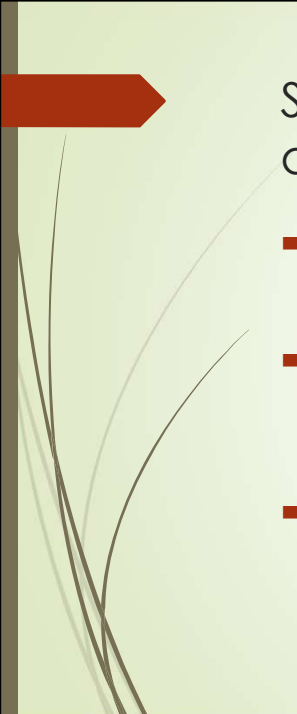




Shiné – Traditional Tibetan Śamatha Meditation

THE NINE STAGES (OF MENTAL SETTING) TO CALM ABIDING

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Shiné Meditation (śamatha or calm-abiding)

- The Tibetan term *Shiné* is translated into English as either "calm-abiding" or "serenity," and its Sanskrit equivalent is *śamatha*.
- The syllable "Shi" means "to pacify," "to calm," or "peace," referring to the quieting of mental agitation and distractions caused by both external and internal phenomena.
- The second syllable "Né" means "to abide" or "to remain," indicating a stable and continuous presence of mind resting in calm.



Shiné Meditation

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- The aim of this type of meditation is to train attention,
 - attain mental stability,
 - and maintain continuous awareness.



Shiné Meditation

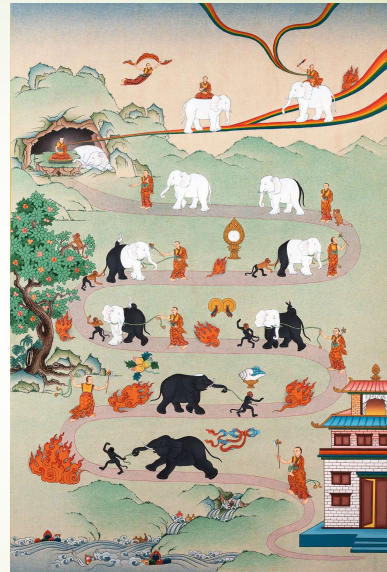
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- **Calm-abiding meditation** involves concentrating fully on a single object, maintaining steady and relaxed focus.
 - In contrast, insight meditation (*vipashyanā*) involves a deep investigation of the object in order to gain a clear understanding of its nature.
 - While insight meditation is often used to explore the nature of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), it can also be applied to a wide range of phenomena.
 - Likewise, **calm-abiding meditation** (*śamatha*) isn't limited to one type of object—it can be practiced by focusing on anything from a physical object like a stone, to a conceptual object like emptiness, or even mental states such as anger.

SHINÉ MEDITATION

Introduction to the Samatha Meditation Path Thangka

This traditional Tibetan thangka illustrates the meditative path of *śamatha*, or calm-abiding meditation. It visually represents the progressive stages of training the mind, moving from distraction and restlessness toward focused attention and mental stability. The **winding path** depicts the gradual refinement of attention, culminating in effortless concentration and meditative absorption. The **monk** represents the meditator.

Rooted in classical Buddhist psychology, this imagery serves both as a contemplative aid and as a pedagogical tool for understanding the inner dynamics of attention, effort, and awareness.



