

**Buddhist Studies Program**

**Subject: Lam Rim Chen Mo Module 3**

**Teacher: Geshe Tashi Tsering**

**Interpreter: Ven. Lozang Zopa**

**Number of the teachings: 17**

**Date of the teaching: 16<sup>th</sup> November 2004**

***In particular how to train in the last two perfections.***

This section has six parts:

- (a) The benefits of cultivating calm abiding and insight*
- (b) How calm abiding and insight include all states of meditative concentration*
- (c) The nature of calm abiding and insight*
- (d) Why it is necessary to cultivate both*
- (e) How to be certain about their order*
- (f) How to train in each.*

We've covered the first section – (a) The benefits of cultivating calm abiding and insight in its entirety.

What is the basis for this statement on the benefits of calm abiding and insight? It comes back to the statement that all mundane and supramundane good qualities are the results or effects of calm abiding and insight, as stated in the Sutra on Unravelling the Intended Meaning. We are actually saying that these good qualities are the effects of those states that are classified with calm abiding and those states that are classified with insight. So all good qualities, be they mundane or supramundane arise in dependence on these two types of thing.

Calm abiding refers to one-pointedness of mind. Insight is a reference to the analysis that you engage in from within that. It's through integrating these two aspects that such good qualities can arise. This is the type of understanding that we draw from the explanation just given.

The second section resembles quite closely the first.

***(b) How calm abiding and insight include all states of meditative concentration.***

Calm abiding and insight are presented as inclusive of all forms of concentration. Inclusive in the sense that they gather within themselves other related states, and the basis for this statement is also found in the Sutra Unravelling the Intended Meaning. In short, any concentration of the Hinayana or the Mahayana can be included within calm abiding or insight.

***(c) The nature of calm abiding and insight.***

This section explains what the nature of calm abiding is. There's a long quote which starts '*while you dwell in solitude,*' but we can give a more condensed or abbreviated explanation of calm abiding - calm abiding is a concentration imbued with the bliss of physical and mental pliancy which has the ability to place the mind upon a single object in whichever way one wishes or pleases.

This short explanation can be kept in mind while reading through the quote from the Sutra on Unravelling the Intended Meaning. It would seem that the short explanation matches up quite well with the longer explanation found in this sutra. Otherwise if you only look at the Sutra Unravelling the Intended Meaning you might find it difficult to keep all the bits together, so that when asked "tell me what the nature of calm abiding is," you think "oh, what should I say." You don't really remember it all so you can't give a full response but only part of it.

© Chenrezig Buddhist Study Programme Lam Rim Chen Mo 2004 – lightly edited transcripts for course participants only  
Insight is only developed after you have achieved calm abiding, that's why the explanation of the nature of insight includes the phrase from within calm abiding, because there is the assumption that insight occurs from within calm abiding. Therefore the nature of insight is described as a concentration that is imbued with the bliss of physical and mental pliancy that is induced through the strength of the analysis of one's object from within calm abiding.

Once you achieve calm abiding you have the self-control whereby you are able to place and then lead the mind in a one-pointed state. Yet when you introduce analysis at that point you might encounter some difficulties. That's why initially, within the state of calm abiding, from one side you analyse for a bit and then set it aside, and then analyse for a bit so that you become used to this analysis that's occurring in this one-pointed state of mind. After some time you become so used to it that through the strength of that analysis itself, there is a special type of bliss that occurs. This is a bliss in which you have eliminated the negative habitual tendencies of body and mind. Through eliminating those, this special type of bliss of physical and mental pliancy occurs marking the attainment of insight.

With this understanding, if you were then to read through the Sutra Unravelling the Intended Meaning you would understand what the natures of calm abiding and insight are, respectively.

Calm abiding and insight are not distinguished in terms of the objects that they focus on, because as it says in the text you can have calm abiding that's focused on emptiness and you can have insight that's not focused on emptiness. Therefore the distinction between the two does not lie in the object that they focus upon.

On page 18 of the text there is an explanation of the term calm abiding. *Calm abiding is your mind quieting or pacifying movement towards external objects and then abiding on an internal object of meditation. Insight is superior or special seeing.*

In calm abiding you calm distraction towards other objects and get the mind to abide inwardly, hence calm abiding. Once you've calmed the distraction of the mind towards external objects you have achieved a degree of self-control, so that you have gained control over your mind. Insight has an additional aspect where you're able to introduce analysis utilising external things. So, insight isn't simply the one-pointedness of mind in which distraction has been pacified but it also has this element of analysis.

At the bottom of page 18 the text continues:

*Some claim that a mind resting in a non-discursive state without vivid intensity is calm abiding, while such a mind with vivid intensity is insight.*

Here we have a statement of another person's position which will be addressed and then refuted by Lama Tsong Khapa, which is the way that the classic texts operate. The way that the classic texts approach these types of discussions is to present a position, which is not actually the case, and then refute it so that the position which is accurate is then revealed. It's like when a gold miner goes to a place where there's a vein of gold – he or she will dig it all up and then when they've got all this rubble, they'll take it down and shake it up in the river which washes away the bits that aren't gold, and you're left with the gold. This is like the approach adopted in these classic texts

That's the way they do it in Tibet, they've probably got machines around here to make it easier. Anyway in Tibet you've got to dig up the ground, dig, dig, dig and then take this big pile that you've got and go filter it in the river and finally you're left with the gold.

This gives us a clue as to how we should read these classic texts because classic texts will almost always have this twofold approach, where initially you refute the position of other traditions. In this first case then an inaccurate position held by others is put forward and you then reveal the faults that exist

Let's look at this incorrect position. This person claims that a mind resting in a non-discursive state without vivid intensity is calm abiding. 'A non-discursive state' could actually be read in a few different ways because there are different positions within this. For instance, non-discursive state could refer to somebody not taking anything to mind and just simply abiding in some vacuous state. Or perhaps there could also be people who rest in a non-discursive state but on a specific object. In any case they're claiming that a mind resting in a non-discursive state without sharpness is calm abiding. So here an aspect of clarity is present but it lacks the sharpness or intensity - and that is claimed to be calm abiding.

*This position is not correct because it contradicts the definitions of calm abiding and insight that are established at length in sources such as the words of the conqueror, Buddha Shakyamuni, the treatises of the regent, which refers to the venerable Maitreya, the texts of Asanga, the great trailblazer who opened the way of his tradition and Kamalasila's Stages of Meditation, like for instance the Middle Stages of Meditation. These texts say that calm abiding is an attention concentrated one-pointedly on an object of meditation while insight is wisdom that properly distinguishes the meaning of an object of knowledge.*

[Interpreter: Just a note on translation - when it says in English 'vivid intensity,' it refers to the sharpness of the aspect of clarity.]

*In particular the presence or absence of the sharpness of clarity of a mind in a non-discursive consciousness indicates whether the concentration is lax; it is utterly incorrect to claim that it indicates the difference between calm abiding and insight. This is because in all concentrations of calm abiding you definitely must clear away laxity and because all concentrations free from laxity are invariably limpid states of mind.*

The point is that we need to be certain about the definition and characteristics of calm abiding. Once we know what those characteristics are, we can then consider different positions and determine whether they are accurate or not.

*Thus, identify concentration and wisdom that focus on the real nature according to whether your mind realises as its object either of the two selflessnesses.<sup>24</sup> Do not identify them according to whether your mind rests in a non-discursive, clear, and blissful state, because there are countless states of concentration which are blissful, clear, and non-discursive, yet which do not orient your mind toward the reality of objects, their lack of self.*

This is a point that we really must know. In many sutras the Bhagavan Buddha used the phrase non-discursive sublime wisdom as well as the phrase blissful, clear and non-discursive sublime wisdom. There are a number of different ways these have been interpreted. When people were trying to unravel the intention of Buddha Shakyamuni they ended up explaining what blissful clear and non-discursive sublime wisdom means in many different ways. So we have a variety of positions on just what Buddha Shakyamuni meant by this term.

The paragraph we've just read reads: *identify concentration and wisdom that focus on the real nature according to whether your mind realises as its object either of the two selflessnesses.<sup>24</sup> Do not identify them according to whether or not your mind rests in a non-discursive, clear, and blissful state*

The reason for this is: *because there are countless states of concentration which are blissful, clear, and non-discursive, yet which do not orient your mind toward the reality of objects, their lack of self.*

According to the Middle Way Consequence School non-discursive wisdom is understood to be an awareness that realises emptiness. Emptiness must be either selflessness of persons or selflessness of phenomena. So in our tradition non-discursive sublime wisdom is an awareness that realises emptiness, whereas in other traditions they understand non-discursive consciousness or non-discursive sublime wisdom to refer to consciousnesses that do not examine or conceptualise about any object whatsoever. These other traditions are saying that non-discursive should be understood as not conceiving of anything, whereas our tradition says that non-discursive is a reference to the realisation of emptiness.

*Thus, identify concentration and wisdom that focus on the real nature according to whether your mind realises as its object either of the two selflessnesses.<sup>24</sup> Do not identify them according to whether your mind rests in a non-discursive, clear, and blissful state, because if you do so, you then have to contend with the fact that there are countless states of concentration which are blissful, clear, and non-discursive, yet which do not orient your mind toward selflessness. How could you call that state of mind which isn't even directed towards selflessness a type of insight that focuses on emptiness?*

*Even without finding the view that knows the way things are, any totally non-discursive mind can be adequate to induce bliss and clarity. Even without understanding emptiness by establishing it in perception, nothing at all prevents you from developing non-discursive concentration.*

So there's nothing that prevents you from developing non-discursive concentration even though you haven't realised emptiness perceptually.

Firstly we would have to acknowledge that it's possible for a person to engage in a type of concentration in which they conceive of absolutely nothing, and that concentration could induce bliss and clarity. We accept that. We'd say that a person could prevent the aspect of any object in particular from arising in their mind, abiding in this non-discursive, non-conceiving state, or non-examining state and have that concentration induce a blissful, clear and non-discursive concentration.

In the text where it says '*Even without understanding emptiness by establishing it in perception,*' this is a mistranslation. In fact it says 'it's obvious that even without finding the view that knows the way things are, any totally non-discursive mind can be adequate to induce bliss and clarity.' We know that by placing the mind upon emptiness and developing our tradition's form of non-discursive sublime wisdom, bliss and clarity can be induced. But we can also know that you can induce bliss and clarity by developing a type of concentration that doesn't conceive of anything at all. We don't have to rely on reason to establish that. It's established manifestly. Even if you do not understand emptiness you can still adopt this non-discursive state and get the mind to abide one-pointedly.

This would be non-discursive concentration - to develop that you don't necessarily need to realise emptiness.

*Even without understanding emptiness, nothing at all prevents you from developing non-discursive concentration. If you keep your mind that way for a long time, you cause the wind-energies to become serviceable. Once this occurs, nothing precludes the arising of bliss, as it is the nature of such serviceability to create mental delight and physical bliss. Once bliss has arisen, then there will be mental clarity by virtue of the quality of clarity in the feelings of delight and bliss.*

Take a person who has not realised emptiness, that person without conceiving of anything at all achieves a one-pointed concentration. This one-pointed concentration leads to physical and mental pliancy and the bliss that accompanies that. That bliss in turn leads to the clarity of mind or the quality of clarity. So you have blissful, clear and non-discursive concentration. There are such concentrations – a person could achieve such a thing.

*For this reason, there is not a single authentic source to prove that all blissful, clear, non-discursive concentrations know reality.*

There is nothing to prove that if something is a blissful, clear and non-discursive concentration it necessarily realises emptiness. So it's not so amazing to possess a blissful, clear and non-discursive concentration. According to the explanation found in the Lam Rim Chen Mo, then all blissful, clear and non-discursive concentrations are not antidotes to grasping at self.

*Therefore, since bliss, clarity, and non-discursiveness are present in concentrations that realise emptiness, yet very often occur in concentrations that are not directed toward emptiness, you have to differentiate these two.*

So, what does a person in our tradition need? We need a blissful, clear and non-discursive concentration that acts as an antidote or remedy to grasping at self – that's the type that we need!

A person following the views and explanations of Hashang could indeed develop a blissful, clear and non-discursive concentration, but that concentration will not act as an antidote to the root of cyclic existence. That will not work as a remedy for grasping at self.

Therefore when we develop a blissful, clear and non-discursive concentration, we want to be sure that it is of the type that acts as an antidote to grasping at the self. Just because a concentration has the qualities or characteristics of blissfulness, clarity and non-discursiveness doesn't mean that that is going to work as an antidote to the root of cyclic existence that Buddha Shakyamuni taught.

This blissful, clear and non-discursive concentration is not just a method to abide in a bit of bliss. It's meant to be a method that we use as a direct antidote to grasping at the self. We don't seek this thing just so we can experience some pleasure. We seek this thing so that we can destroy the root of cyclic existence. Therefore when Buddha Shakyamuni spoke about the blissful, clear non-discursive wisdom in sutra he was talking about blissful, clear and non-discursive sublime wisdoms that realises emptiness.

It's like Lama Tsong Khapa says in The Three Principle Aspects of the Path - no matter how much you familiarise yourself with the determination to be free and the mind of enlightenment they will not be able to cut the root of conditioned existence. For that reason apply effort in the means to realise interdependence. In other words he's saying in this respect (i.e. overcoming the root of cyclic existence) the determination to be free and the mind of enlightenment won't help, you need to realise emptiness. So it goes without saying then that simply abiding in a state where you do not conceive of anything at all is not going to be beneficial.

Geshela jokingly brings this up by way of telling a story. Apparently there was a person who said to a lama "Hey, you know calm abiding is not very precious because many non-Buddhists can attain it" and this Lama said to him, "Well you achieve calm abiding and I'll prostrate to you!" It's not easy. In fact calm abiding is very precious in so far as it's a very powerful method for us to overcome distraction, but it alone is not enough because it alone cannot cut the root of conditioned existence. We definitely need to realise emptiness.

The Precious Lord is saying, in short, all blissful, clear non-discursive concentrations do not act as antidotes to grasping at self.

Some people might be fooled and think that they're really something because they've achieved a blissful, clear non-discursive concentration, but they're just fooling themselves. They're confused as Lama Tsong Khapa points out. Even if you develop blissful, clear non-discursive concentration you must still meditate on emptiness.

