

## Review of Some Key Points of Calm Abiding Meditation

as taught by Geshe Gelek for Kadampa Center  
Wednesday Lam Rim Classes 2020

*Additional readings, in case of interest, are noted in the footnotes.*

### 3 Root Texts on Shamatha:

By Maitreya Buddha – *Ornament of Mahayana Discourse* (21 chapters)

- chapter 13 – requirements of the environment
- chapter 14 – the 9 stages

By Maitreya Buddha – *Distinguishing the Middle from the Extreme* (5 chapters)

- chapter 4 – the 5 Faults & 8 Adjustments

By Asanga – *Compendium of Knowledge/Abhidharma* (chapters and location TBD)

- the 9 stages

These texts are used by every Buddhist tradition that talks about shamatha. These three texts are the root of shamatha meditation.

**Quote** from Lama Atisha's *Lamp for the Path*<sup>1</sup>

While the conditions for calm abiding  
Are incomplete, meditative stabilization  
Will not be accomplished, even if one meditates  
Strenuously for thousands of years.

### 5 Attributes for an Appropriate Place for Meditating on Calm Abiding<sup>2</sup>

1. easy access, so that necessities such as food and clothing may be readily obtained;
2. being a good place to live, where there are no wild beasts such as predators, enemies, etc.;
3. being on a good piece of ground, in that it does not breed sickness;
4. offering good companionship insofar as your companions are ethically disciplined and like-minded;
5. being well-situated inasmuch as there are not many people about in the day and little noise at night.

### Choosing an Object of Meditation<sup>3</sup>

The object can be almost anything, including the breath, the nature of the mind, cheesecake, or a photo of a loved one. For those following Lama Tsongkhapa's tradition, a holy image is usually the preferred choice. Among other benefits, a holy image allows one to build up their collection of merit and purify negativities. Also, it also makes one familiar with the holy image, which can be beneficial in future practices. Geshe-la has said that if your goal is simply to quiet the mind in day-to-day life, then changing objects is probably alright. If the goal is to achieve calm abiding, then choosing one object and sticking with it is important.

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1 Stanza 39, page 22, *The Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, by Atisha Dipamkarashrijnana, translated by Ruth Sonam, FPMT reprinted with permission from Snow Lion Publications, 1997.

2 Pages 28-9, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment, Volume Three*, by Tsong-kha-pa, translated by the Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee, Snow Lion Publications, 2002. Also, see pages 595-7, *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand: A Concise Discourse on the Path to Enlightenment*, by Pabongka Rinpoche, translated by Michael Richards, Wisdom Publications, 2006.

3 Taken from Geshe Gelek's teachings and from pages 601-3 in *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand: A Concise Discourse on the Path to Enlightenment*, by Pabongka Rinpoche, translated by Michael Richards, Wisdom Publications, 2006. Also see pages 34-46, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment, Volume Three*, by Tsong-kha-pa, translated by the Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee, Snow Lion Publications, 2002.

## 5 Faults and 8 Antidotes for Developing Calm Abiding<sup>4</sup>

### 5 Faults

laziness

forgetting the instructions

sinking and excitement

non-application [of the antidote]

over-application [of the antidote]

### 8 Antidotes

faith in the benefits,

interest,

enthusiasm, and

pliancy

mindfulness

introspection

application [of the antidote]

equanimity

### 3 Types of Laziness<sup>5</sup>

1) laziness of discouragement or self-contempt

2) laziness of attachment to ignoble [mundane] activities

3) laziness of procrastination

### The Order of Well-Being, Pliancy, and Bliss<sup>6</sup>

First, one develops physical well-being, then mental well-being;

Next comes mental pliancy, then physical pliancy.

Finally, bliss of physical pliancy comes first, then bliss of mental pliancy.

### Definitions of Sinking and Excitement<sup>7</sup>

Gross Sinking Mind: the object's image is steady but unclear

Subtle Sinking Mind: the object's image is steady and clear but the force of your retention has slackened and the clarity is not intense

Gross Excitement Mind: losing the object through thinking of something else (to which you are attached)

Subtle Excitement Mind: the mind does not lose track of the object but something else appears simultaneously in a portion of the mind, below the level of conceptual thought, like water flowing under a sheet of ice

Cause of Sinking Mind – sluggishness (which is caused by food – portion size, timing, type, etc.)

Cause of Excitement Mind – attachment

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4 Taken from Geshe Gelek's teachings, and from page 55, *Calming the Mind: Tibetan Buddhist Teachings on Cultivating Meditative Quiescence*, by Gen Lamrimpa, translated by B. Alan Wallace, Snow Lion Publications, 1995, and from pages 599-611, *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand: A Concise Discourse on the Path to Enlightenment*, by Pabongka Rinpoche, translated by Michael Richards, Wisdom Publications, 2006.

5 Page 187, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment, Volume Two*, by Tsong-kha-pa, translated by the Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee, Snow Lion Publications, 2004.

6 Taken from Geshe Gelek's teachings and page 617-8, *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand: A Concise Discourse on the Path to Enlightenment*, by Pabongka Rinpoche, translated by Michael Richards, Wisdom Publications, 2006.

7 Page 604-6, *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand: A Concise Discourse on the Path to Enlightenment*, by Pabongka Rinpoche, translated by Michael Richards, Wisdom Publications, 2006.