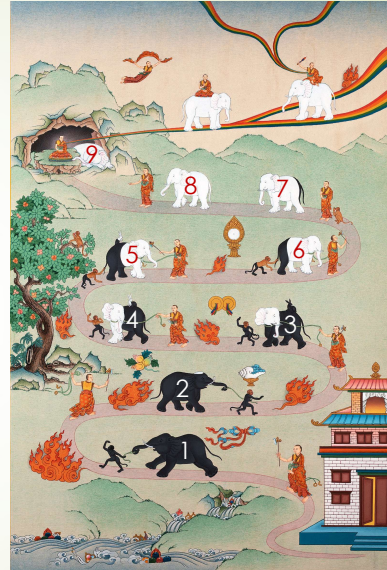
32 SHINÉ NAVIGATION POINTS

- The Nine Stages of Mental Setting
- The Six Powers
- The Four Levels of Mental Engagement
- The Five Faults
- The Eight Antidotes



32 SHINÉ NAVIGATION POINTS – the nine stages of mental setting

The **elephant** symbolizes the **mind**—initially dark and unruly, becoming lighter and more disciplined over time.



32 SHINÉ NAVIGATION POINTS – the nine stages of mental setting

Preliminary Stage - The stage where we set intentions, prepare body and mind, and create the right conditions before starting meditation.

- 1 Setting the Mind
- 2 Continuously Setting the Mind
- 3 Fixing and Resetting the Mind
- 4 Close Setting of the Mind
- 5 Controlled Setting of the Mind
- 6 Pacification of the Mind
- 7 Thorough Pacification of the Mind
- 8 Making the Mind Single-Pointed
- 9 Setting the Mind in Equipose



32 SHINÉ NAVIGATION POINTS – the nine stages of mental setting

Stage 1: Setting the Mind — We place the mind on the object, but focus is weak and brief.

Stage 2: Continuous Setting — Focus lasts a bit longer, though still unstable.

Stage 3: Fixing and Resetting — We notice when focus is lost and bring attention back.

Stage 4: Close Setting — Mindfulness strengthens; we stay focused most of the time.

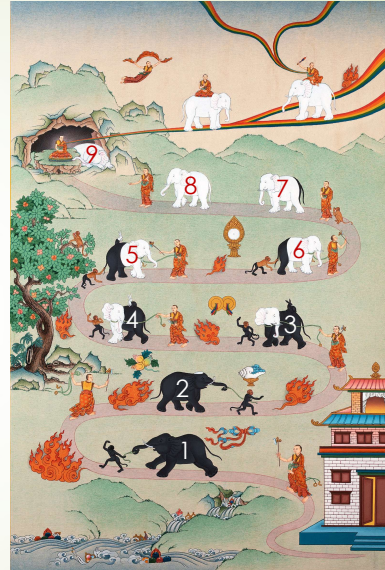
Stage 5: Controlled Setting — Gross distractions stop; subtle laxity becomes the challenge.

Stage 6: Pacifying the Mind — We begin to catch laxity or excitement before they arise.

Stage 7: Thorough Pacification — Subtle distractions are easily calmed, though effort is still needed.

Stage 8: Single-Pointed Mind — Only slight effort at the start; the mind stays steady.

Stage 9: Mind in Equipoise — Focus remains effortlessly stable; true Shiné is near, bringing bliss of body and mind.

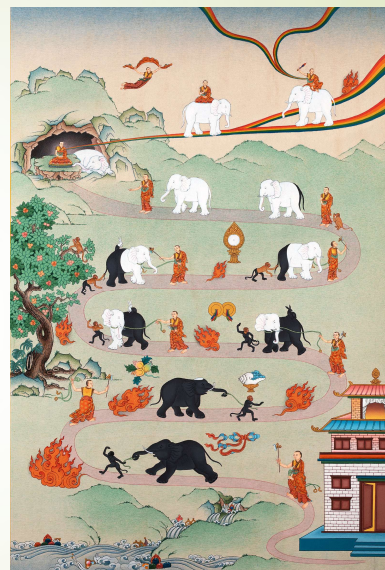


32 SHINÉ NAVIGATION POINTS – the six powers

Each curve in the path signifies the application of a **mental power** that helps us move forward.

Each **mental power** is a quality we can cultivate within ourselves. Developing the power associated with a particular stage helps us reach that stage, while also laying the foundation for developing the next power.

All **nine stages** contain elements of every power. Identifying a certain power with a particular stage simply highlights the **key mental strength** needed most at that point in the journey.