**(d) Why it is necessary to cultivate both.**

*Why is it insufficient to cultivate either calm abiding or insight alone? Why is it necessary to cultivate both? I will explain. [476]*

*If you light an oil-lamp for the purpose of viewing a picture in the middle of the night, you will see the depictions very clearly if the lamp is both very bright and undisturbed by wind. If the lamp is not bright, or is bright but flickering in the wind, then you will not see the images clearly. Likewise, when looking for the profound meaning, you will clearly see reality if you have both the wisdom that unerringly discerns the meaning of reality and an unmoving attention that stays as you wish on the object of meditation. However, if you do not have wisdom that knows how things are — even if you have a non-discursive concentration in which your mind is stable and does not scatter to other objects — then you lack the eyes which see reality. Hence, it will be impossible to know how things are no matter how much you develop your concentration. And even with a perspective that understands reality — selflessness — if you lack a firm concentration that stays one-pointedly on its object, then it will be impossible to clearly see the meaning of the way things are because you will be disturbed by the winds of uncontrollably fluctuating discursive thought. This is why you need both calm abiding and insight.*

Even if we realise emptiness yet lack calm abiding, then no matter how much we become acquainted with emptiness, we will not have the clarity we would if we had calm abiding. The realisation of emptiness becomes even clearer through the strength of calm abiding. In this sense it's like a lamp that is clearer when it's not being moved around by the wind.

This analogy likens wisdom to the flame of a lamp and discursive thought to wind, so that the winds of discursive thought affect the lamp of wisdom.

It's stated quite clearly in the text: *it will be impossible to clearly see the meaning of the way things are because you will be disturbed by the winds of uncontrollably fluctuating discursive thought. This is why you need both calm abiding and insight.*

*Kamalasila's second Stages of Meditation says:*<sup>25</sup>

*With bare insight that lacks serenity, the yogi's mind is distracted by objects; like an oil-lamp in the wind, it will not be stable. For this reason, what sublime wisdom sees will not be very clear. As this is so, rely equally on both.*

*Therefore, the Great Final Nirvana Sutra (Maha-parinirvana-sutra) says:*

*Hearers do not see the lineage of the tathagatas because their concentration is greater than their wisdom; bodhisattvas see it, but unclearly, because their wisdom is greater than their concentration. The tathagatas see everything because they have calm abiding and insight in equal measure. [477]*

*Hearers don't see this lineage or potential of the Tathagatas because their concentration is greater than their wisdom, thus reflecting in some way their preference for that state. Yet bodhisattvas see it, however unclearly, because their wisdom is greater than their concentration, whereas tathagatas see everything because they have calm abiding and insight in equal measure.*

*With the power of calm abiding, your mind — like a lamp placed where there is no wind — will be unmoved by the winds of discursive thought. With insight, others cannot divert you since you have abandoned the infinite entanglements of bad views. As the Moon Lamp Sutra (Candra-pradipa-sutra) says in support of that:*

*The power of calm abiding makes your mind steady; insight makes it like a mountain.*

Hearers work only to free themselves from suffering by achieving a state free from suffering. To achieve that they emphasize concentration, for instance the concentration on emptiness. As a result however their wisdom is weaker. Bodhisattvas make working for the benefit of sentient beings their emphasis and due to that they have greater fluctuations of mind than Hearers. So when it says that the Hearers *do not see the lineage of the Tathagatas*, you could say that this means they do not see the buddha potential, or more particularly that their efforts do not become causes for buddhahood. Bodhisattvas emphasize wisdom over concentration. Tathagatas work for the benefit of sentient beings from within the state of equipoise that's concentrated on emptiness and hence they don't have either the fluctuation or the weak wisdom but they *see everything*..

There are ten bodhisattva grounds. There is a final uninterrupted path on the tenth ground. We achieve buddhahood while in that one-pointed equipoise focused upon emptiness. When you enter into this final uninterrupted path on the tenth ground, you enter into one-pointed meditative equipoise on emptiness in a manner such that you will not arise from it again. It is irreversible. The reason for that is that you then go on to achieve buddhahood, and once you've achieved buddhahood you don't need to arise from meditative equipoise to benefit others. You benefit others from within that state of meditative equipoise.

For that reason it's said that there is no time in which a buddha is not within equipoise. Buddhas are necessarily always in equipoise. Whether they're going or sitting or doing anything at all they're always in equipoise. As it says in scripture, buddhas are never without an application of mindfulness.

What's more is that due to this mindfulness a buddha never misses the opportunity to benefit a sentient being when the time for such arises. So it's not like the time for benefiting a sentient being occurs and a buddha forgets to do it because it's in meditative equipoise. We might think "Oh they're always in equipoise, they might forget to help us!" It's not like that. There's never a time in which they neglect or forget to help. (Geshela: Don't Worry!)

*So, the mark of calm abiding is that your attention stays right where it is placed without distraction from the object of meditation. The mark of insight is that you know the reality of selflessness and eliminate bad views such as the view of self; your mind is like a mountain in that it cannot be shaken by opponents. Therefore, you should distinguish these two marks.*

It says the mind is like a mountain through the force of insight in that it cannot be shaken or moved. We talk about certain preconceptions or ideas that hold unequivocally to something inaccurate, and we also talk about doubt that is of two minds. Doubt has different aspects too – you have doubt that tends towards the fact, away from the fact and equal doubt, also known as factually concordant doubt, doubt that does not accord with the fact and equal doubt. We must overcome all these so that the mind is not shaken or moved by either these preconceptions or by any form of doubt.

*Before you achieve calm abiding, you may use discerning wisdom to analyze the meaning of selflessness, but your mind is extremely unsteady, like a lamp in the wind, so your concept of selflessness is unclear. This concept is the generic image. On the other hand, if you analyze when you have achieved calm abiding, you avoid the fault of extreme unsteadiness, so your concept of selflessness will be clear. Thus, the mental state of insight has a quality of steadiness which derives from non-discursive calm abiding and a quality of knowing how things exist which does not derive from calm abiding.*

It says here that *insight has a quality of steadiness, which derives from non-discursive calm abiding and a quality of knowing how things exist which does not derive from calm abiding*. So insight has these two aspects – it has the aspect of not wavering or moving, steadiness, and realising the way things exist. This unwavering quality derives from calm abiding, whereas the quality of knowing how things exist does not.

These two qualities arise from different things in other words. As it says:

*For example, a lamp's ability to illumine forms derives from the wick and the preceding moments of flame; it does not derive from such things as the screen that protects it from the wind.*

It says here that *insight has a quality of steadiness*, more literally an unmoving unwavering quality, but insight does waver a bit in that it's using analysis and so it follows that insight does have a quality of wavering.

Geshela: Is there movement within insight?

Student: Not from subject to subject

Geshela: But don't you need to think of many different reasons?

Student: Yes but all pertaining to one subject

Geshela: But you think about a variety of reasons, correct? Many different reasons occur to you. It follows that that is movement

Student: Movement towards one point

Geshela: (laughs) It follows that there is movement related to two reasons, movement related to three reasons, because there is such movement.

In analytical meditation we usually say that you are not meant to turn away from the object that you are analysing. For instance when you cultivate compassion then you're trying to engender this wish that all sentient beings be free of suffering, and you might use a variety of reasons to develop this. You may think about how kind all sentient beings have been.

It's possible that this is a reason for compassion that you remember. You could remember potentially any number of different reasons that help support the development of compassion, but all of these reasons need to come back to that compassion. If these reasons come down to some different point then you have moved from that compassion.

Alternatively, with an analysis of the self, you meditate on selflessness and think "the self does not exist inherently because it's interdependent, because it depends on other things, because without other causes and conditions it would not occur." There's a variety of different reasons that you might remember as you're reflecting on how the self lacks inherent existence. In fact there are many reasons that support the lack of true existence of the self, like for instance how it is free of being one or many and so on and so forth. All these different reasons that you employ must come back to how the self lacks inherent existence. You might then be swayed by different preconceptions or certain thoughts so that you develop doubt, for instance, and think "I wonder if it depends on the basis of imputation." So in this case you can't even be moved by a doubt.

There's this aspect of steadiness or more literally an aspect of unwavering or not moving – does that derive from calm abiding? It says here that it does.

This quality of knowing how things are derives from wisdom – there's no doubt about that.

So the quality of steadiness or the unmoving quality within insight derives from non-discursive calm abiding and the quality of knowing how things exist does not. This is clear because you can develop a realisation of how things exist before you even achieve calm abiding – so it doesn't derive from calm abiding.



The analogy mentions how wind causes the flame to waver and move, fluctuate – this is an analogy for discursive thoughts, preconceptions, which could be any number of different things like doubt for instance.

Discursive thought in this case refers to erroneous discursive thought. It refers to discursive thought which causes you to move between objects. Probably we have to understand this term discursive thought in a very specific way.

*For example, a lamp's ability to illumine forms derives from the wick and the preceding moments of flame; it does not derive from such things as the screen that protects it from the wind. However, the stability of the steady flame of the lamp does derive from this screen. Thus, if you engage in analysis with a wisdom possessed of the meditative equipoise of calm abiding — a state undisturbed by laxity or excitement — then you will understand the meaning of reality. With this in mind, the Compendium of the Teachings Sutra (Dharma-samgiti-sutra) states:<sup>26</sup>*

*When your mind is in meditative equipoise, you will understand reality just as it is.*

Do you have any questions?

Student: Is insight both concentration and wisdom? (Geshela: This good question)

Geshela: Geshela would say that we probably don't need to say that it's both but there's certainly logic in your question. Indeed the short explanation calls it a concentration imbued with da da da, so how to understand this?

Geshela: If Geshela had to give an answer then he would say that insight is called concentration even though it's mainly wisdom. Calm abiding is also called concentration isn't it? So he would say that insight can be referred to as concentration though in actuality it's wisdom.

Interpreter: I asked Geshela "If it's wisdom isn't it necessarily a mental factor?" and he said 'Yes indeed if it's wisdom it's necessarily a mental factor so insight is a mental factor.'

Good question, very good. For the time being let's go with that, but it's possible that we change that as we go along. Geshela's going to have a think about it.

Student: On page 20 it says that "*the mark of insight is that you know the reality of selflessness*" but can't you achieve insight focused on an object other than selflessness?

Interpreter: Before I put the question to Geshela, I'll just mention the word for mark is lag je (*lag rje*) while the word for measure, as in the measure of having achieved insight, is tse (*tshad*).

Geshela: No this statement doesn't contradict the idea that insight can be achieved by focusing on something other than emptiness. Actually what it says here is that the mark of insight is that through realising the reality of selflessness you eliminate bad views such as the view of self, so your mind is like a mountain in that it cannot be shaken by opponents. It's a description here of the insight focused on emptiness.

Let's say the person has already achieved calm abiding focused on emptiness, then they analyse and their mind does not move or fluctuate does it? Their mind is not moved by, for example, discursive thoughts of different types. Insight continues to analyse the object yet it is unwavering, and that is the mark of calm abiding.

© Chenrezig Buddhist Study Programme Lam Rim Chen Mo 2004 – lightly edited transcripts for course participants only  
A person is one-pointedly focused upon emptiness and yet insight is analysing this. So despite the fact that there is this analysis, the person's mind does not move from emptiness. Not moving from emptiness here is the mark of calm abiding.

Interpreter: One thing about the word mark - it's literally like the footprint so to speak, it's kind of the traces.

Geshela: At this point a person does not hold to grasping at a self, does not hold to views of the self, does not even hold to doubts about the self. So during that period a person does not apprehend these bad views, due to wisdom – it is the mark of wisdom. In this sense it's like a mountain.

That question's not so problematic. We need to still think about whether insight is both concentration and wisdom – this is a new doubt. So we'll leave it there for today and we'll continue to look into that issue.

**Buddhist Studies Programme**

**Subject : Lam Rim Chen Mo Module 3**

**Teacher : Geshe Tashi Tsering**

**Interpreter : Ven Lozang Zopa**

**Number of the teaching: 18**

**Date of the teaching: 17/11/04**

We got down to section (d), the fourth section on. Why it is necessary to cultivate both calm abiding and insight. Before this there was a section on the Benefits of cultivating calm abiding and insight; How calm abiding and insight include all states of concentration; The nature of calm abiding and insight; and finally, Why it is necessary to cultivate both.

We left off on page 21 of the English translation.

Lama Tsong Khapa said something, which we seem not to have remembered. In the section on the nature of insight, on page 16, he quotes a sutra, and just after that, he remarks;

*It is said that the Chinese master Ha-shang, having seen this sutra's very clear and undeniable explanation that insight is discerning wisdom... having seen this sutra's very clear and undeniable explanation that insight is discerning wisdom.*

He doesn't actually say so, but the implication here is that if it's insight then it's necessarily discerning wisdom. Here he says that the *sutra's very clear and undeniable explanation is that insight is discerning wisdom*. If it's calm abiding it's necessarily concentration.

So we should understand calm abiding to be a concentration, and insight to be a wisdom, in particular a discerning wisdom.

Then the very venerable Jetsunpa composed a text on the meditative stabilizations of the form and formless realms, and in that he gives the definition of insight. In fact, the definition that Jetsunpa gives is the one that Geshela has been rattling off, except that when Geshela has been rattling it off he sort of lost the tail end of it. So, in any case, what Jetsunpa says is that in the definition of insight....

The definition of insight is a discriminating wisdom that is imbued with the bliss of physical and mental pliancy that is induced through the power of analysis, the power of analysing it's own object from within calm abiding. So the very venerable Jetsunpa as well as Lama Tsong Khapa, based on sutra, both say that insight is necessarily wisdom. So we can therefore be convinced of this. We can believe it.

Actually Jampa went home and consulted Jetsunpa's text and reported back to Geshela. Anyway Geshela was just saying he is guilty of what he encourages us not to be guilty of, which is this fault of saying; "I know, I know, I know, I know, I know" Geshela has actually been saying; "I know, I know, I know, I know." Until the question was asked – if that question had not been asked, he probably would have continued to think; "he knows, he knows, he knows" the distinctions and definitions of these things. So it's quite helpful actually. It's very good that this issue came up.

Geshela: Important discussing. Discussing very, very important. Otherwise, we many mistakes. And we thought; "I know, I know." This good. Thank you.

The integration of calm abiding and insight. First you develop the one pointedness of calm abiding, then you go on to develop analysis until eventually that analysis itself induces the bliss of, or through the power of that analysis, the bliss of physical and mental pliancy arises. There is no way to proceed without this integration of calm abiding and insight. So let's get back to where we left off yesterday, page 21, about half way down there's a quote;

*Kamalasila's first Stages of Meditation says:*<sup>27</sup> [478]

*Because your mind moves like a river, it does not rest without the foundation of calm abiding; a mind that is not in meditative equipoise cannot understand reality just as it is. Also, the Bhagavan says, "With meditative equipoise, you know reality just as it is."*

*When you achieve calm abiding, you not only stop the fault of movement in the wisdom consciousness that properly analyzes selflessness, you also stop the fault of distraction from the object of meditation whenever you use discerning wisdom to conduct analytical meditation on topics such as impermanence, karma and its effects, the faults of cyclic existence, loving kindness, compassion, or the practice of the mind of enlightenment. No matter what your object of meditation, you engage it without distraction, so that any virtue you cultivate is much more powerful. On the other hand, before you reach calm abiding, you weaken all of your virtuous deeds by frequent distraction to other objects.*

Quite clear.

