

Study Group - "Liberation *in the Palm of Your Hand*"

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ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལམ་གྱི་ལམ་གྱི་བཅའ་བུ་



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Bodhicitta is wishing for the state of buddhahood for the sake of all beings. You should think that you are listening to this teaching on the lam rim to fulfil that aspiration, and for the same reason think of putting this lam rim teaching into practice.

We have been discussing the topic of accumulating suitable conditions for meditating to achieve the state of calm abiding.

The first suitable condition is the right place, which we learnt should have five characteristics. The remaining suitable conditions are ones, which you have to create for yourself. In other words if you have not created these suitable conditions of having less desire and so forth for yourself, then the first suitable condition of the finding a suitable place with all the right resources is of no use at all.

422.331.211.5 Abandoning the Demands of Society

བྱུང་མང་པོའི་འདྲ་འཛིན་ཡོངས་སུ་སྤང་བ།

Having discussed the suitable conditions of having less desire, having contentment and having pure moral ethics, we now turn to the condition of abandoning the multiple distracting activities of daily life. To achieve the single-pointed state of concentration of calm abiding it is essential that we impose some discipline on our mind and body, in terms of isolating ourselves both mentally and physically from all distracting activities.

The conditions of having less desires, achieving contentment and having pure morality are to remove the gross mental distractions caused by external activities and objects from our mind. With worldly activities our mind is naturally drawn to delusions such as desire and hatred. Then our mind experiences restlessness as it endlessly worries about these worldly and distracting activities, and meditation becomes so much harder.

If we think of the influence on our mind of the external distractions caused by daily life, we can see the tracks that they leave as they cause our mind to wander. Then we can see how easily we waste our time day and night, month after month, year after year, in activities which bring no meaning or purpose to our life. For instance how much time do we waste in idle gossip or reading worldly texts purely to entertain ourselves and fill in time? Think of how many things we do just to fill in time. When we really honestly think about how we use our time, and then think about how we expect to derive some automatic benefit from the Dharma that we are studying, then it is not surprising that we see so little benefit in terms of calming our mind. The truth is that to achieve the benefits we seek we have to apply the Dharma to our actions.

422.331.211.6 Abandoning Conceptual Thoughts Such As Desire

འདོད་པ་ལ་སོགས་པའི་རྣམ་རྟོག་ཡོངས་སུ་སྤང་བ།

If, on the other hand, we think of having less desire and mental distraction in our mind, then that means that there are fewer worries and things to do. This is more conducive to enabling our mind to pursue meditation practice. We should try to think that as part of our practice to achieve the state of calm abiding we have to minimise desire and mental distraction. In order to do this we should try to contemplate death and impermanence, and the shortcomings of cyclic existence. Just contemplating the various topics from the teachings of the small and medium stages of the path can help us to overcome or reduce, for instance, attachment towards this life and its superficial pleasures. This can help us to settle and calm our mind.

The main source of all immediate problems and the source of mental distractions is desire and hatred. We should try to learn that there is no good basis for desire or hatred towards any object. In other words there is no basis for any particular object to be perceived as very attractive and appealing, or very ugly and unappealing. Why? Because this perception of the perceived object as being beautiful or ugly is just a projection of our own mind due to some immediate conditions. When we look into our mind we see that the way we view things is always changing in that what we now see as very beautiful may in the next moment appear to be very ugly. If we think back over the last year, we can see how much our perceptions of the various objects in our mind have fluctuated between good and bad, ugly and beautiful.

Try to understand that having desire for a particular object is no reason to grasp at that object very strongly. Likewise for hatred or aversion: try to understand that there is no concrete reason for that hatred, and that it is just the way that you are perceiving things. We have to overcome desire and hatred, because without doing so we cannot find any peace, happiness or joy in our mind, and then we cannot rest. Normally of course, when we feel disturbed or unhappy we do not check our minds, and so we do not consider that it is because there is some desire or hatred in our mind. Rather we simply try to blame it on to someone else, who is usually someone close to us. In fact if we take a close look at the cause of our unhappiness and restlessness, then we can see that the real cause is desire or hatred.