32 SHINÉ NAVIGATION POINTS – the six powers

	SIX POWERS	CORRESPONDING STAGES
1	Hearing	1
2	Contemplation	2
3	Mindfulness	3 & 4
4	Introspective Awareness	5 & 6
5	Enthusiastic Perseverance	7 & 8
6	Thorough Familiarization	9



32 SHINÉ NAVIGATION POINTS – the six powers

The **rope** illustrates the power of **mindfulness**.

The **elephant goad** (taming hook) represents **introspective awareness**, which helps monitor and correct the mind.



32 SHINÉ NAVIGATION POINTS – the four levels of mental engagement

	THE FOUR TYPES OF MENTAL ENGAGEMENT	CORRESPONDING STAGES
1	Tightly Focused Mental Engagement	1 & 2
2	Interrupted Mental Engagement	3 until 7
3	Uninterrupted Mental Engagement	8
4	Spontaneous Mental Engagement	9



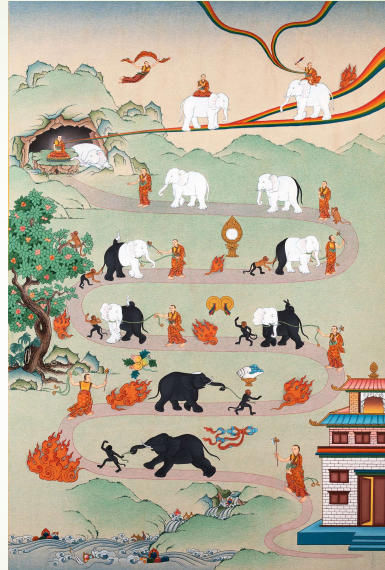
32 SHINÉ NAVIGATION POINTS – the five faults

In meditation, we must learn to distinguish helpful experiences from **inner obstacles**. There are five such mental faults that block our progress. To overcome them, we apply eight antidotes — but first, we need to recognize these faults when they appear.



32 SHINÉ NAVIGATION POINTS – the five faults

- 1 Laziness
- 2 Forgetfulness (Both of the Instructions and the Object of Focus)
- 3 Laxity and Excitement
- 4 Non-Application of the Antidotes
- 5 Over-Application of the Antidotes



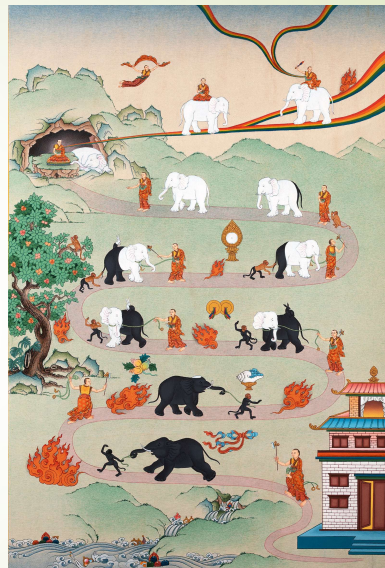
32 SHINÉ NAVIGATION POINTS – the five faults

Fault 1: When stabilizing meditation, three forms of **laziness** may arise:

Physical laziness: A heavy, obvious lethargy — wanting only to rest or sleep, with little interest in activity. It's easy to spot because it's so clear.

Mental laziness: A subtle sense of inadequacy — thinking "*I can't do this*", leading to procrastination and avoidance. Harder to recognize and overcome.