It's saying here, that if you achieve calm abiding, not only will you stop the fault of movement in this wisdom that is analysing selflessness, but the object itself also becomes much more clear.

We used an analogy yesterday where you have an oil lamp that is either moved or unmoved by wind.

Such things are not only limited to our analysis of emptiness. They also occur when we turn our attention to analyse things like *impermanence, karma and its effects, the faults of cyclic existence, loving kindness, compassion, the mind of enlightenment*. As it says, *you also stop the fault of distraction from the object of meditation whenever you use discerning wisdom to conduct analytical meditation on those topics. No matter what your object of meditation, you engage it without distraction, so that any virtue you cultivate is much more powerful.*

If a person has achieved calm abiding, then no matter what that person meditates on, be it the mind of enlightenment or some other topic, that person will not have the fault of movement, or wavering due to that attainment. This is something we already know.

What's more is *that no matter what your object of meditation, any virtue you cultivate is much more powerful*, because you've engaged it without distraction.

*On the other hand, before you reach calm abiding, you weaken all of your virtuous deeds by frequent distraction to other objects.*

Then,

*As Santideva's Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds says:*<sup>26</sup>

*The person whose mind is distracted  
Lives between the fangs of the afflictions.*

*And:*<sup>29</sup>

*The One Who Knows Reality has said that  
Prayers, austerities, and such—  
Even if practiced for a long time—  
Are pointless if done with a distracted mind.*

There is a difference in the potency or strength of meditations, depending on whether they're engaged in after you've achieved calm abiding or before.

In a similar vein, then mantras and austerities that you might engage in with a distracted mind have less strength. They are weaker. As it says here;

*Prayers, austerities, and such—*

*Even if practiced for a long time—*

*if done with a distracted mind.*

Here it says; *Are pointless if done with a distracted mind* but that doesn't mean that they are completely pointless, that there's no purpose to them. Rather it means that they are weaker, less potent.

Generally, even if you were able to recite mantras with sort of just an empty mind, or to engage in physical austerities, these could be virtuous. These are virtuous and so of course there is a potency to them.

After all, we're dealing with things that are virtuous by nature. Let's say that a person recites the refuge recitation, without thinking at all about the three jewels and their qualities, etc. That person just thinks; "I go for refuge to the Buddha. I go for refuge to the Dharma. I go for refuge to the Sangha." They're using their speech to engage in something that is virtuous by nature.

What's more is that we accumulate many negativities through our speech, through speaking idly, through speaking abusively, or harshly and so forth. Then engaging in these types of verbal virtues, even if they don't completely purify the past negativities, there is still a benefit, and some degree of purification that takes place with them.

There's a story that comes from one of the Lam Rim texts; Geshela's not sure which one. It's possible that it might be Liberation in the Palm of your Hand. You have this nunnery in Tibet, and a thief arrived one evening. He came to steal. Next to the gate there was a hole in the wall, so the thief sticks his arm through the hole and looks around to see if he can't open the door. And some of the nuns saw him reaching his arm through this hole, trying to get in. So they very quietly took a rope, tied up his arm, go around, tied up his arm and then tied it to a pillar. And then they opened the door. They took a big stick, they opened the door, they went outside, then they hit him! "I go for refuge to the Lama. I go for refuge to the Buddha. I go for refuge to the Dharma. I go for refuge to the Sangha." They hit him four times, hit him really strong, really hard with a very thick stick so that he almost died. Then the nuns walked back inside, shut the gate, locked it, untied the rope from the post and let him go.

So the thief then at that point walks away from the nunnery and is going down the road and he comes to a bridge, and he goes; "Phew! It's a good thing there are only four objects of refuge because if there would have been five, I would have probably died!! They would have killed me!!" So he's going, "Boy, it's a good thing- they go for refuge to the Lama, they go for refuge to the Buddha, they go for refuge to the Dharma, they go for refuge to the Sangha." So here he is thinking about how lucky he is that there's only four objects of refuge 'cause if there had been five, they certainly would have hit him a fifth time, he would have died. And he's just going around saying this to himself, and as he's walking home that evening, in Tibet you sometimes will get ghosts and so forth that you might run into. Because he had been saying this; 'I go for refuge to the Lama. I go for refuge to the Buddha. I go for refuge to the Dharma' and so forth, then any ghosts or spirits were prevented from coming into his path that night.

So the Lam Rim presents this story and then explains the meaning, and says, even if you don't reflect on what you're saying, but simply by reciting these prayers of going for refuge, the harmful forces and non-human spirits and so forth are not meant to be able to harm you.

Recitation and austerities are therefore not necessarily pointless if done with a distracted mind. But you do certainly get a difference in the strength or potency.

It's clear that these types of things done with a distracted mind don't help the mind. That much is obvious. We know from our experience that if you recite this or do some physical austerity with a distracted mind it doesn't have any beneficial impact on your mind.

But it is virtuous.

With our prayers, then, we might think that, with our prayer commitments, we think that; ‘oh I don’t have enough time. What’s the point? What’s the point of reciting this if I’m not thinking about the meaning?’ That’s a great mistake. We should definitely not think in this way.

There is, for instance the benefit of not violating your commitment. You have the benefit of keeping your commitment. Even though you might not think about the meaning, you’re still thinking; ‘I must observe my commitment.’ So you’re showing respect to your commitment.

If you maintain that simply reciting such things is not a virtue because there is no thought accompanying that, well then it follows similarly that saying bad words are not non-virtuous because they’re saying the good ones are not virtuous.

Whether you have the motivation or not to speak offensively, it’s a negativity.

If you say something that hurts another person, that’s a non-virtue.

So the same principle applies. If you recite your prayers, it’s virtuous.

It’s best if we can both think about, and recite it with our speech. But even if we can’t be thinking about it, at least make sure that you do say your prayers. So the importance of saying your prayers even if you’re not thinking about it has been established through scripture, reason and analogy. All three.

When Shantideva says that;

*Prayers, austerities, and such—*

*Even if practiced for a long time—*

*Are pointless if done with a distracted mind.*

What he’s saying is that they alone are not going to accomplish great aims.

*Thus, the aim of attaining a concentration in which your mind is non-discursively stabilized on a single object without distraction is to have mental serviceability—the ability to willfully direct your attention to virtuous objects of meditation. Willfully, here is ‘as you like’; -the ability to direct your attention to virtuous objects of meditation whichever way you choose. If you fix your attention on a single object of meditation, you can keep it there, but if you release it, it will proceed as you wish to limitless virtuous objects, just like water drawn into smoothly flowing irrigation ditches. [479] Therefore, after you have achieved calm abiding, you must sustain in meditation objects and attitudes that stop limitless faults and bring together limitless virtues, such as wisdom consciousnesses focusing on the real nature and the diversity of phenomena, generosity, the attitude of restraint, patience, joyous perseverance, faith, and disenchantment with cyclic existence. Realize that continuously stabilizing your mind by fixing it on a single object of meditation yields no great advantages in the practice of virtue, for those who do this fail to appreciate the purpose of achieving calm abiding.*

The purpose of calm abiding. What is the purpose of achieving calm abiding? It’s stated very clearly here that the purpose of achieving calm abiding is not so that you can just remain one pointedly.

In achieving calm abiding, if you need to place the mind one pointedly, you are capable. If you choose to direct the mind toward different things, then the mind flow toward those virtuous things you directed it towards, just as water flows through irrigation ditches, or as Geshela says, through a pipe. Therefore, if in, for instance, meditative equipoise you simply place your mind one pointedly, the mind remains upon that without distraction to other things. Then in the post equipoise state, you can direct the mind toward any number of, in fact limitless virtuous objects and the mind goes directly to those just as water directly channeled by a pipe or irrigation ditch.

© Chenrezig Buddhist Study Programme Lam Rim Chen Mo 2004 – lightly edited transcripts for course participants only  
The Essence of Refined Gold, this text by Lama Tsong Khapa, states; “If placed, it remains like the king of mountains. If directed, it engages all virtuous things.” Which is what Lama Tsong Khapa’s saying here, it’s that, *Therefore, after you have achieved calm abiding, you must sustain in meditation objects and attitudes that stop limitless faults and bring together limitless virtues, Realize that continuously stabilizing your mind by fixing it on a single object of meditation yields no great advantages in the practice of virtue, for those who do this fail to appreciate the purpose of achieving calm abiding.*

*If you fix your attention on a single object of meditation you can keep it there. but if you release it, it will proceed as you wish to limitless virtuous objects. So realise what the purpose of achieving calm abiding is. It’s not just placing one’s mind on a single object of meditation, for that yields no great advantages in the practice of virtue.*

What is this indicating? The need for insight. We need insight.

*Thus, if you reject analytical meditation with discerning wisdom both in the deeds section of the perfections and in the view section of the perfections, your cultivation of one-pointed concentration will be very weak. The technique for producing forceful and long-lasting certainty about the meaning of selflessness is sustained analysis with discerning wisdom. Without such insight into the real nature, no matter how long you cultivate calm abiding, you can only suppress manifest afflictions; you cannot eradicate their seeds.*

*Therefore, do not cultivate only calm abiding; you need to cultivate insight as well because, as Kamalasila's second Stages of Meditation says:<sup>30</sup>*

*Cultivating just calm abiding alone does not get rid of a practitioner's obscurations; it only suppresses the afflictions for a while. Unless you have the light of wisdom, you do not destroy dormant tendencies.*

Next we have a quote from *the Sutra Unravelling the Intended Meaning*. All of these support what Lama Tsong Khapa’s saying. There are a number of misconceptions that must be addressed. For instance, some people think that once you achieve calm abiding then what’s the point of analysis at that point. This is a misconception. We need to know what the misconceptions are, and we must know how to overcome and address those. Otherwise we will not be able to eliminate the doubts that we ourselves can develop. So it’s these misconceptions and the way to address them that’s very important.

*For this reason the Sutra Unravelling the Intended Meaning says:<sup>31</sup>*

*Meditative stabilization suppresses afflictions; wisdom destroys dormant tendencies.*

More on the reason we need insight.

*Also, the King of Concentrations Sutra says:<sup>32</sup>*

*Although worldly persons cultivate concentration  
They do not destroy the notion of self.  
Their afflictions return and disturb them,  
As they did Udraka, who cultivated concentration in this way.<sup>33</sup>*

*If you analytically discern the lack of self in phenomena  
And if you cultivate that analysis in meditation,  
This will cause the result, attainment of nirvana; [480]  
There is no peace through any other means.*

*Also, the Scriptural Collection of the Bodhisattvas says:<sup>34</sup>*

*Those who are unlearned in the contents of the Scriptural Collection of the Bodhisattvas, unlearned in the discipline of the noble teaching, and who derive a sense of sufficiency from mere concentration fall by virtue of their pride into an inflated sense of themselves. They will not escape from birth, aging, sickness, death, sorrow, lamentation, suffering, un-happiness, or perturbation ; they will not escape from the six realms of cyclic existence; they will not escape from the aggregation of suffering. With that in mind, the Tathagata said, "Learning from others what is appropriate, you will escape aging and death."*

These all carry the same meaning. No need for us to discuss it again, because it simply uses different words to repeat the same point.

*As this is so, those who seek completely pure sublime wisdom from which every obscuration has been eliminated should cultivate wisdom while they remain in calm abiding. On this point, the Ratna-kuta Collection says:*<sup>35</sup>

*Keeping ethical discipline, you will attain concentration;  
Attaining concentration, you cultivate wisdom;  
With wisdom you attain pure, sublime wisdom;  
As your sublime wisdom is pure, your ethical discipline is perfect.*

This discerning wisdom leads to excellent ethics.

*And the Sutra of Cultivating Faith in the Mahayana says:*

*Child of good lineage, if you did not have wisdom, I would not say that you had faith in the Mahayana of bodhisattvas, nor would I say you knew the real nature in the Mahayana.*

Without it, you will not achieve liberation, you will not abandon disturbing emotions, nor will you abandon the seeds and the imprints left behind by those. And thus we need insight. Are we clear about the reasons why we need the integration of calm abiding and insight?

The reason we need to cultivate both calm abiding and insight.

Next we have their order;

***(e) How to be certain about their order***

*Santideva's Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds says:*<sup>37</sup>

*Insight possessed of calm abiding  
Destroys the afflictions. Knowing this,  
Seek calm abiding at the outset.*

*According to this statement, you first achieve calm abiding and then cultivate insight on that basis.*  
[481]

*Qualm: Kamalasila's first Stages of Meditation says,*<sup>38</sup> *"Its object of meditation is indeterminate," meaning that the object of meditation of calm abiding is indeterminate. As explained above, the object of meditation of calm abiding may be either reality itself or a conventional phenomenon possessed of reality. If you first understand the meaning of selflessness, and then meditate while focusing on this, it should be enough to simultaneously produce both the calm abiding of an undistracted mind and insight focused on emptiness. Why, then, is it said that you first seek calm abiding and then cultivate insight?*

Lama Tsong Khapa says: *The way in which calm abiding precedes insight is as follows.* Below he explains.



© Chenrezig Buddhist Study Programme Lam Rim Chen Mo 2004 – lightly edited transcripts for course participants only  
Properly speaking, how do we develop these - calm abiding focussed on insight, calm abiding focussed on emptiness. This is the real concern here, isn't it? The emphasis here is on calm abiding that focuses on emptiness and insight focussed on emptiness. The order is fixed between first calm abiding and insight, as stated.

However, to begin with, you must realise emptiness.

Emptiness is a hidden phenomenon, isn't it? It must be realised in dependence upon a reason. On a correct reason. It's not something that you can identify or realise in the way that you would the colours or white, blue or red. You need to think about different reasons supporting it. Through reflection then come to develop your realisation in dependence upon those reasons.

We say that no phenomena exist inherently, and that this lack of inherent existence is emptiness.

Someone can say; 'No phenomena exist inherently.' And at first you might believe that, but later you might develop doubt. So we really need to think about it. What does it mean if something does not exist inherently? How would something be if it existed inherently? How is it that things lack inherent existence? To realise emptiness we must first think about these points.

It's like what we're talking about on Tuesday evenings. We've got this phrase, translated into English as 'lack of inherent existence.' What does it mean to say something lacks inherent existence? Even if a thing existed inherently, what would that mean? What would that entail? What is inherent existence after all? How can we identify this?

'It does not inherently exist' means it exists in dependence upon others.

When we say that no phenomena exist inherently, we're saying there is nothing that arises or occurs without depending on others.

That's it. That's not existing inherently.

You would explain 'not being established by way of one's own character', 'not being established from one's own side' in a similar way. All three of these points carry the same meaning. They're all emptiness. However the words that are used to express them imply slightly different things so that you draw slightly different understandings from these terms.

