without being rigid as if a string were pulling you upward by the top of your head.
8. Just observe. Whatever arises in the six sense fields—the sense of sound, the sense of smell, sight, taste, touch, thought—just observe.

If you are holding very, very still without being rigid, all of your senses are open, and if you are endeavoring to just observe, you are doing this correctly. Whatever arises in your mind, don't add, don't subtract, and don't look away. Just observe. There is nothing to correct. There is nothing to adjust. There is just this. Just observe.

Bake for 1 hour, more or less, or until done. Strike the bell to end your sitting practice.