



Dhyana and Emptiness

Led by Tejananda

About the retreat

From the earliest days, the main meditative approach to awakening in Buddhism has combined the cultivation of calmness of mind (shamatha) and mental absorption (dhyana) with the cultivation of liberating insight (vipashyana).

Accessing dhyana seems very natural for some people and a complete mystery to others. On this retreat, Tejananda will be suggesting approaches that people have found to be helpful and effective. This may involve questioning both our own views and some of what the tradition has to say about dhyana practice. We'll proceed on the basis of asking 'What, in our experience, is and is not actually helpful?'

By becoming alive to the immediacy of our sensate body experience, resources for entering absorption can be discovered as already present – just waiting to be noticed. We'll explore this in direct experience by delving into the relation between body and breath and the relation between these and boundless love (metta).

We'll then explore these further in the context of awareness and insight, using a progression of insight contemplations from the Buddha's Shorter Discourse on Emptiness. This starts from our ordinary everyday experience and proceeds into the formless spheres of boundless space, consciousness and no-thingness. This may sound very 'advanced' but these spheres are surprisingly accessible and the approach to emptiness is less analytical and more experiential than many of those developed in later Mahayana schools. It doesn't matter how far through this progression we manage to get – emptiness is emptiness and discovering it in relation to our ordinary experience now can be quite profound enough!

This retreat is suitable for people with at least six months regular meditation practice and who have attended at least one full weeks retreat before.

Is there anything special I need to bring?

Comfortable, loose clothing for meditation.

What can you expect from the programme?

This is a silent meditation retreat. Participants should expect to go into silence on the first full day and come out of silence on the last full day. The retreat day will start with open practice where you can do sitting or walking meditation according to your own needs and rhythms. Open practice will continue through the day in between the programmed shrine room activities, so you can do more sitting or walking practice if you wish. The programmed activities, including input, interactive sessions with Tejananda and devotional practice will



involve around 5 – 6 hours in the shrine room a day. There will be opportunities for meditation reviews and personal yoga practice.

About the retreat team

Tejananda has been part of the resident / teaching team at Vajraloka retreat centre in Wales since 1995 and became chairman of the centre in 2001. In meditation and Dharma practice he is particularly inspired by the formless meditations of the Tibetan Mahamudra and Dzogchen traditions. He has written a book introducing the fundamentals of Buddhism 'The Buddhist Path to Awakening' and taught meditation and Dharma in many parts of the UK, Europe, Australasia and the USA.

Tejananda will be supported on this retreat by other experienced meditation teachers.