Things don't exist by way of their own character. If a thing existed by way of its own character, what would that mean? What would that be like?

If it existed by way of its own character, you wouldn't need to give a name. It wouldn't need to be imputed by name and conception, because it's established as such by way of its own character.

So according to the Consequentialists, all phenomena are merely imputed by name and conception. No phenomena is established by way of its own character.

That's one consequence of emptiness, so to speak. The explanation of emptiness from one perspective. Then the Consequentialists also say that things do not exist from their own side. What does that mean? Here perhaps we need to add the additional step. We say that things do not exist from their own side - we're saying they do not exist from the side of the basis of imputation.

Ok, we say that things do not exist from the side of the basis for imputing them. What does that mean? It means that if you were to search for it in the basis of imputation, you would not find it.

These are positions unique to the Middle Way Consequence school. This is what we might call the unique Middle Way Consequence view. Then we have this assertion that things do not truly exist. The Consequence school say things do not exist truly, and the Autonomists also say that things do not exist truly. So what this means, according to the Consequentialists is that things do not exist in the way that they appear to.

For Consequentialists this is quite easy to explain. They say that relative phenomena do not exist in the way that they appear to, are false, and therefore do not exist truly. So all relative phenomena appear to exist inherently, and yet they do not. So they don’t exist in the way that they appear to, and hence, do not exist truly.

The master Bhavaviveka, like other Autonomists, explains the meaning in a slightly different way. For him, that things do not exist in the way that they appear, means that things appear to be entities distinct from their parts, though they are not. Although things are single entity with their parts, they appear to be an entity distinct from their parts. And hence, they do not exist in the way they appear. That’s true for anything. Now if it’s easy to understand that, that’s great, because there is also significant understandings to be drawn from this position. Like, for instance, take the gompa.

We have the door, the windows, the roof and the walls of the gompa. It seems as if there is...

The gompa’s doors, the gompa’s windows, the gompa’s roof, the gompa’s walls. It appears as if there is some gompa apart from these things. An entity distinct from these things. It seems as if we can actually see some gompa which is an entity distinct from the windows, the walls, the roof and the door of the gompa.

When in actual fact, gompa is a single entity with those.

So the gompa’s windows are a single entity with gompa.

The gompa’s windows are one in nature with gompa, or single entity with gompa. The gompa’s roof is one in nature with gompa. The gompa’s walls are one in nature with gompa. They are single entity with gompa. So you have the parts, and the thing that possesses the parts.

All of the parts of gompa are single entity or same nature with gompa.

If those were entities distinct, then you could...if they were distinct entities, rather, you could then remove those and there would be a gompa left over that you could actually see, which is not the case.

This illustrates a basic principle that the parts appear to be entities distinct from the thing that possesses those parts, but that is not actually the case. This is what we say about these relative phenomena, that parts appear to be entities distinct from the thing that possesses those parts.

The Autonomists say this. But the Consequentialist would also accept it. This is a presentation according to the Autonomous, but it’s a presentation that the Consequentialists are happy to accept.

The doors and the windows are not single entity or same nature. We don’t say that.

Just as you could say that the roof and the wall of a gompa are not a single entity or a same nature, because it’s clear that that’s not the case because you can see; ‘there’s the window, there’s the door, and there’s the roof’.

Geshela did not say that!

Body and mind are single entity with person. Body and mind are not a single entity with one another.

So first we need to develop a realisation of emptiness based on analysis and so we analyse things to determine how they do not exist inherently, how they do not exist truly. We must understand what that means. Use reasons. Take a person, it does not exist inherently, because it is interdependent. Take a person, it does not exist inherently, because it is free from being established as either one or many, so on and so forth. Actually this type of reasoning, the reasoning of one or many will be explained later.

The point is, that we must first realise emptiness through inference. There are two types of valid cognition; valid inference and valid perception.

Emptiness is a hidden phenomenon, isn’t it? So you can’t from the very outset realise it through valid perception. You must rely upon reasons and realise it through valid inference initially.

Valid inferences realise their objects in dependence upon correct reasons, correct? So emptiness must be realised initially in dependence upon correct reasons. Actually that’s found in the definition for valid inference, ‘in dependence upon the reason which is its basis’. ‘In dependence upon the correct reason which is its basis.’ Once you’ve already realised emptiness through inference then you move on to developing calm abiding focused upon emptiness. It’s impossible to develop calm abiding focused on emptiness if you haven’t realised emptiness first. Once you’ve already achieved calm abiding focused upon emptiness then you must go on to achieve insight focused upon emptiness. That’s what’s being said.

There are limitless investigations that you carry out for achieving calm abiding focused upon emptiness, those are not insights. Once you’ve achieved calm abiding then you use analysis again. Yet still this is not insight. After some time a bliss of physical and mental pliancy is induced through the force of that process and the discriminating wisdom that is imbued with that becomes insight. Some say you don’t need Tarig. There are people who think you don’t need to study types of reasoning, people who say you can realise emptiness without relying on these types of reasoning. How exactly they realise emptiness Geshela is not sure.

If we look at the qualm this person has, it says: If you first understand (*rtogs pa*) the meaning of selflessness and then meditate while focusing on this it should be enough to simultaneously produce both the calm abiding of an undistracted mind and insight focused on emptiness. Why then is it first that you seek calm abiding and then insight. The way in which calm abiding proceeds insight is as follows.

*You do not need to have calm abiding already in order to develop an understanding of the view that knows that there is no self, for we see that even those who lack calm abiding develop this view. Nor do you need to have calm abiding already in order to experience mental transformation in regard to the view, for nothing precludes mental transformation being brought on by the practice of repeated analysis with discerning wisdom, even in the absence of calm abiding. If you claim that the absence of calm abiding precludes mental transformation in regard to the view, then the very same reasoning forces you to the extremely absurd conclusion that calm abiding is required even to experience mental transformation when meditating on impermanence, the faults of cyclic existence, or the spirit of enlightenment.*

To have transformative experiences about the mind of enlightenment or loving kindness or compassion doesn’t require that we have calm abiding, just as to have a transformative experience about emptiness

*So, why is serenity required for insight? This is our position right, why? According to the Sutra Unravelling the Intended Meaning; "as long as the practice of discrimination and special discrimination with discerning wisdom cannot generate physical and mental pliancy, it constitutes a type of attention which approximates insight; when it generates pliancy, then it is insight. Thus, if you have not attained serenity, then no matter how much analytical meditation you do with discerning wisdom, in the end you will not be able generate the delight and bliss of physical and mental pliancy. Once you have attained calm abiding, then even the analytical meditation of discerning wisdom will culminate in pliancy. [482] Hence, insight requires meditative serenity as a cause. This will be explained below.*

Properly speaking when you achieve insight you achieve a bliss of body and mind, a bliss of physical and mental pliancy induced through the power of analysis. It's saying very clearly here that if you do not have calm abiding from before then it will be impossible to develop this bliss of physical and mental pliancy induced through the power of analysis. Induced through the power of analysing its own object. Because before you achieve calm abiding it would be impossible to develop the bliss of physical and mental pliancy that's induced through the power of analysing its own object without having attained calm abiding. Excuse me. Because before you achieve calm abiding no matter how much analysis you do it would be impossible to achieve the bliss of physical and mental pliancy induced through analysing your own object. In effect what they're saying is that the rising of bliss of physical and mental pliancy induced through power of analysing your own object that occurs after you have achieved calm abiding depends on having that calm abiding because before you achieve calm abiding doesn't matter how much analysis you do it's impossible for that to lead to the arising of this bliss of physical and mental pliancy. In short, due to having calm abiding then that analysis is then going to induce the bliss of physical and mental pliancy. As Lama Tsong Khapa says this will be explained below.

Discerning wisdom becomes insight when, without focusing on a single object, it can generate pliancy through the power of analysis. So generating pliancy by setting your attention on a single object of meditation—even if the object is emptiness—is nothing more than a way to achieve *calm abiding*; that alone does not count as attaining insight. Why? If you thus first seek an understanding of selflessness, analyzing its meaning again and again, it will be impossible to achieve *calm abiding* on the basis of this analysis since you have not previously achieved *calm abiding*. If you do stabilizing meditation *without analysis*, you will achieve calm abiding on that basis. However, as there is no way to sustain insight except by sustaining calm abiding, you have to seek insight later. Hence, this does not fall outside the pattern in which, having previously sought serenity, you cultivate insight based on it.

Then continuing on ...

*Accordingly, the way insight develops is that discerning analytical meditation generates pliancy. If this were not so, there would not be the slightest good reason to seek calm abiding first and then cultivate insight based on it. Failing to do these meditations in this order is quite inappropriate because the Sutra Unravelling the Intended Meaning states in a passage cited above that you cultivate insight on the basis of having attained calm abiding. Also, the order of meditative stabilization and wisdom among the six perfections— of which it is said that "the latter develop based on the former"— as well as the sequence in which training in higher wisdom is based on training in higher concentration are in agreement with the sequence in which, having previously cultivated calm abiding, you later cultivate insight. Asanga's Bodhisattva Levels (cited earlier)<sup>41</sup> and his Sravaka Levels (Srdvaka-bhumi) indicate that insight is cultivated on the basis of calm abiding. [483] Also, Bhavaviveka's Heart of the Middle Way (Madhyamaka-hrdaya), Santideva's Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds, Kamalasila's three Stages of Meditation, Jnanakirti,<sup>42</sup> and Ratnakarasanti all state that you cultivate insight after previously seeking calm abiding. Some Indian masters claim that, without seeking calm abiding separately, you generate insight from the outset through analysis by discerning wisdom. Since this view contradicts the texts of the great trailblazers, the wise deem it to be untrustworthy.*

The trailblazer here refers mainly to Asanga, right. So the text of the great trailblazers like Asanga for instance. Now the wise deem this view untrustworthy because it contradicts the view that Asanga and other great Indian masters have espoused. So some Indian masters hold that position but it is not reliable.

*This is the sequence in which you newly develop serenity and insight for the first time; later the sequence is indefinite, as you may cultivate serenity after previously cultivating insight.*

There is no cultivation of insight without having first achieved calm abiding. They're not saying after you have achieved calm abiding and insight that you can't cultivate insight before cultivating calm abiding. This is a different story. Now a qualm:

*Qualm: Asanga's Compendium of Knowledge states,<sup>43</sup> "Some attain insight, but do not attain serenity; they strive for serenity on the basis of insight." How do you account for this?*

We talk about these different meditative stabilisations. We talk about the actual first meditative stabilisation, the access to the first meditative stabilisation. So first you develop the access to the first meditative stabilisation only then do you develop the actual first meditative stabilisation.

*Reply: This means that they have not attained the serenity of the actual first meditative stabilization, or beyond; it does not preclude their having attained the serenity which is included in the access to the first meditative stabilization." Also, once you have perceptual knowledge of the four truths, you can establish on that basis the serenity of the actual first meditative stabilization and the higher meditative stabilizations. For Asanga's Levels of Yogic Deeds (Yoga-carya-bhumi) says:<sup>15</sup>*

*Moreover, you can accurately know the reality of the truths from suffering to path, without having attained the first meditative stabilization, etc- As soon as this knowledge of the truths occurs, you stabilize your mind and do not analyze phenomena. Based on this higher wisdom, you pursue the practice of higher states of consciousness.*

If you have achieved the access to the first meditative stabilisation then you have achieved the calm abiding included within the access to the first meditative stabilisation. You have not yet achieved those calm abidings that are not included within the actual first meditative stabilisation on up. Then having perceptually realised the four noble truths in which case you would have achieved the path of seeing, right, then you can achieve the other meditative stabilisations from actual first meditative stabilisation on up. It says here in the qualm that "some attain insight but do not attain calm abiding". What they're talking about not having attained calm abidings included within the actual first meditative stabilisation on up. There are calm abidings included with the access state and calm abidings included within the actual states. The access is a preparation, it must come before. So these calm abidings that we been talking about, excuse me the calm abiding achieved by a person who is newly attaining that for the first time is a calm abiding included within the access state not within the actual meditative stabilisation state. Only once you've done that can you go on to achieve the calm abidings included within the actual first meditative stabilisations. So there are times in which a person perceptually realises the four noble truths before they have gone on to achieve a calm abiding included within the actual meditative stabilisations. There is that possibility isn't there? So we could maybe augment or supplement Asanga's quote changing it to read: "Some attain insight, but do not attain calm abiding included within the actuals", something like this because the point is here calm abidings they're talking about are calm abidings included with the actual first meditative stabilisation on up. So can we make a few changes to the Lam Rim. Why not? Add a little bit to the Lam Rim Chen Mo?

*As Asanga's Levels of Yogic Deeds (Yoga-carya-bhumi) says:<sup>15</sup>*

© Chenrezig Buddhist Study Programme Lam Rim Chen Mo 2004 – lightly edited transcripts for course participants only  
*Moreover, you can accurately know the reality of the truths from suffering to path, without having attained the first meditative stabilization, etc- As soon as this knowledge of the truths occurs, you stabilize your mind and do not analyze phenomena. Based on this higher wisdom, you pursue the practice of higher states of consciousness.*

*In general, for the sake of comprehensive terminology, the nine mental states<sup>46</sup> are called meditative serenity and the fourfold analysis<sup>47</sup> is called insight. However, you must apply the terms "actual serenity" and "actual insight"—as will be explained—after the generation of pliancy.*

So Lama Tsong Khapa is saying that these terms calm abiding and insight can be used loosely in which case they cover things like the nine mental states in the case of calm abiding and four-fold analysis in the case of insight yet this is a case in which the terms are being loosely used. Properly calm abiding and insight are marked by the generation of pliancy so Lama Tsong Khapa is saying that he doesn't accept these are actual calm abiding and actual insight. These earlier states, before the generation of pliancy, he doesn't accept that they are actual calm abiding or actual insight.

Going back to this issue of "I know, I know" Geshela thinks he recalls a quote from Jetsunpa's text on the meditative stabilisation of the form and formless realm that is actually an explanation of Asanga's quote that is the subject of discussion here right. Asanga says some attain insight but do not attain calm abiding they strive for calm abiding on the basis of insight. Now Jetsunpa says this means that there are cases in which a person strives for the calm abiding included within the actuals on the basis of insight included in the access states.

Once again when Asanga says they strive for calm abidings that are included within the actual states on the basis of insights that are included within the access states. Jampa's going to look in the text just to make sure but Geshela seems to recall that Jetsunpa explained the quote in this way which in line with what Lama Tsong Khapa is saying. You see? They strive for calm abiding on the basis of insight. We've now reached the end of the section dealing with calm abiding and insight together. So we go into the last section f: how to train in each where we deal with calm abiding and insight individually. Any questions?