## The Nine Stages of Calm Abiding in Some Detail

### Stage 1 – Inner Placement

New Experience: being aware of your thoughts

Power: power of knowledge from hearing

4 Mental Engagements: tight focus

Additional Details:

- Mind stays on object only for a fraction of a second
- You think you are having more thoughts but this is incorrect – you are simply more aware of them
- You have achieved stage 1 when you can count 21 breaths without distraction

### Stage 2 – Continual Placement

New Experience: gain some (meditative experience) insight into what it's like when your conceptual thoughts take a rest

Power: power of contemplation

4 Mental Engagements: tight focus

Additional Details:

- Sometimes you have thoughts and sometimes not – there is space between thoughts
- Still more time of wandering mind than time on the object but stability is improving (i.e.: you can stay longer on the object compared to stage 1)
- You achieve the second stage when you can place your mind without distraction on the object for the length of time it takes to recite one mala of MANI mantras

### Stage 3 – Patchy Placement

New Experience: it seems as if conceptual thoughts have exhausted themselves

Power: power of mindfulness

4 Mental Engagements: interrupted focus

Additional Details:

- You recognize right away when your mind starts to wander – the mind does become distracted but you are immediately aware and “patch up” your fixation
- Before, your mind was like a monkey; now the monkey is tired from jumping up and down
- You are developing a more powerful mindfulness
- The space between thoughts expands more than in the second stage
- The duration of distraction is shorter than in the two previous stages

### Stage 4 – Close Placement

Power: power of mindfulness

4 Mental Engagements: interrupted focus

Additional Details:

- Now you won't ever lose the object; this stage is unique because this is the first stage where you don't lose the object (in the first 3 stages you still lose the object)
  - No need now for “patch” because there are no holes in your holding of the object
- Mindfulness is complete; it has reached its fullest power
- Still have problems of sinking and excited mind so introspection needs to be ready
- You have achieved the fourth stage when you can stay on the object without losing it for some time

### Stage 5 – Subdued Placement

Power: power of introspection

4 Mental Engagements: interrupted focus

Additional Details:

- Gross sinking and excitement minds are no longer a concern
- Due to drawing mind inward, subtle sinking mind is now the greatest risk; therefore power/intensity/brightness is the important focus
- Antidotes to subtle sinking mind: cheering up your mind by thinking about precious human life, the opportunity to do shamatha meditation, etc. If that doesn't work, think of bright light, moonlight, sunlight, etc. If that doesn't work, get up, wash your face, drink coffee, take a break. As a last resort, you can use the forceful method to overcome subtle sinking mind, the meditation called "Instructions for Mixing Your Mind and Energy with Space".

### Stage 6 – Pacifying

Power: power of introspection

4 Mental Engagements: interrupted focus

Additional Details:

- Now subtle excitement is the greatest challenge because in the previous stage you were working hard to cheer up your mind and the mind may have been too uplifted
- You need to boost the energy of introspection to stop subtle excitement mind
- Introspection becomes perfected; from now on introspection will be spontaneous

### Stage 7 – Complete Pacification

Power: power of joyful effort

4 Mental Engagements: interrupted focus

Additional Details:

- Sinking and excitement mind rarely arise because mindfulness and introspection are now perfected
- This doesn't mean you can be completely relaxed; you still need to be vigilant

### Stage 8 – Becoming Single-Pointed

Power: power of joyful effort

4 Mental Engagements: uninterrupted focus

Additional Details:

- At this stage, your meditation does not require much effort; only some slight effort is required in the beginning and then your meditation can continue, uninterrupted
- From the 8<sup>th</sup> stage on, you do not have to put effort into the application of introspection

### Stage 9 – Meditative Stabilization

Power: power of familiarization

4 Mental Engagements: effortless engagement

Additional Details:

- No effort is needed; no exertion is needed to enter into single-pointed concentration

## 6 Powers and 4 Mental Engagements of Calm Abiding<sup>8</sup>

Stage	The Power	The Mental Engagement
1	The power of knowledge from hearing	Tight focus
2	The power of contemplation	Tight focus
3-4	The power of mindfulness	Interrupted focus
5-6	The power of introspection	Interrupted focus
7	The power of joyful effort	Interrupted focus
8	The power of joyful effort	Uninterrupted focus
9	The power of familiarization	Effortless engagement

## 9 Mental States of Calm Abiding<sup>9</sup>

1. Inner placement
2. Continual placement
3. Patch-like placement
4. Close placement
5. Subdued placement
6. Pacifying
7. Complete pacification
8. Becoming single-pointed
9. Meditative equipoise

## Quote from Shantideva<sup>10</sup>

Having understood that disturbing conceptions are completely overcome  
By superior insight endowed with calm abiding,  
First of all, I should search for calm abiding.

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8 Taken from Geshe Gelek's teachings. For more on this topic, see pages 78-9, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment, Volume Three*, by Tsong-kha-pa, translated by the Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee, Snow Lion Publications, 2002 and pages 616-7, *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand: A Concise Discourse on the Path to Enlightenment*, by Pabongka Rinpoche, translated by Michael Richards, Wisdom Publications, 2006.

9 Taken from Geshe Gelek's teachings. For more on this topic, see pages 612-5, *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand: A Concise Discourse on the Path to Enlightenment*, by Pabongka Rinpoche, translated by Michael Richards, Wisdom Publications, 2006.

10 In stanza 4, chapter 8, *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, by Shantideva, translated by Stephen Batchelor, Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1979.