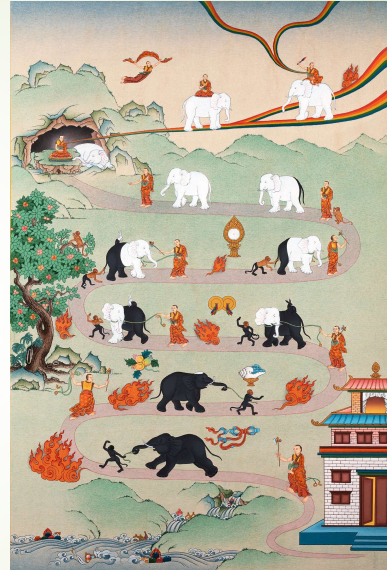
Intelligent (or frivolous) laziness: Staying busy with work, social life, or tasks, using busyness as an excuse to delay meditation. This subtle form is common and tricky to notice.



32 SHINÉ NAVIGATION POINTS – the five faults

Fault 2: Forgetfulness

This is losing mindfulness of the instructions or object of meditation. Without remembering how to practice or what to focus on, concentration is lost. Distraction by sensory input or thoughts often causes this, especially in early meditation stages.



32 SHINÉ NAVIGATION POINTS – the five faults

Fault 3: There are two kinds of **laxity** in meditation:

Gross laxity: The mind stays on the object but lacks clarity and strength, feeling dull or heavy, almost as if about to forget the object. A severe form is lethargy, where mind and body feel heavy, concentration fades, and even dreams may arise. This is common in early practice.

Subtle laxity: The mind holds the object with stability and clarity, but without enough sharpness or intensity. It feels slightly too relaxed, making it hard to notice. This is risky because it mimics good meditation, but the mind is slightly dull, so no effort is made to improve.



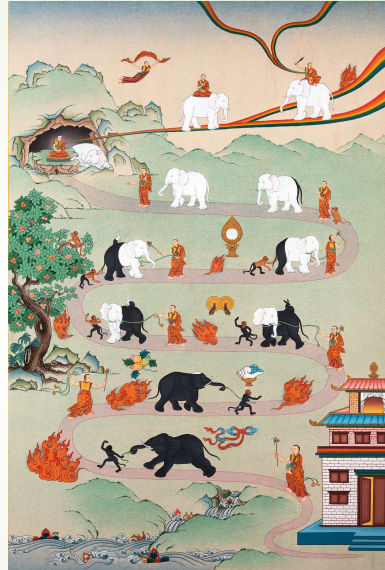
32 SHINÉ NAVIGATION POINTS – the five faults

Fault 3: There are two types of **excitement** in meditation:

Gross excitement: The mind completely leaves the meditation object and becomes caught up in thoughts of something desirable (like food, success, or a person), usually when mental energy is too high.

Subtle excitement: The object of meditation remains, but part of the mind drifts toward pleasant thoughts, like a hidden current beneath stable concentration. This form is harder to detect because stability and clarity seem intact, but attachment quietly pulls the mind away, often when focus is too tight.

These forms of excitement, like the two types of laxity, are key examples of inner distractions that we must learn to recognize and overcome.



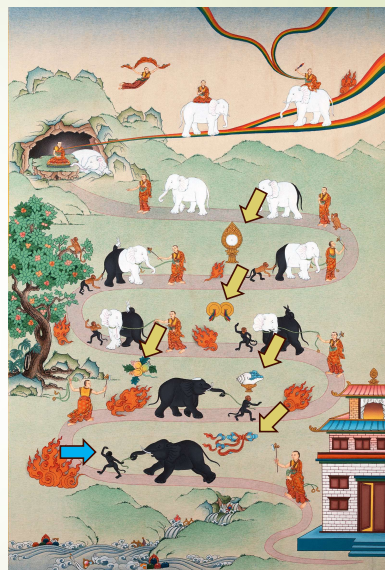
32 SHINÉ NAVIGATION POINTS

The **monkey** stands for mental distractions. ➡

The **five sense objects** signify distractions related to sensory pleasures.

The five sensory objects symbolize **sources of distraction**. ➡

1. The **scarf (kata)** stands for the sense of **touch**.
2. The **fruit** symbolizes the sense of **taste**.
3. The **conch filled with perfume** represents the sense of **smell**.
4. The **cymbals** correspond to **hearing**.
5. The **mirror** signifies the sense of **vision**.