Student: When a person achieves actual insight is that also the time in which they achieve a integration of calm abiding and insight or is there a period where they have got actual insight and not the integration of the two?

Geshela: No you don't need to have an intervening period. Once you achieve insight then you have the integration of calm abiding and insight. After all it's posited in terms of the arising of bliss of physical and mental pliancy through the force of analysing your own object from within calm abiding so at points prior to this you haven't actually achieved insight yet you really have integration of calm abiding and what becomes insight. Geshela doesn't reckon there is anything higher than that to integrate. So it says section f here: How to train in each. It's the sixth section: the sixth of six. Try to develop certainty about, to be firm about, the outline, there is a benefit in doing so.

Student: Geshela said there was benefit in reciting mantras even with a distracted mind. So with a distracted mind, mentally reciting mantras is that also beneficial?

Geshela: What do you mean with a distracted mind mentally reciting mantras? What is that? How could the mind in this case be distracted, the mind is reciting mantras. Generally speaking we have certain commitments to recite a certain amount of mantras right? According to different practices. Reciting those mentally does not count. You need to actually verbally recite them. So this thing you're talking about, where you recite mantras with a distracted mind, Geshela is not really sure where the mind is distracted to.

© Chenrezig Buddhist Study Programme Lam Rim Chen Mo 2004 – lightly edited transcripts for course participants only  
Student: There are calm abiding included in the access states and calm abiding included in the actual meditative stabilisations. Do the calm abidings themselves differ, for instance is the first one also imbued with bliss of physical and mental pliancy.

Geshela: The nature of calm abiding is the same in both cases so calm abiding which is included within access states are also imbued with the bliss of physical and mental pliancy. The calm abiding has come along in a continuum right. You've got this continuity of calm abiding when you go from the access to the actual states of the form realm through to the formless realm and so forth.

Student: on page 24 it says "Nor do you need to have serenity already in order to experience mental trans-formation in regard to the view,". What does this mean?

Geshela: Transform in this case means that you don't require a great deal of effort. Rather transformation of mind refers to the fact that the mind has transformed or turned to the view and the experience, we talk about transformative experience, the experience bit implies that it does not require a great deal of effort any longer. So transformative experience, your mind turns toward the view without requiring a great deal of effort, without requiring strong effort, easily developed.

Student: Could Geshela give some idea about how long it takes to achieve calm abiding.

Geshela: How long do you reckon it takes to achieve buddhahood? In scriptures they say that if you have all the causal prerequisites present then it might take six months. This is the old situation from former times. So these scriptures say that if you have the prerequisites complete then six months. But people say that "Look I practiced tummo for a year and didn't accomplish it, I practiced calm abiding for a year and didn't accomplish it". As Geshela often says that calm abiding is a mind of the higher realms. It is a quality that surpasses those of the desire realms. Or rather it exceeds those qualities found in the desire realm. That is why Geshela says if we are not able to separate from the attachment of pleasures to the desire realm then it will not be possible for us to achieve calm abiding. (Geshela: This my idea). To achieve this higher realm state then you must separate from the attachment to the lower state, in this case to the desire realm. There must be this separation from the attachment otherwise you cannot develop the higher state. We will be covering the prerequisites for calm abiding soon. Either tomorrow or the next day. You will find certain statements in scriptures such as if you do this you will achieve it in six months, if you do this you will achieve it in seven lifetimes, this type of thing, or within seven lifetimes. These statements are made with the assumption that the person has all of the causal prerequisites present, or complete. So we can assess our own situation to try and determine whether we have all the causal prerequisites complete.

Student: Do we say the gompa is one in entity with its parts and/or the parts are one in entity with the gompa?

LZ: Geshela pointed out here when we say distinct here, we say distinct entities.

Geshela: Yes it can go both ways, the gompa is both one in single entity with the parts and the parts are one in nature, one in entity with the gompa. But we should not say that the parts are single entities, or one in nature, with the other parts. That we don't say. We have a forest, right. A forest has a collection of trees so the trees are one in nature with the forest and the forest is one in nature with the trees. Single entities. But the trees are not single entities with one another. You have got different trees you can clearly see. So in this case the forest is the thing that has parts and the trees are the parts. The thing that has the parts and the parts. Also the basis for imputation and the imputed phenomena these must be single entities or one in nature. According to the Consequence school all phenomena are merely imputed onto a basis of imputation, there's no phenomena that is established from its own side. Like Geshe Chekawa says towards the end of his text "Seven point Mind Training": even if I were to die right now I would have no regrets. So it would be good for us also to have this attitude that I could die right now without regrets. We're a far bit of the way through this text, we've gotten a fair bit of the

© Chenrezig Buddhist Study Programme Lam Rim Chen Mo 2004 – lightly edited transcripts for course participants only  
way through the insight section even on Tuesday nights. And of course when Geshe Chekawa is saying the even if he were to die now he wouldn't have any regrets - he's feeling that way because he's found deep within himself some sense of the mind of enlightenment. We have not found this deep-seated mind of enlightenment but still through all this study that we've done for so long then Geshe feels that even if he were to die right now he would have no regrets then we as students also should to think that even if we were to die now we would have no regrets. (Geshela: Ok? Rejoice.) Very fortunate. Geshela also reckons that his purpose in coming to Chenrezig has been fulfilled. This is it? We'll leave it there.



**Buddhist Studies Programme**

**Subject : Lam Rim Chen Mo Module 3**

**Teacher : Geshe Tashi Tsering**

**Interpreter : Ven Lozang Zopa**

**Number of the teaching: 19**

**Date of the teaching: 18<sup>th</sup> November 2004**

We're dealing with a section of the text entitled '*In particular, how to train in the last two perfections*'. This has six parts of which we are on the last entitled. '*How to train in each*'.

In the earlier sections where calm abiding and insight were discussed together, we looked at '*what calm abiding and insight are*' which contained a general description of what the nature of these things are, and so forth. We also dealt with just how important it is to have both calm abiding and insight, didn't we.

Geshela asks if calm abiding is an English term. He doesn't understand the word and so wonders if this term is clear. What do you think? Is this a good translation of the term? You don't know Tibetan and I don't know English, therefore...

The Tibetan word is *shi nay (zhi gnas)*. '*Shi*' means to 'pacify'. In particular it is explained as referring to the pacification of distractions towards external objects. '*Nay*' means to 'abide'. In this context it refers to 'getting the mind to 'abide' within'. In this way, 'calm abiding' means 'pacifying' or 'calming' distraction to external objects, and getting the mind to 'abide' within. Alternatively we could explain calm abiding as meaning having calmed the negative discursive thoughts and getting the mind to abide in what is correct.

We talk about 'peace' don't we? This is the same term here. It means making the mind peaceful. In order to have peace, the mind must be at peace, mustn't it! It would be difficult to be peaceful if the mind were not at peace.

What are the obstacles to developing a peaceful mind? It is these negative discursive thoughts; the negative ideas and preconceptions, isn't it! Through the influence of negative discursive thoughts, we feel the need to fight others and create all sorts of different problems.

Even if we don't achieve proper calm abiding, it's very important that we become familiar with abiding in what is correct which is why meditation is so important. Meditation; Geshela has spoken of it's significance, hasn't he. We know that our problems are created under the influence of these negative discursive thoughts, it's just we don't remember it. That's why it's so important that when a negative discursive thought begins to arise, that we are able to identify it and thereby stop it.

Achieving this one-pointedness that is associated with calm abiding is not enough though, we need insight also as we need to then analyse what is correct from within that calm abiding.

The text says that all qualities; mundane and supramundane, are the effects of calm abiding and insight. In stating this, it is saying that these are the effects of remaining upon what is correct. They're saying in effect that all the good things that arise, arise in dependence upon a concentration in which the mind abides one-pointedly, and on wisdom which utilizes the strength of analysis.

***(f) How to train in each***

*This has three sections:*

- 1. How to train in meditative calm abiding (Chapters 2-6)*
- 2. How to train in insight (Chapters 7-26)*
- 3. How to unite them (Chapter 26)*

### ***(i) How to train in meditative calm abiding***

*This section has three parts:*

- 1. Relying on the preconditions for meditative calm abiding*
- 2. How to cultivate calm abiding on that basis (Chapters 2-5)*
- 3. The measure of successful cultivation of calm abiding (Chapters 5-6)*

On Tuesday evenings we've been talking about insight. We have identified some of the prerequisites for insight, and have also seen just how important these prerequisites are for achieving insight. Here, then the text says:

#### ***(a') Relying on the preconditions for meditative calm abiding***

*At the outset, the yogi should rely on the preconditions for calm abiding, which make it possible to achieve calm abiding quickly and comfortably. There are six:*

It doesn't have all six listed after the heading. It just has the heading and then an explanation of each of them; one by one, so we'll deal with them as they come. The first is:

##### ***(1') Dwelling in an appropriate area***

*The area should have five attributes:*

To achieve calm abiding you need a place to practice it. The place where you practice calm abiding should be excellent, because an excellent place is going to help you achieve it 'quickly and comfortably' as it says in the text. Such an excellent place should have five attributes:

- (a) easy access, so that necessities such as food and clothing may be readily obtained;*
- (b) being a good place to live, where there are no wild beasts such as predators, no enemies, etc.;*
- (c) being on a good piece of ground, in that it does not breed sickness;*

The fourth is called 'good companionship':

*(d) offering good companionship insofar as your companions are ethically disciplined and like-minded;*

Sometimes we talk of 'isolation' or 'seclusion', of internal isolation and external isolation. Here, when talking of the place where you practice calm abiding, we're talking of the external aspect of seclusion or isolation in which you are secluded or isolated from hustle and bustle; from commotion where there are lots of people, and so forth. When you stay in such an isolated or secluded place practicing calm abiding, it's important that you have good companionship. Initially this is of great importance. Good companions are those who are ethical and who have views similar to your own.

*(e) being well-situated inasmuch as there are not many people about in the day and little noise at night.*

It says 'little noise'; we don't want to have noise that will disturb our meditation. For instance, the sound of rushing water, can be quite loud. If you're near a waterfall or a stream rushing down from the mountain at a quick pace, the sound from that water can be disruptive to a beginner meditator.

These five attributes are mentioned in Maitreya's *Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras* which states:

*The intelligent practice in a place*

That's all for the first point; '*dwelling in an appropriate area*'. The next point is:

### **(2') *Having little desire***

*You do not strongly crave more or better robes, etc.*

'Strongly crave' (*lhag par chags pa*) could also be translated as 'excessive attachment'

### **(3') *Being content***

*You are always content to have even the poorest robes, etc.*

These two points: 'having little desire', and 'being content', are very important for us. These two should be a constant feature of our practice, particularly for us as westerners. Ho-ho! We have circumstances and conditions which are really quite conducive to our aims but since we have things so good, we get used to that. Because of this, when things don't go our way, lacking these two qualities of little desire, and a sense of contentment, it creates all sorts of problems for us. For instance, that which we have is never enough. This is quite a problem, it's not just unique to westerners.

An illustration would be the way families can get into fights over food. For instance when one person makes dinner, the other person acts as if it's not very delicious and refuses to eat it. Then when that person makes food, the other acts as if it's not very delicious and refuses to eat it. You even get into disagreements about dinner! Saying it's not delicious which actually is quite a minor thing. This is due to having too great desires, and not being content.

What's happening here is that the person is thinking that "I must have it my way! It must happen as I want it to!". This comes from having too great a desire. Discontent would be to think that 'Oh, no, no, this is not acceptable. There must be some other way', and so forth. Most of our problems come about because our desires are too great, and because we are not content, so cultivating having little desire, and being content. is a very important practice for us to do, and to do in this lifetime.

Geshela has just been talking about how being content and having little desire are important both for dharma matters and non-dharma matters. It goes without saying that these two are crucial for achieving calm abiding.

### **(4') *Completely giving up many activities***

*You give up base activities such as buying and selling; you also abandon excessive socializing with householders and renunciates, as well as pursuits such as medicine and astrology.*

If you are one-pointedly focused on achieving calm abiding, you must give these things up.

This means only that you must give these up while you're trying to achieve calm abiding. You might look at this statement and compare it with an earlier statement where it was said that in order to achieve buddhahood, you must become proficient in the five topics of knowledge. You might think 'Oh, wait a minute! If I can't become a buddha without becoming proficient in those five topics, why are they encouraging me to give them up here?' Perhaps this debate occurred to you. Therefore, when it says here that one must completely give up many activities such as medicine, which was mentioned in that context, it's referring to giving up these pursuits while you are trying to achieve calm abiding.

© Chenrezig Buddhist Study Programme Lam Rim Chen Mo 2004 – lightly edited transcripts for course participants only

There are different times for different activities. This is something that Ani Margaret should know because she's the nuns' disciplinarian, so listen carefully! In the great monasteries such as Sera and Drepung, the monks come together in the evening time for debate. About midway through the debate session a bell is rang calling all the monks to leave their debate aside, and come together for an assembly for recitation of prayers. Some monks get so involved in the debate, however, they can't leave the debate aside. They'll come up to the assembly area but sit next to one another and continue debating. Of course they can't talk very loudly at this time because everyone's in assembly and the disciplinarian is walking around, but they sit there leaning over and debating. When the disciplinarian notices, he'll come up and say "Hey! Put the dirt where dirt belongs, and stones belong! You don't put dirt where stones belong, and stones where dirt belongs". The meaning is that you should debate where you're meant to debate, and come and recite your prayers when you're meant to say prayers. They're meant to leave the debate aside and come and participate in the prayers, but rather than do that, they come, sit down, and continue to debate. So the disciplinarian's will scold them for doing that. So here also there's a time and a place for these different things; a time for the pursuit of medicine and so forth, and a time for the pursuit of calm abiding.

When you're in assembly doing a puja you're not supposed to chattering, even if it's supposedly a dharma discussion. During pujas you even have to refrain from discussing dharma. Here, if you don't do this you're going to get whipped by Ani Margaret, ho-ho.

### ***(5') Pure ethical discipline***

*You do not violate precepts, doing deeds that are wrong by nature or wrong by prohibition, either in the case of vows of individual liberation or in the case of bodhisattva vows. If you do violate them through carelessness, you restore them promptly with regret in accordance with the teaching.*

It is Lama Tsong Khapa himself saying this so please pay attention. What does Lama Tsong Khapa identify as pure ethical discipline:

*'either in the case of vows of individual liberation or in the case of bodhisattva vows'....*

...You might have both these sets of vows; the vows of 'approaching virtue' are included within 'individual liberation', but even in terms of the ethics of refraining from the ten non-virtues...

...*'you do not violate precepts, doing deeds that are wrong by nature or wrong by prohibition'*

This is ideal, but...