In relationships we may develop an interest in another person because they seem to be more appealing, more

friendly, more beautiful or more handsome than one's existing friend, then out of this you somehow mistreat and abuse your existing friend. Although this conflict appears at first glance to be in our relationship, we are only perceiving it at a superficial level, i.e. with one's friend or partner, and are not looking to the deeper causes of our own perceptions and grasping as a result of a deluded mind. We should try to understand that we must always keep a check on desire and hatred and overcome it, because if we do not do so then we can accumulate a great many negative actions. We should also try to understand that the one who has to bear the result of these negative actions is ourself - that is the truth of the law of karma, the law of cause and effect which applies to all beings whether or not they accept the Dharma. You have to bear the result of your own actions, and the result of negative actions is misery and suffering.

This concludes the topic Suitable Conditions For Achieving Calm Abiding.

422.331.212 The Actual Way To Achieve Calm Abiding

ཞི་གནས་སྐྱབ་ཚུལ་དངོས།

In his text *Discriminating Between the Extremes and the Middle Way*, Maitreya Buddha said that calm abiding is achieved by applying the eight remedies or the opponent forces to the five obstacles.

In achieving calm abiding it is also important to know the right physical meditation posture, which is generally described as the posture of Vairochana Buddha, and which has seven or eight features, depending on whether or not you include counting the breath.

The five main obstacles are:

1. Laziness
2. Forgetfulness
3. Mental sinking and excitement. When we talk of there being five obstacles to meditation, these two are counted as one, however in Lama Tsong Khapa's text *The Great Exposition*, it says that you can sometimes count mental sinking and excitement as two, which makes six obstacles.
4. Not applying the antidote
5. Over-applying the antidote

422.331.212.1 The Obstacle Of Laziness

ཉེས་པ་དང་པོ་ལོལ།

To oppose the five obstacles there are eight remedies. Of these eight the first four remedies are the opponent forces to the first obstacle of laziness. The first four of the eight remedies are:

1. Faith in the benefit of concentration
2. Aspiration or interest in achieving single-pointed concentration
3. Joyous effort in single-pointed concentration
4. Pliancy which is the result of single-pointed concentration

It is imperative to first overcome laziness which is the main obstacle single-pointed concentration. Laziness is the first of the five obstacles because it is the one which initially prevents us from engaging in single-pointed concentration meditation. Laziness must also be counteracted even after one has begun pursuing single-

pointed concentration, otherwise one may soon lose interest and stop meditating. Until the end result is achieved laziness is a perpetual obstacle, and one needs to be constantly alert to its presence.

The fourth remedy to laziness is the bliss of pliancy, which is also the result of single-pointed concentration. When you achieve that pliancy of mental and physical suppleness you have totally removed laziness from your mind. Mentally there is some increase of bliss, and along with that your mind becomes very serviceable, in the sense that you have gained full control over it. With physical pliancy there is physical suppleness and bliss in the body, making it very serviceable, so that physically nothing hinders or impairs one in achieving single-pointed concentration. By achieving physical and mental pliancy you completely overcome laziness.

Obviously achieving the state of mental and physical pliancy is dependent upon making an effort, which means having joyous effort, or a strong determination to be diligent and make a continuous effort to achieve single-pointed concentration. How can one generate joyous effort? It has to come from the strong aspiration to achieve single-pointed concentration, which in turn comes from faith, and an understanding of the benefits of single-pointed concentration.

Benefits of Single-pointed Concentration

The most important thing is to develop the understanding of the benefits of single-pointed concentration.

1. As said before, one benefit is gaining the mental and physical pliancy through which one experiences bliss in mind and body.
2. It is said one can then place one's mind on objects, without any movement, as stable as a mountain.
3. One can release the mind, to roam far and wide.
4. One can achieve special insight if one analyses, and utilises one's wisdom to investigate and analyse the truth, and then conjoins this with calm abiding. As a benefit of achieving special insight one can overcome all the manifested mental delusions.
5. Furthermore, if one continues this meditation of the union of calm abiding and special insight conjoined with skilful means one can even remove the seeds or latencies of mental delusions, and of all the dualistic misconceptions.

Although at the moment we may not have actual experience of mental and physical pliancy, when we practise meditation properly we do experience a substitute for it in the form of mental peace and physical relaxation. Whenever we engage in meditation, we place our mind on the object and remove mental distractions from the mind as much as possible.

Generally, as much as possible, try to understand the benefits, qualities and advantages of achieving single-pointed concentration or calm abiding, and try to contemplate the benefits over and over again, developing this understanding until there is the beginning of serious interest in pursuing single-pointed concentration. When serious interest and aspiration for single-pointed concentration arises then naturally we become more determined and make an effort to pursue it.