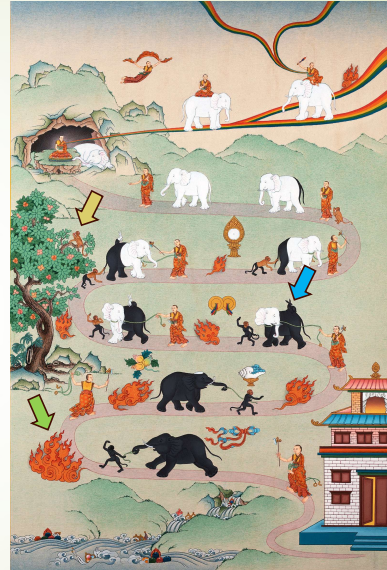


32 SHINÉ NAVIGATION POINTS

The **rabbit** depicts subtle mental dullness or laxity. →

The **monkey picking fruit** along the path shows how even virtuous thoughts can become distractions during calm-abiding meditation and must be set aside—though such thoughts are generally positive outside of meditation. →

The **fire** illustrates the effort applied—its size changes to reflect how the level of effort needed shifts at different stages of the practice. →



32 SHINÉ NAVIGATION POINTS – the five faults

Fault 4: Non-Application of Antidotes

This is when we fail to apply the needed remedy, even though we notice laxity or excitement. Without addressing these faults, meditation won't progress.

Fault 5: Over-Application of Antidotes

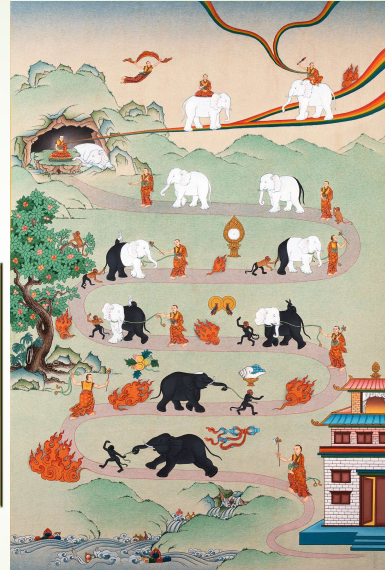
This happens when we use antidotes unnecessarily—when laxity or excitement isn't present or has already passed. Overuse disturbs the mind, like correcting a child who's done nothing wrong.

To deepen meditation, we must recognize these five faults and apply the eight antidotes appropriately.



32 SHINÉ NAVIGATION POINTS – the eight antidotes

	THE FIVE FAULTS	THE EIGHT ANTIDOTES
1	Laziness	Faith, Aspiration, Effort, Pliancy
2	Forgetfulness	Recollection (Memory)
3	Laxity and Excitement	Introspective Awareness
4	Non-Application of the Antidotes	Application of the Antidotes
5	Over-Application of the Antidotes	Equanimity