*'If you do violate them through carelessness, you restore them promptly with regret in accordance with the teaching'.*

We see similar explanations in many different scriptures; those from mantra, as well as in other contexts. They talk of 'abiding by' one's vows. 'Abiding by ones vows' doesn't necessarily mean that a person avoids incurring any transgressions or violations although that of course would be best, it means that if you do transgress one, you try to immediately restore it. That's what it means to 'abide by the vows'; in mantra, as well as in other contexts.

In vinaya, the analogy is given of how you would react should a poisonous snake curl up in your lap. Lama Tsong Khapa used a slightly different analogy, but this one will do. If you looked down and saw a poisonous snake in your lap, you'd immediately try to get rid of it. You wouldn't wait even a single moment. You couldn't possibly be lazy at that time, could you? You'd do something to get it away as soon as you could. Similarly here, don't be lazy in trying to restore the vows. Immediately address the violation that you have incurred.

**(6') Completely getting rid of thoughts of desire, etc.**

*In the case of desires, contemplate their disadvantages in this lifetime, such as their leading to being killed or imprisoned, as well their disadvantages for the future, such as their leading to rebirth in miserable realms. Alternatively, eliminate all thoughts of desire and such by meditating with the thought that "Everything in cyclic existence, pleasant or unpleasant, is ephemeral and impermanent. Since it is certain that I will shortly be separated from all of these things, why should I crave them?"*

This is a problem faced by many people who try to achieve calm abiding. Do you remember Geshela said calm abiding is a mind of the higher realms, and that he has had to point this out to some of his friends who tried to achieve calm abiding? To obtain a mind of the higher realms we must give up our attachment to the good things of the desire realm; these things that you might call, 'good qualities', and begin to see such things as disadvantageous. Our attachment to the pleasures of the desire realm acts as a great obstacle to our achieving calm abiding because without separating from our attachment to the pleasures and good things of the desire realm, it's not possible for us to achieve the calm abiding which is a mind of the higher realms. This sixth point is therefore very important.

Geshela in fact thinks that failing to completely get rid of thoughts of desire is probably the main factor that prevents people from achieving calm abiding. Here then, having little desire, being content, and completely getting rid of thoughts of desire, etc., are very important. Of these different prerequisites, these are the most significant.

*I have explained these points according to the purport [that is, the intention] of Kamalasila's second Stages of Meditation; you should learn more about them from Asanga's Sravaka Levels.*

This is quite an important point. When we were discussing insight [on Tuesday evenings], there was a lot of discussion of different masters such as the Protector Nagarjuna, the Glorious Chandrakirti, the Master Bhavaviveka, Buddhapalita, and so forth. We spent considerable time talking of these different masters, and how important the tradition that stems from them is, in relation to insight. We also talked of the importance of certain scriptures such as those of the Middle-Way. In particular, the *Extensive, Middling and Abbreviated Perfections of Wisdom Sutras*. Now here in the context of calm abiding, we talk of the importance of masters such as the Venerable Maitreya, and the Noble Being Asanga. It was Asanga, after all, who composed this text; *The Hearer Levels*. These are the masters who explained the stages of the path of vast or extensive deeds. Therefore the masters of the lineage of the extensive deeds are important for their instruction on calm abiding, just as those other masters were important for insight.

The lineage of lam-rim lamas, includes the lineage of the profound view, and the lineage of the extensive deeds. Geshela spoke a little about this. Perhaps we have forgotten? Notice then that Lama Tsong Khapa quotes Maitreya and encourages us to consult Asanga's text. This is the way, the Precious Lord Lama Tsong Khapa, explains things. Here the Precious Lord is putting dirt where dirt belongs, and stones where stones belong. Ho-ho.

*These six topics cover the key causes and conditions for newly developing good concentration, for maintaining an existing concentration without deterioration, and for heightening your concentration. In particular, the most important ones are good ethical discipline, seeing desires as disadvantageous and dwelling in an appropriate area.*

Here, Lama Tsong Khapa has added one category to those expressed by Geshela's as being in his opinion of greatest importance; that of 'dwelling in an appropriate area'.

*Geshe Drom-don-ba (dGe-bshes 'Brom-ston-pa-rgyal-ba'i-'byung-gnas) said:*

*We think that the fault lies only in our personal instructions. As we then seek only personal instructions, we are unable to attain concentration. This is the result of not abiding under its conditions.*

What's being said here is that the inability to achieve calm abiding can be traced back to the inability to rely completely on the conditions required for it.

*The term "conditions" refers to the six explained above.*

The word translated here as 'conditions' is elsewhere translated as 'prerequisites' (*tsgogs*).

*Moreover, the first four perfections serve as preconditions for the fifth, meditative stabilization. Kamalasila's first Stages of Meditation states:*

*You quickly accomplish calm abiding when you disregard the desire for possessions and such, keep good ethical discipline, have a disposition to readily tolerate suffering, and joyously persevere.*

The first four perfections: generosity, ethics, patience, and joyous effort, are prerequisites for calm abiding. In effect, what's being said is that you can't achieve calm abiding without these four.

*That being the case, sources such as the Sutra Unravelling the Intended Meaning teach that generosity and the other perfections are causes of the successively higher perfections.*

With the six perfections such as generosity, the earlier ones act as causes for the later ones which are their effects. That is a statement made in the *Sutra Unravelling the Intended Meaning*

*Atisha's Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment (Bodhi-patha-pradlpa) states:*

*When you lack the elements of calm abiding,  
Even if you meditate assiduously,  
You will not achieve concentration  
Even in thousands of years.*

*Therefore, it is very important for those who sincerely wish to achieve the concentrations of calm abiding and insight to work on the elements or preconditions for calm abiding, such as the thirteen which are set forth in Asanga's Sravaka Levels*

It would seem then, that Arya Asanga talks of thirteen elements in his text; '*The Hearer Levels*'.

It was Doug who asked the question yesterday about long it would take to achieve calm abiding? Is Doug here? I just don't see him.

Student: he's started [ho-ho]

If Doug's gone off to start, then apparently we won't see him for a long time because it says right here that; 'When you lack the elements of calm abiding, even if you meditate assiduously, you will not achieve concentration even in thousands of years'. It's a very clear answer, isn't it? Thousands of years! So please, somebody let him know! Ho-ho

Just to repeat that; it's very important that those who sincerely want to achieve calm abiding put effort into gathering the various preconditions for it.

**(b') How to cultivate calm abiding on that basis**

*This has two parts: (1) preparation and (2) actual practice.*

### **(1') Preparation**

*Practice the six preparatory teachings explained above and especially cultivate the mind of enlightenment for a long time; also, in support of that you should do the meditative practices that are shared with persons of small and medium capacities.*

Please make a note of this section. Mark it down so that you know what it is that Lama Tsong Khapa has just very clearly stated. He says; '*cultivate the mind of enlightenment for a long time*'. So you cultivate the mind of enlightenment by employing the instructions on the six causes and one effect, for instance, loving kindness and compassion. When Lama Tsong Khapa says to cultivate the mind of enlightenment for a long time, he's talking about doing so in its entirety; with all of the different stages that build up to it. Then he says; '*in support of that you should do the meditative practices that are shared with persons of small and medium capacities*'. Take note that Lama Tsong Khapa is saying that these stages of the path shared with persons of small and medium capacities are 'branches of', or 'supports for' our cultivation of the mind of enlightenment, loving kindness, and compassion. Please make a note of this so that you can come back to it again and again.

We look at these different stages of the path; those that are associated with beings of different capacities, don't we, but it's not that these stages of the path of a person of small capacity are just for those who can't practice the stages of the path of a person of medium or great capacity. Nor is it the case that the stages of the path of a person of medium capacity are taught only for those who are unable to practice the stages of the path of a person of great capacity. It's not as if they're taught only for those types of people because, as it states very clearly here, a person who is practicing the stages of the path of a person of great capacity must also practice the stages associated with persons of small and medium capacities.

Are there any doubts about this? Any questions?

'*How to cultivate calm abiding on that basis*' had two parts; '*preparation*', and '*actual practice*'. 'Preparation' therefore refers to the six prerequisites, together with the stages of the path for a person of small and medium capacities. Now we come to part two:

### **(2') Actual practice**

*This has two parts: (1) meditative posture and (2) the meditative process itself.*

#### **(a'') Meditative posture**

*Kamalasila's second and third Stages of Meditation say that you should take up an eight-point posture on a very soft and comfortable seat:*

*(1) Cross your legs in the manner of the venerable Vairocana, using either the full-lotus [fully crossed] posture or the half-lotus [half crossed] posture as appropriate.*

We usually talk of 'the seven pointed Vairocana posture' don't we. We are all familiar with the Buddha Vairocana. He is one of the heads of the five buddha families. There are different sets of five that match up with the five buddha families. There are the five aggregates, the five disturbing emotions, and the five sublime wisdoms. Buddha Vairocana is said to be the deity who is the purified aspect of the aggregate of form. In other words, he is sort of the ideal for physical form, being the embodiment of the purified aspect of the aggregate of form. That's why we try to hold our bodies in a posture that resembles his. It makes sense, doesn't it! Hence we have the seven pointed Vairocana posture.

© Chenrezig Buddhist Study Programme Lam Rim Chen Mo 2004 – lightly edited transcripts for course participants only  
It would seem that the Buddha Vairocana doesn't ever sit in a chair. Maybe this could be debated but Geshela is not sure that it's appropriate to do so. So anyway, if you try to debate Geshela on this, he's not going to answer you.

The posture of the legs is properly known as 'the vajra posture'. The word 'vajra' indicates that it cannot be upset by anything, that it cannot be split, or divided by anything. It's in this full vajra posture that one is said to be able to manifest the physical form of a buddha. This posture is therefore called the vajra posture in recognition of vajra's meaning; that it cannot be upset by anything.

Another posture is what is known as the 'half-vajra' position which many of us are sitting in at the moment.

There's a difficulty of translating these in English because we commonly know this posture as the 'lotus' and 'half-lotus' postures. We should however call it 'the full vajra posture' or 'the half-vajra posture'.

*(2) Your eyes should be neither wide open nor too far closed, and they should be fixed on the tip of your nose.*

The eyes should not be too wide open in the sense that you should not be trying to look too far away, nor should your eyes be completely closed. When it says here that your eyes; '*should be fixed on the tip of your nose*', that doesn't mean that you have to try and look at the tip of your nose. Rather, it means you should let your eyes rest naturally in a downward gaze.

If we had to see the end of our noses, people with small noses would have quite a problem, wouldn't they? They would be struggling; always trying to see the tip of their nose; their nose being too small to see the tip of it. That's not what it means. (laughs)

Let the eyes rest in a natural gaze downwards towards the tip of the nose. Do not open the eyes too wide, nor close them too far. If however, after meditating for a long time, your eyes slowly close, you don't have to make a point of opening them up again. Rather, at the outset of the meditation, make sure that your eyes are not too wide open, not too far closed, but left in a natural way, gazing downward towards the tip of the nose. Then, through the course of the meditation, allow them to do what they may.

Then number three is for the body. It says:

*(3) Sit with your awareness directed inward, keeping your body straight without leaning too far back or being bent too far forward.*

Holding the body straight and upright is done so that the channels are straight. There's a benefit for one's meditation if one's channels are straight which is why we hold the torso or the upper body in a straight and upright posture.

*(4) Keep your shoulders straight and even.*

One shoulder shouldn't be higher than the other, 'straight and even'.

*(5) Do not raise or lower your head nor turn it to one side, set it so that your nose and navel are aligned.*

It says your nose and navel should be straight, or as they say here, 'aligned'. It seems they are matched.

*(6) Set your teeth and lips in their usual, natural positions.*



The tongue should come up towards the palate. When meditating for a long time, as you meditate, the mind becomes one-pointed. Initially placing the tongue up towards the palate prevents saliva from drooling out of your mouth later on.

(8) *Your inhalation and exhalation should not be noisy, forced, or uneven; let it flow effortlessly, ever so gently, without any sense that you are moving it here or there.*

There's nothing here in this eight-pointed posture that we don't understand, so we'll move on. The reasons for adopting this kind of posture are explained below.

*Asanga's Sravaka Levels gives five reasons for sitting as the Buddha taught, cross-legged on a seat, stool, or grass mat:*

The Buddha permitted sitting on certain types of seats.

*(1) This posture in which the body is pulled together well is conducive to the arising of pliancy, so you will develop pliancy very quickly. (2) Sitting in this way makes it possible to maintain the posture for a long time; the posture does not lead to physical exhaustion. (3) This posture is not common to non-Buddhists and our opponents. (4) When others see you sitting in this posture, they are inspired. (5) The Buddha and his disciples used this posture and bestowed it upon us. Asanga's Sravaka Levels says that, in light of these reasons, you should sit cross-legged. It also says that you keep your body straight so that lethargy and sleepiness will not occur.*

*Thus, at the outset you have to meet these eight points of physical conduct, particularly the calming of breathing just as I have described above.*

It's important that we try to adopt this eight-pointed posture. Within these Lama Tsong Khapa mentions the calming of breathing as being particularly important. It's also known as 'balancing the breath'. Literally it's 'balancing the winds' but you're trying to balance the breath because the mind goes outward just as the breath or the winds can. By balancing your breathing, you can get your mind to be balanced and abide inward.

Now we have a new section:

### ***(b'') The meditative process***

*Broadly speaking, the "stages of the path" tradition indicates that you achieve calm abiding by means of the eight antidotes which eliminate the five faults listed in Maitreya's Separation of the Middle from the Extremes (Madhyanta-vibhaga). Personal instructions passed down from Geshe Lak-sor-wa (dGe-bshes Lag-sor-ba) explain that in addition to that you have to achieve calm abiding through the six powers, the four types of attention, and the nine mental states which Asanga's Sravaka Levels explains. The scholar Yon-den-drak (Yon-tan-grags) says:*

*The methods of the nine mental states are included in the four attentions, and the six faults and the eight applications which are their antidotes are the method [for achieving] all concentrations. This is agreed upon in all teachings about the techniques for meditative stabilization—including those in most sutras, Maitreya's Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras and Separation of the Middle from the Extremes, Asanga's texts on the levels, and Kamalasila's three Stages of Meditation.*

This section mentions a number of elements; the five faults and the eight applications that are antidotes to those, and the six powers, the four mental attentions, and the nine stages of mental abiding. These

© Chenrezig Buddhist Study Programme Lam Rim Chen Mo 2004 – lightly edited transcripts for course participants only will all be discussed later in the text. After all, the way that we achieve calm abiding can be explained through these different elements. We'll get to them with time.

