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All these different views are mistaken – thinking that one needs only analytical meditation for one’s progress; thinking that one needs only single-pointed meditation for one’s progress; and thinking that analytical meditation is only part of the listening and contemplation stages but not of the actual meditation stage.

Another mistaken view is saying that all conceptual thoughts obstruct the attainment of enlightenment because they apprehend characteristics. This idea arises because of not being able to discriminate between inaccurate, misleading thoughts and accurate thoughts.

Also, some practitioners are worried about engaging in a lot of analytical meditation before engaging in single-pointed meditation, because they are worried that engaging in a conceptual analytical process before engaging in single-pointed meditation will have a detrimental effect – it will carry over into the single-pointed meditation and disturb it. That is also an unnecessary worry.

Actually, the analytical meditation we engage in beforehand supports the single-pointed meditation that follows. When we engage in analytical meditation, it is not like going to the market with one’s friends and engaging in all kinds of conversation. One engages in analytical meditation on the meaning of the Dharma, so it is something different.

Do you have a question for tonight? If you don’t have a question, we can continue this important point.

*Question:* Is it true that you need to develop calm abiding meditation before you can go into an analytical meditation? If so, why?

*Answer:* What did we just talk about?! (*Laughter*)

You have to decide who you believe more – those people who say these things or Shantideva and Maitreya Buddha and all the other great practitioners we have quoted over the past Wednesdays, who all say that this is not necessary.

If somebody wants to engage in meditation without having engaged in the practice of listening, it would be like somebody without hands wanting to be a handyman or to climb a mountain. It’s not possible. If you don’t engage in the practice of listening, how can you meditate? It is contradictory to want to meditate without having first engaged in the practice of listening.

If one engages in single-pointed meditation without the practice of analytical meditation beforehand, without an understanding of the Dharma, one will not be able to generate proper calm abiding. One might be able to generate some calm states of the mind, but that will be all; otherwise it could even harm one’s mind and make one more dull.

We have talked a lot about the reasons why one should engage in both analytical and single-pointed meditation. Somebody once said to me that when one meditates on the Lam Rim, the mind does not abide single-pointedly, but if the mind is not single-pointed, how can one meditate on the Lam Rim?

*Question:* When would be the point when one could start single-pointed meditation?

Of course you are allowed to engage in single-pointed meditation, but you need to be prepared your mind by meditating on topics like impermanence, the sufferings of cyclic existence, the sufferings of the lower realms and so forth. Without having meditated on these topics, it will be easy for the mind to fall under the control of mental excitement, and one will not be successful in one’s meditation practice.

For example, one has to meditate on the impure aspect of the object repeatedly to overcome attachment to the object; then, when one actually sits down to meditate the mind will not be distracted by attachment but will very vividly abide on the object naturally.

By having a thorough understanding of the Buddha’s teachings, one will be aware of the faults of not having calm abiding and of the benefits of having calm abiding, which will give one strength to carry through one’s practice. Also, one will know the different faults of cyclic existence, which will generate renunciation, which will prevent one’s mind from wandering off to an external object.

Next time, we can go into this point of why analytical meditation is so useful.

*Question:* What is the course or sequence we follow to attain calm abiding?

*Answer:* You attain calm abiding by abandoning the five faults with the eight antidotes. Through this process, one goes through the nine stages of calm abiding. The first stage is achieved when one is able to keep the mind focused on the object for the duration of the recitation of one mala of OM MANI PADME HUNG. One then goes through the next eight stages until, after the ninth stage, one attains calm abiding.

We will discuss this in more detail when we get to the Six Perfections. There is a chapter dedicated to this topic. One goes through the nine stages such as initial focus on the mind, patch-like focus and so forth.

As was said earlier, sit in a comfortable, relaxed meditation posture, then turn the mind inwards and place it on the mantra.

*TAYATHA OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNAYE SOHA*

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