9 STAGES OF MENTAL SETTING	6 POWERS TO CULTIVATE	4 STAGE OF MENTAL ENGAGEMENT	5 MAIN FAULT/ OBSTACLE TO OVERCOME	8 MAIN ANTIDOTE	WHAT TO ACCOMPLISH	DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STAGES	MAIN FOCUS
Preliminary stages			Laziness	Faith, Aspiration, Effort, Pliancy			
1 Setting the mind	Hearing	Tightly focussed mental engagement	Forgetfulness (instructions, object and focus)	Recollection (memory)	Identify the meditation object and place your attention on it	1-> 2: The duration of mental stability increases	Reduce our active mind
2 Continuously setting the mind	Contemplation	Tightly focussed mental engagement	Forgetfulness (instructions, object and focus)	Recollection (memory)	Remain on the object a little longer	2-> 3: There are fewer distracting thoughts, and those that do arise do not endure as long. We are able to bring our focus back to the object of meditation due to the power of mindfulness.	Reduce our active mind
3 Fixing and resettting the mind	Mindfulness	Interrupted mental engagement	Forgetfulness (instructions, object and focus)	Recollection (memory)	Recognize when the object has been lost and reset attention on it	3->4: What we bring back we don't allow ourselves to lose again.	Reduce our active mind
4 Close setting of the mind	Mindfulness	Interrupted mental engagement	Gross excitement and Gross Lazity	Introspective Awareness	Strengthen the mindfulness so you can remain on the object longer without distraction	4->5: Gross laxity no longer arises. Biggest danger is subtle laxity.	Reduce our Dull mind
5 Controlled setting of the mind	Introspective awareness	Interrupted mental engagement	Subtle Lazity	Introspective Awareness	Stop wandering so you can remain on the object almost continuously	5->6: Subtle excitement arises less and there is less need to be aware of subtle laxity.	Reduce our Dull mind
6 Pacification of the mind	Introspective awareness	Interrupted mental engagement	Subtle Excitement and Subtle Lazity	Introspective Awareness	Abandon all resistance to concentration; identify dullness and agitation mind before they arise	6->7: Laxity and excitement can no longer hinder the Meditation because we can immediately stop them when they arise. We infidely make corrections. This requires effort in waves.	Reduce our effort
7 Thorough pacification of the mind	Enthusiastic perseverance	Interrupted mental engagement	Non-application of the antidotes	Application of the antidotes	Easily pacify subtle afflictions	7->8: We apply only effort at the beginning of the session. Then, neither laxity nor excitement arises because our effort remains stable.	Reduce our effort
8 Making the mind single-pointed	Enthusiastic perseverance	Uninterrupted mental engagement	Over application of the Antidotes	Equanimity	Only a little effort is needed at the beginning of the session, guard against agitation and dull mind.	8->9: No effort is needed. Energy is still required, but it does not cost real effort to expend.	Reduce our effort
9 Setting the mind in Equipoise	Thorough Familiarization	Spontaneous Mental engagement		Pliancy	No effort is needed to maintain mindfulness and introspective awareness mind habitually remains single-pointed		Effortless, Relaxation, but with full awareness

Shiné Meditation

- Upon reaching the ninth stage, it's important to keep meditating until a state of both mental and physical bliss is attained—this is known as **genuine Shiné**.

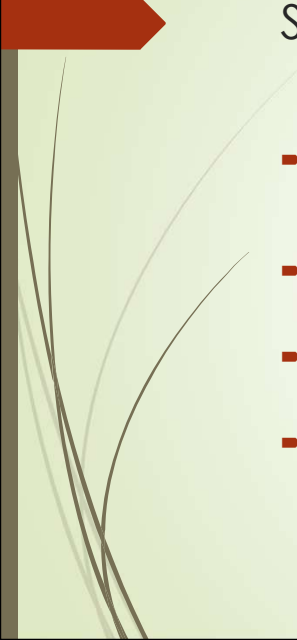
32 SHINÉ NAVIGATION POINTS

The **flying monk** indicates a state of bodily bliss.

The **white elephant** represents mental bliss, and the monk seated on it in meditation posture symbolizes the realization of true Shiné.

The **elephant with the monk holding a sword** shows the highest level of insight meditation (Lhaktong), where emptiness is used as the object of meditation.





Shiné Meditation –Personal reflection

- The method begins not with trying to eliminate thoughts, as is quite common in the West, but simply with learning to stay—again and again—with one object. It's deceptively simple, yet profoundly challenging.
- The structure of the practice feels diagnostic—you can observe which stage your mind is in and adjust your approach accordingly. That makes it both practical and precise.
- The progression of the nine stages makes it clear that meditation is not a single-point achievement, but a gradual training of the mind—much like strengthening a muscle.
- It surprised me that something as ancient as this method aligns so well with contemporary cognitive science on attention and the brainwave training of the Awakened Mind Method.