*Those who first have the preconditions for concentration will definitely attain concentration if they use these methods to work at it. Nowadays, supposedly profound oral traditions on meditative stabilization lack even the names of these techniques. These texts do not indicate that you will achieve concentration without the preconditions for concentration and these techniques, even if you work at it for a long time.*

*This is stated in his text on the stages of the path; it speaks of reaching pure certainty about how the classic texts present the way to achieve concentration.*

This paragraph towards the top of page is from the scholar Yon-den-drak's text on lam-rim. It's not written by Lama Tsong Khapa. Rather, he's quoting it showing that he mentions the four attentions, nine mental states, the six faults, the eight applications, and so forth. The 'six faults' are usually presented as five but can also be divided into six. Lama Tsong Khapa speaks of reaching pure certainty about how the classic texts present the way to achieve concentration and praises Yon-den-drak's presentation of these points because it is based on the classic texts of Maitreya, Asanga, and so forth.

*In that regard, since the general way of teaching the stages of the paths of the three vehicles is demonstrated at length in the noble Asanga's five texts on the levels [grounds], the texts that teach these practices are very extensive. Among these five, one text gives a detailed explanation, while the others do not. Asanga's Compendium of Determinations (Viniscaya-samgraham) says that his Sravaka Levels should be used to understand calm abiding and insight, so it is the Sravaka Levels that is most extensive. Also, the venerable Maitreya discusses the methods of the nine mental states and the eight antidotes in his Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras and Separation of the Middle from the Extremes. Following them, such learned Indian masters as Haribhadra, Kamalasila, and Ratnakarasanti wrote much about the process of achieving concentration. On the general sense of concentration the tantras are very consistent with the explanations in these classic texts, except that they use different objects of meditation, such as divine bodies, drops, and syllables.*

The discussion of divine bodies, drops, and syllables is found only in mantra, isn't it. So except for the object that one focuses on in meditation, the general structure of concentration and how it develops is the same.

*In particular, texts in the sutra class provide very extensive discussions of problems—such as the five faults of concentration—and ways of clearing them away.*

The Precious Lord then goes on to say:

*However, those who know how to practice on the basis of those classic texts alone are as rare as stars in the daytime. Those who impose on those texts the stains of their defective understanding derive only a superficial comprehension and maintain that the instructions that reveal the quintessential meaning lie elsewhere. When the time comes for them to put into practice the process of achieving concentration which these texts explain, they do not even research how to do it.*

In the Tibetan, rather than say 'they do not even research how to do it', Lama Tsong Khapa says 'it would appear that they don't even develop doubt about how it might be done'.

*The personal instructions of this treatise stress only the practices from the beginning to the end, which are derived from the classic texts. Therefore, herein I will explain the methods used to achieve concentration drawing on the classic texts.*

© Chenrezig Buddhist Study Programme Lam Rim Chen Mo 2004 – lightly edited transcripts for course participants only  
Up to this point we've received some advice and we've been looking at the general situation surrounding this topic. There's nothing that we don't understand there is there. Everything is very clear.

*This explanation of the meditative process has two sections:*

- 1. How to develop flawless concentration (Chapters 2-4)*
- 2. The stages in which the mental states are thereby developed (Chapter 5)*

***(I'') How to develop flawless concentration***

*This has three parts:*

- 1. What to do prior to focusing the attention on an object of meditation*
- 2. What to do while focusing on an object of meditation. (Chapters 2-3)*
- 3. What to do after you focus on an object of meditation (Chapter 4)*

***(a) What to do prior to focusing the attention on an object of meditation***

*If you cannot stop the laziness of being disinclined to cultivate concentration and of enjoying things that are not conducive to it, from the outset you will not gain entry into concentration; even if you do attain it once, you will be unable to sustain it, so it will quickly deteriorate. Therefore, it is most crucial to stop laziness in the beginning.*

Before placing one's attention on an object, it's important that we stop laziness. How many types of laziness are there?

Students: two...three.

Sometimes three are mentioned, sometimes two. Initially Lama Tsong Khapa speaks of two but then subsequently when he explains, it becomes clear that there are three. Good! Excellent! Amazing!

The laziness we're talking of here is mainly the laziness of being disinclined to meditate. That of not enjoying cultivating concentration. Enjoying the cultivation of concentration, or delighting in that, is joyous effort. The factor that it's incompatible with that joyous effort is the laziness that does not enjoy it - that is disinclined to do such a thing. We must stop that.

*When you attain pliancy in which your mind and body are full of delight and bliss, you will stop laziness inasmuch as you will be able to cultivate virtue all day and night without weariness. To develop this pliancy, you must be able to have continuous enthusiasm for the concentration that causes pliancy.*

The translation reads; '*continuous enthusiasm*' but actually this would be more consistently translated as '*continuous joyous effort*'. In the section on joyous effort, Lama Tsong Khapa explained how to become proficient or skilled in joyous effort. In describing how to do it continuously, Lama Tsong Khapa mentions '*the power of relinquishment*', of setting things aside.

Do you remember the power of relinquishment?

Joyous effort doesn't refer to this very busy hard work all the time, does it? No! It refers to a moderate yet continuous application of effort. It's important that you're neither too slack nor too tense. Your effort should be moderate, balanced between slackness and tightness or tenseness, that's where the power of relinquishment comes in. That type of effort is important with all virtues.

Continuing on, it says:

© Chenrezig Buddhist Study Programme Lam Rim Chen Mo 2004 – lightly edited transcripts for course participants only  
*To develop this enthusiasm, you need a continuous, intense yearning [aspiration] that is intent on concentration. As a cause for this yearning [aspiration] you need steadfast confidence [faith] in and fascination with the good qualities of concentration. So to start with, cultivate again and again a confidence [faith] that is aware of the good qualities of concentration.*

The English translation of this and the previous section leaves a little bit to be desired. There are eight applications which are remedies for the five faults. Of those eight applications, the first four act as remedies to laziness and these are mentioned in the above passages

The text says that you need a ‘*steadfast faith in, and fascination that sees the good qualities of concentration*’. So here ‘faith’ is mentioned; a steadfast or stable faith that is captivated, because you see the good qualities of concentration. Faith is the first of the four remedies but it is mentioned last here. It is a faith that sees the good qualities of a thing. It is ‘fascinated’ in the sense that you are completely ‘taken’ or, you might even say, ‘enamored’, because you see the good qualities of concentration.

Then an ‘*aspiration that’s intent on [or strives for] concentration*’ will arise in dependence upon that. So based on faith, you develop aspiration; the second of the four applications or remedies.

If you have fierce aspiration, that will lead to joyous effort. So through aspiration comes effort; joyous effort.

Then, through the application of joyous effort, pliancy comes. From joyous effort comes pliancy. The pliancy here however is not the pliancy that occurs when you develop actual calm abiding or insight. When you achieve actual calm abiding and insight, you get really great or strong forms of mental delight and physical bliss that are associated with the physical and mental pliancy. Here this is a different type of pliancy we’re talking about.

Is that all right? These four: faith, aspiration, joyous effort, and pliancy are the remedies for laziness.

We’ll leave it there today with this section describing the four antidotes or remedies to laziness. The discussion continues on to the next page but our time is up. It’s gone a little bit over, so we’ll leave it there for today. Do you have any questions?

Student: I would think that a person who is trying to achieve calm abiding would want to do so in silence. They wouldn’t want to talk to anybody. Here, rather than espouse that, Lama Tsong Khapa talks about the need to ‘minimize’ one’s socializing.

Geshela: Why would it be better not to talk to anyone - to be in silence as opposed to minimizing your socializing? Here, in the text, it says it’s better to minimize or reduce your socializing, right? You might say, it’s best to have a minimal amount of socializing. It says that doesn’t it!

So what do you mean? Are you saying it’s best not to have a telephone at your place? I mean, there you are at your place, and no one else is around. What else is there but the telephone? If you’re going to socialize, you’re going to socialize over the telephone.

[translator] I said but it mentions good companions, though. He said well, maybe an attendant or someone around - perhaps. There’s no one really around anyway, is there?

It mentions the importance of good companions, but actually good companions are meant to have a number of particular attributes. For instance they’re meant to be quite skilled in getting their point across in communicating, and so forth. You may need someone to help out; someone who’s good at doing things. This is the kind of thing meant.

© Chenrezig Buddhist Study Programme Lam Rim Chen Mo 2004 – lightly edited transcripts for course participants only  
Geshela says it may be good to stay silent, but at the same time, the importance of good companions with the right attributes is also encouraged. Geshe Doga once said “Ah! People talk about doing retreats silently, but I don’t know about this! It seems that when people come out of silent retreat, they’ve basically turned crazy. There they are, they can’t stop all their discursive thoughts, but they’ve stopped their mouth by being silent. Then, when they come out of retreat, here they are, talking like crazy people. All these thoughts just running, running, running, and they haven’t talked for so long. So I don’t know. It doesn’t seem to be so good”

Properly speaking when doing retreat we ought to try and minimize our contact with things like newspapers and the news, and all sorts of different affairs. It’s best to really minimize those. But then again, what if you have a question about what you’re doing. Suppose you want to ask a dharma related question, to get advice from a lama, or something like this. If you need to discuss a point, for you then not to get the advice or guidance you need because you are keeping silence would be rather silly wouldn’t it?

Furthermore it is said that even when in retreat, you should be allowed to meet a doctor, or have any other meetings that are required. Really, in retreat you should be allowed to have the opportunity to speak with somebody - a teacher for instance, about questions related to the practice, and what you’re doing. It’s better if you do that.

Do you understand? Silence is mainly intended to stop idle or senseless speech. Otherwise, if you’re silent, what happens if you get sick? The doctor comes along what do you do? You point to the part that’s sick? You’re going to have to act like Geshela did when he first came here, not knowing English. (laughs)

We’ll leave it there for today.

**Buddhist Studies Programme**

**Subject : Lam Rim Chen Mo Module 3**

**Teacher : Geshe Tashi Tsering**

**Interpreter : Ven Lozang Zopa**

**Number of the teaching: 20**

**Date of the teaching: 19 November 2004**

We are on the section, *How to train in each*: calm abiding and insight. There is a section on how to train in calm abiding, how to train in insight and how to train in the integration of the two.

The section on how to train in calm abiding has three parts:

1. *Relying on the preconditions for calm abiding*
2. *How to cultivate calm abiding on that basis*
3. *The measure of successful cultivation of calm abiding*

**Of the different pre-requisites or preconditions for calm abiding, the first is**

- *dwelling in an appropriate area.*

**So the first of six: dwelling in an appropriate area. In the section on dwelling in an appropriate area, there are five sub-divisions related to the five attributes. Then the remaining five are given:**

- *Having little desire*
- *Being content*
- *Completely giving up many activities*
- *Pure ethical discipline and*
- *Completely getting rid of thoughts of desire, etc.*

We've covered all those points and arrived at the next section,

*How to cultivate serenity on that basis*, where there are *two parts*: the *preparation* and the *actual practice*.

The section on preparation isn't very long. It mentions the need to engage in the six preparatory practices in particular. These include cleaning the area in which you do your practice and setting out images of the tathagatas and so forth. Actually we discussed these quite a while ago, in the first module of this BSP. This is also explained in the practice of Jörchö, which is usually done with Guru Puja in the morning. This has all been explained hasn't it?

*And especially cultivate the mind of enlightenment for a long time. In support of that you should do the meditative practices that are shared with persons of small and medium capacities.*

These are the preparations.

*The actual practice has two parts: the meditative posture and the meditative process itself.*

The meditative posture refers to what is often called the seven-pointed posture – it can also be explained as having eight points – in short it's the physical posture which you adopt for meditation.

That brings us to the section on the meditative process itself. It's there that we look at the five faults and the eight applications that are remedies to those faults, as explained in Maitreya's text *Separation of the Middle from the Extremes*. We covered this yesterday, didn't we?

According to the Precious Lord, we should cultivate concentration as is explained in the classic texts. Therefore, in order to do that, we need to consider:

1. *How to develop flawless concentration*
2. *The stages in which the mental states are thereby developed*

1. *What to do prior to focusing the attention on an object of meditation*
2. *What to do while focusing on an object of meditation*
3. *What to do after you focus on an object of meditation*

Notice that before you discuss how to develop flawless concentration and the way in which these stages of mental abiding develop, there's mention of the five faults and the eight applications which act as remedies for those. They are spoken about briefly and then you go into more detailed instructions on how to develop flawless concentration and how you proceed through these nine stages and so forth, and you look at what you do while you're focusing on an object and so forth. Keep in mind that this can all be traced back to the meditative process itself, that is the stages of meditation.

The first fault is laziness, which we must abandon. There are four antidotes or remedies for this: faith, aspiration, joyous effort and pliancy. The worst aspect of this would be the disinclination to cultivate concentration, not enjoying it. We must overcome that and develop a state of mind that sees the good qualities of concentration.

We must develop that mind that wishes to achieve concentration - an aspiration intent on concentration. We also need the joyous effort that trains in concentration, the enjoyment of engaging in concentration and the work involved in that. Through joyous effort comes the increase of mental delight and physical bliss associated with pliancy.

So we left off on the bottom of page 33, just before the quote from Maitreya's text:

*So to start with, cultivate again and again a confidence that is aware of the good qualities of concentration. When you see this process in practice, you will understand this most vital point with the clearest sense of certainty. Maitreya's Separation of the Middle from the Extremes states:*

*The basis and what is based upon it  
Are the cause and its result.*

*Here, the "basis" is yearning (aspiration), which is the basis of endeavor (effort); "what is based upon it" is the endeavor (joyous effort, or effort you might say). The cause of yearning (aspiration) is confident faith in the good qualities of concentration while the result of endeavor (effort) is pliancy.*

The most important points in this are to understand the good qualities of concentration and to recollect them again and again.

*In this context, the good qualities of concentration are as follows:  
When you reach calm abiding, your mind is filled with delight and your body filled with bliss, so you are happy in this lifetime. Also, since you have attained physical and mental pliancy, you can turn your attention to any virtuous object of meditation you choose. Since you have quelled uncontrolled distraction toward the wrong sort of objects, you are not constantly involved in wrongdoing and any virtue you do is very powerful. Based on calm abiding, you can achieve good qualities such as the superknowledges and supernormal powers. In particular, it is on the basis of calm abiding that you develop the knowledge of insight that knows the real nature, whereby you can quickly cut the root of cyclic existence. If you reflect on any of these good qualities, you will become aware of, and meditate upon, things that strengthen your inclination to cultivate concentration. When this inclination arises, you will be continually prompted from within –*

How many good qualities of concentration are there? Did someone say five? Do we have six? [laughter]

It says that when you reach calm abiding, your mind is filled with delight and your body filled with bliss, so you have happiness in the phenomena that are seen. 'The phenomena that are seen' means the

© Chenrezig Buddhist Study Programme Lam Rim Chen Mo 2004 – lightly edited transcripts for course participants only  
things that you experience in this very life – and hence the English translation here. There's a technical term, which we may have discussed before, that means 'visible dharmas' or 'phenomena that are seen'? When we talk about phenomena that 'are seen', we are talking about things in this life.

