

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

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by Sandup Tsering

ལྷོ་ལམ་རིམ་རྒྱུ་ལ་ལག་བཅད་སྤྱོད་པ།



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Generate the bodhicitta motivation, which is to think that these lam rim teachings that we are receiving are to achieve complete enlightenment to benefit all sentient beings. At the same time, generate the motivation to put these teachings into practice to be a cause to achieve the bodhicitta mind.

## 422.331.212 The Actual Means Of Calm Abiding

Last year we completed this topic, which comprises the five faults or obstacles to achieving calm abiding, and the eight remedies to these faults.

## 422.331.213 How to Achieve the Nine Mental States

དེ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་སེམས་གནས་དག་སྤྱོད་པ།

This next main heading, about how to achieve the nine mental abidings, is a very important topic, because it provides a measure of one's progress in achieving calm abiding or, in other words, the degree of concentration achieved.

The nine mental abidings are:

1. Placing the Mind

སེམས་འཛོལ་པ།

2. Continuous Placement

རྒྱུན་དུ་འཛོལ་པ།

3. Patch-like Placement

གྲུབ་ཏེ་འཛོལ་པ།

4. Close Placement

ཉེ་བར་འཛོལ་པ།

5. Controlling The Mind

དུལ་བར་བྱེད་པ།

6. Pacifying

ཞི་བར་བྱེད་པ།

7. Thoroughly Pacifying

རྒྱལ་བར་ཞི་བར་བྱེད་པ།

8. Single-pointed Concentration

ཚུལ་ཅིག་དུ་བྱེད་པ།

9. Placement with Equanimity

མཉམ་བར་འཛོལ་པ།

There are six forces which are the means to achieve these nine mental abidings. If we discuss each one of these mental abidings along with the force which is the main means to achieve that state, then this will give a clearer

understanding of each of these mental abidings.

## 422.331.213.1 Placing the Mind

The literal meaning is closer to 'drawing the mind inward'.

Placing the mind is the first accomplishment of the state of meditative concentration. Having chosen a favourite object such as an image of a deity, one then tries to direct or focus the mind on that object. At this first level one is able to actually place the mind on the given object.

The first mental abiding is said to be achieved mainly through the force of listening or studying. The reason why one is actually able to place the mind on the object, and so to achieve the first mental concentration, is said to be by the virtue of one's study or understanding of the chosen object. This understanding might have been gained through hearing, or through receiving instructions from the guru and so forth. It is said that at the first level, even though one is able to focus the mind on the object, that focus does not come from one's own familiarity with the meditation practice, or from continuous reflection upon the object. Rather one is able to direct the mind to it mainly by just knowing that object. So at the first mental abiding, the level of concentration is sufficient only to be able to tie the mind to the object.

The actual level of mental concentration of the first mental abiding is so weak that it is said that if we investigate and observe our mind, we can see that there are very gross and forceful distractions in our mind, rather than any real concentration on the object. Even though the mental distractions are so great and forceful in the first mental abiding, it is said that just recognising them is the sign of progress rather than any failure. The only reason why one is able to recognise a great deal of mental distraction is because of greater awareness of one's mind.

## 422.331.213.2 Continuous Placement

With the second mental abiding, continuous mental placement, one is not only able to place the mind on the object as in the case of the first mental abiding, but also able to sustain the continuity of that concentration. It is said that the indication of having reached the second mental abiding is when one's mental abiding lasts as long as it takes one to recite a round of the mala or rosary of the six syllable Chenrezig mantra - Om Mani Padme Hung.

Unlike the first mental abiding the level of mental distractions is neither continuous, nor always very strong. Indeed there are both times when there are

mental distractions, and times where there are no mental distractions at all in one's meditation. Overall it is said that in the second mental abiding there are periods when the mental distractions take a rest, and this is the difference from the first mental abiding.

Of the six forces, the second mental abiding is mainly achieved through the force of thinking. This is because one's ability to prolong the length of one's mental abiding is said to be mainly because of one's efforts in trying to familiarise the mind with the object, by contemplating it over and over again.

#### **The Four Types of Mental Attention**

There are four types of mental attentions, which also distinguish the nine mental abidings. For the first two mental abidings, the type of mental attention applied is called forceful attention. Even though, in the first two mental abidings, the level of abiding is interrupted by obstacles, mental sinking or excitement, it is said that we mainly apply forceful attention rather than interrupted attention. This is because the obstacles (mainly mental sinking or excitement) are so great that forceful attention is necessary.

#### **422.331.213.3 Patch-like Placement**

The third mental abiding is called Patch-like Placement, as it is like putting a patch over a hole in a piece of cloth. Compared with the second mental abiding, when you reach the third level the duration of the abiding is longer, and the duration of the mental distractions is shorter. This is because as soon as any mental distraction arises, the meditator can recognise this. Not only that, but the meditator can also immediately apply an antidote to remove it. The result is that the duration of mental abiding is longer.

During the third mental abiding a strong force of mindfulness is generated. If any distractions arise during the meditation, the meditator is able to overcome that distraction and place the mind back onto the object. This is because the meditator has achieved a strong force of mindfulness.

#### **422.331.213.4 Close Placement**

Through further increasing the force of mindfulness it is said that one will reach the fourth mental abiding which is close placement. As the force of mindfulness reaches its peak level, it is very obvious during the fourth mental abiding that the length of concentration is even further extended in comparison to the first three mental abidings. At the fourth mental abiding, since one has fully developed the force of mindfulness, it is impossible for the meditator to lose the object.

At this fourth level the meditator still has to apply the antidotes to mental sinking and excitement, as both of these can still be present. In fact to understand each level of mental abiding properly it is essential to have a good understanding of the five faults and the eight antidotes that we have we previously discussed. To be better able to understand this level of abiding we have to know that there are both subtle and gross forms of mental sinking and excitement.

The third and fourth mental abidings are mainly achieved through the force of mindfulness. The reason is that during the third mental abiding, even though the meditator still experiences mental distractions, he or she

is able to remove them immediately they occur, and so progress to this level of mental abiding. This is because as soon as the object is lost the meditator is able to bring it back, through the force of mindfulness, likewise in the fourth mental abiding. The difference between the third and the fourth mental abiding is that at the fourth level the meditator never loses the object of the meditation. Why? Because of the full development of the force of mindfulness.

It is important to try to combine your study of the current topic with revision of earlier ones, because they are linked to each other. The earlier ones are therefore very important and a good understanding of them is essential. Revision of all the previous topics not only improves your understanding of them, but it makes the current topic clearer, so there is no point in skimming over them.

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**Headings with outline numbering are derived from the Text. Headings without outline numbering are derived from Geshe Doga's commentary.**

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#### **Note on authentication**

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