We talked about it in the section on karma, cause and effect. There are different types of effects. Effects that are experienced as phenomena that are seen – in other words, in this life; effects that are experienced after rebirth – in the next life; and effects that are experienced in lifetimes beyond that, many lifetimes, many rebirths later.

Geshela said that the section on karma and its effects is one of the most important. It seems that we haven't been reading through it, have we? Cause and effect is found in the stages of the path shared with persons of small capacity, again in the stages of the path shared with persons of medium capacity and in the stages of the path of a person of great capacity. It's discussed in a variety of places in the text.

Karma and its effects is of utmost importance. Properly speaking, when we apply the teachings, we begin by applying karma and its effects. Isn't it true that the practice, the application of the dharma begins with karma?

Now Geshela said this before, perhaps you haven't taken it to heart yet - the Buddha's teachings have their root within compassion.

And sometimes this statement is altered slightly to say that they have their roots in emptiness compassion, which is a point that Tsong Khapa was making as well, when he discussed the importance of understanding emptiness to ensure that our virtues do not become true origins in the ordinary sense.

The point here is that the root of the Buddha's teachings is compassion and we must understand this. Compassion is a mental factor, a state of mind, that involves giving up the ill will and the harm directed towards other sentient beings. And this begins with karma and its effects.

Giving up ill will and the harm directed towards sentient beings, giving up killing, giving up stealing, giving up the things that harm sentient beings - is karma and its effects. This is where the application of the Buddha's teachings begins. This is a basic principle of Buddhism. This is the way it works, which we should understand. It's very important.

The first good quality then is that you will abide in happiness in this lifetime.

Then the second quality is:

*since you have attained physical and mental pliancy, you can turn your attention to any virtuous object of meditation you choose.*

You can turn your attention to any virtuous object of meditation you choose because you have achieved the pliancy of body and mind. This is the reason.

Perhaps we should add a slight qualification to that: because you have achieved the pliancy of body and mind through the power of concentration. Can you see how this works as a reason? You are capable of turning your attention to any virtuous object of meditation that you please because you have achieved physical and mental pliancy through the force of concentration.

Then the third quality is:

*since you have quelled uncontrolled distraction toward the wrong sort of objects, you are not constantly involved in wrongdoing and any virtue you do is very powerful.*



© Chenrezig Buddhist Study Programme Lam Rim Chen Mo 2004 – lightly edited transcripts for course participants only  
Geshela says that this whole sentence should be taken as a single quality, because the main point is that the virtue you do becomes very powerful. Having achieved calm abiding, any virtue you do becomes extremely powerful. This is what it comes down to.

Why is it that any virtue you do is very powerful once you have achieved calm abiding? Because you have quelled uncontrolled distraction toward the wrong sorts of objects. Another reason right?

Thus, you are not constantly involved in wrongdoing and faults, and for that reason, any virtue that you do is very powerful.

So that's three. Then:

*based on calm abiding, you can achieve good qualities such as the superknowledges and supernormal powers.*

The text mentions superknowledges and supernormal powers that are developed on the basis of calm abiding. These are superknowledges and supernormal powers that have arisen through application or practice. There are some sentient beings who develop superknowledges for instance through the force of karma, but that's a different situation, a different story. Here we're talking about superknowledges and supernormal powers that arise once you've achieved calm abiding, through the force of that application or practice.

Generally speaking, good qualities are either good qualities that have arisen through application or practice or good qualities that have arisen through the force of rebirth.

This second type of quality can be established simply through a being taking a particular rebirth. You are all probably quite familiar with this, no need to go into it any more.

*In particular, it is on the basis of calm abiding that you develop the knowledge of insight or the realisation of insight that knows the real nature, whereby you can quickly cut the root of cyclic existence.*

If you achieve calm abiding, you can then go on to achieve insight and if you achieve insight then you can quickly cut the root of cyclic existence. So how many qualities do we have then?

We have five. We need to recollect these good qualities and reflect on them.

*If you reflect on any of these good qualities, you will become aware of, and meditate upon, things that strengthen your inclination to cultivate concentration. When this inclination arises, you will be continually prompted from within to cultivate concentration, so it will be easy to attain concentration. Also, since you will cultivate it repeatedly even after attaining it, you will be unlikely to lose it.*

What are we talking about here? What to do prior to focusing your attention on the object of meditation. This is presented mainly so as to stop laziness.

In effect, Tsong Khapa is saying that what you must do first, before focusing your attention on an object of meditation, is stop laziness. In order to stop laziness, you must develop faith, and to develop faith, you must see the good qualities of concentration. Hence the explanation of those good qualities.

And then, on the basis of the faith aspiration and joyous effort and pliancy and so forth, arise. That brings us to the second section:

### ***What to do while focusing on an object of meditation***

*This has two parts:*

1. *Identifying the object of meditation upon which your attention is set and*
2. *How to focus your mind on the object of meditation*

The section on *identifying the object of meditation* has two parts:

1. *A general presentation of objects of meditation*
2. *Identifying objects of meditation for this context*

Notice how you have two parts, identifying the object of meditation in general and identifying the object of meditation for this context, this context being the cultivation of calm abiding. The presentation of the objects of meditation in general refers to the presentations that you'll find in the classic texts, where they discuss objects that you might focus on in meditation. It's possible that there would be quite a few in that category.

So the section on

***A general presentation of objects of meditation*** has three parts:

1. *The objects of meditation themselves*
2. *Who should meditate on which objects*
3. *Synonyms of the object of meditation*

***[(1')] The objects of meditation themselves]***

*The Bhagavan stated that yogis have four types of objects of meditation, these being: [1] universal objects of meditation, [2] objects of meditation for purifying your behavior, [3] objects of meditation for expertise, and [4] objects of meditation for purifying afflictions.*

***[(a'') Universal objects of meditation]***

*Then there are four types of universal objects of meditation: [a] discursive images, [b] non-discursive images, [c] the limits of existence, and [d] achievement of your purpose. [491]*

*The two types of images [(discursive and non-discursive)] are posited in terms of the observer: the first is the object of insight, and the second is the object of calm abiding. The image is not the actual specifically characterized object upon which your mind is focused, but rather the appearance of that object's aspect to your mind. When you carry out analysis while observing an object, then the image is discursive since analytical thinking is present.*

So, a discursive image. Remember that there are four types of universal objects of meditation. The first of which is a discursive image. Now we go onto the second type, the non-discursive image.

*When you stabilize your mind without analysis while observing an object, the image is said to be non-discursive since analytical thinking is absent. As for these images, what objects of meditation are they images of? They are the images, or aspects, of the five objects of meditation for purifying behavior, the five objects of meditation for expertise, and the two objects of meditation for purifying afflictions.*

These will be described below.

The limits of existence are posited with reference to the observed objects. So in the four types of universal objects of meditation, the third is limits of existence. That's what we're talking about: *The limits of existence for the diversity of phenomena, which are expressed in the statement, "Just this is all there is; there is nothing more";* so the first of two within limits of existence refers to diverse phenomena.

*And the limits of existence for the real nature, expressed in the statement, "This alone is how things exist; they do not exist in any other way."*

So you have the nature of phenomena. Nature in this case being reality. What is diversity anyway?

We have five aggregates which we often talk about - the aggregate of form, the aggregate of feeling, the aggregate of discrimination or recognition, the aggregate of formation and the aggregate of primary consciousness.

It says that all composite phenomena can be included, subsumed under these five aggregates. The text says: *in the case of the diversity of phenomena, this means that the five aggregates include all composite phenomena;*  
and then goes on to say *the eighteen constituents and twelve sources include all phenomena.*

Eighteen constituents: The way that these 18 are described are in three groups of six, where you have the group of six objects that are focused on, the group of six faculties (that is, sense powers) that are supports, and the group of six primary consciousnesses which are the supported.

The first group of six which are the objects you focus on are

- visible forms;
- audible sounds;
- smells;
- taste;
- tactile objects; and
- what's called phenomena

Then the group of six faculties begin with the eye faculty or sense power and go down to the mental faculty or mental sense power. And then in dependence upon that, you have six primary consciousnesses.

Then there are the 12 sources. Six inner sources, six outer sources. The six outer sources are the source of form, the source of sounds, the source of smells, the source of taste, the source of tactile objects and the source of phenomena. These are the ones mentioned in the *Heart of Wisdom Sutra*.

And then the six inner sources are the sources from the eye source down to the mental source.

*And the four truths include everything there is to know; there is nothing else beyond this.*  
that is, all objects of knowledge, objects of awareness. The four truths of course are true suffering, true origins, true cessations and true paths.

These things are what the term “diversity of phenomena” refer to.

*In the case of the nature, (that is, reality) this means that reason establishes the truth or reality of those objects of meditation.*

This real nature refers to a phenomenon's final way of being or mode of abidance. In other words, it refers to emptiness.

Then you have the *achievement of purpose*, which is posited in terms of the result.

*With either calm abiding or insight you direct your attention to the images of those objects of meditation. Then you stabilize on them, become accustomed to them, and, by virtue of repeated practice, you become free from your dysfunctional tendencies, undergoing a fundamental transformation. [492]*

[Interpreter: remember, dysfunctional tendencies are the negative habitual tendencies.]

That's enough for these universal objects of meditation. We go onto the next section:

*Objects of meditation for purifying behavior are objects that purify behavior in which attachment or the like is predominant. There are five such objects of meditation.*

*The five are: [a] ugliness, [b] loving-kindness, [c] dependent-arising, [d] differentiation of constituents, and [e] inhalation and exhalation. Of these, the objects of meditation on ugliness consist of the thirty-six uglinesses pertaining to the body,<sup>61</sup> such as head and body hair, and external uglinesses such as a corpse's turning blue.<sup>62</sup> When an aspect of impurity and ugliness arises in your mind, you keep your attention on it.*

When we're troubled by attachment and our attachment is creating problems for us, it's at that time that we meditate on ugliness. The meditation on ugliness is said to be helpful for overcoming attachment. In short you think about how such things are sources for impurity.

There are impurities that are still connected with consciousness and thereby included within a continuum and others that are not - hence inner versus outer. Once the consciousness has left a body and you're left with a corpse, this would be considered an outer source of impurity.

*Loving kindness involves focusing on friends, enemies, and persons toward whom you have neutral feelings, and having an attitude—at the level of meditative equipoise—of providing them with help and happiness. Keeping your attention on these objects of meditation with a loving attitude is called "meditation on loving kindness"; loving kindness refers both to the subjective attitude and to the object,*

*Regarding the object of meditation on dependent-arising: All there is in the past, the present, and the future is dependent-arising in which effects that are mere phenomenal factors simply arise based on mere phenomenal factors. Apart from these, there is no performer of actions or experiencer of their effects. You focus your attention on this fact, and hold it there.*

*As for the object of meditation on the differentiation of the constituents: You differentiate the factors of the six constituents—earth, water, fire, air, space, and consciousness. You focus your attention on them and hold it there.*

Notice how constituents can be explained in different ways - in particular two different ways. Please be aware of the context in which the word "constituent" is being used, otherwise, you will mistakenly associate it with the wrong thing. We first talked about constituents as the 18 constituents which were the six objects focused on (visible forms and sound etc), the six sense powers and the six primary consciousnesses. Here, in this context, the six constituents are a reference to earth, water, fire, wind and then in addition to that space and consciousness.

Rather than say wind, they say air here. You could talk about the earth constituent, the water constituent, air constituent. But there's a question you must look into. If it's the earth constituent, is it necessarily earth? If you don't stipulate what you're talking about, you can create problems. Better to avoid the problems in the first place.

Perhaps you remember that it is said that if a thing is form then it necessarily the eight substantial particles, referring to things like the earth constituent, water constituent, air constituent etc. If you don't stipulate here that you're talking about the earth constituent then you might run into problems, implying that there's earth, water, fire and air in everything. They say even very subtle particles have these eight particles of substance. Notice how, at the beginning, it says six constituents. That word "constituent" should be applied to each word that follows: earth constituent, water constituent, fire constituent etc.

Those are the objects of meditation for purifying your behaviour. Next we have:

### ***Objects of meditation for expertise***

*There are also five objects of meditation for expertise, namely expertise in [a] the aggregates, [b] the constituents, once again [c] the sources, [d] dependent-arising, and [e] what is and is not possible. The aggregates are the five aggregates of form and the others which we already listed off. [feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness]. Expertise in these is knowing that, apart from these aggregates, the self and what pertains to the self do not exist...*

We should know this. There is no self or thing that belongs to the self that is a thing distinct from the aggregates, is there?

When the text says that apart from the aggregates, the self and what pertains to the self do not exist, it's saying that there is no self (or that which pertains to the self) that is distinct from those aggregates. The aggregates are, after all, the basis for imputing self and hence the self,, and that which pertains to it are a single entity, the same entity.

Is there a self that exists apart from these aggregates? Is there a self that is other than the aggregates? Does such a thing exist? Is there no person that is other than the form aggregate?

Student: No

Student 2: In the formless realm there is.

Geshela: Very clever. Something is moving in her mind.

Chödrön! There is a person other than the form aggregate isn't there?

Chödrön: There's a person that's merely imputed ...

Geshela: That's not the form aggregate though is it?

Chödrön: No

Geshela: So there is a person that is other than the form aggregate, isn't there?

Yes, yes!

There's nothing to think about, the answer is yes! You're not going to find what you're looking for by looking around.

Furthermore, the aggregate of primary consciousness is not the person is it? The person is other than the aggregate of primary consciousness. The same holds with the aggregate of feeling and discrimination and formation or compositional factors. The person is other than those things. Those are not the person are they? Take the person, it is other than the five aggregates. Is that the case?

Chödrön: Yes

Geshela: Tsa! So, you just got over saying that there was no person other than the five aggregates, so it follows that there is a person other than the five aggregates! Yes of course, there is, isn't there.

© Chenrezig Buddhist Study Programme Lam Rim Chen Mo 2004 – lightly edited transcripts for course participants only  
But the Precious Lord Lama Tsong Khapa says that apart from these aggregates, the self and that which pertains to the self do not exist? So to know that there is no self and what pertains to the self apart from these aggregates is expertise. That's what it says. *Expertise is knowing that, apart from these aggregates, there is no self or what pertains to the self.*

In actuality, there is no person that is an entity distinct from the aggregates, though it seems to us as if there is. Though when we consider the person and the aggregates, it seems as if they were individual things that actually could be seen so you have the impression that there is a person that is an entity distinct from those aggregates. But when you investigate and analyse, you find that that is not the case. Geshela thinks that's how this statement should be read. There's no person as an entity distinct from those aggregates.

The person is merely imputed on those aggregates, there is no person that is an entity distinct from those. It is similar with the gumpa: the gumpa is merely imputed onto the basis for designating or imputing it. There is no entity that is distinct from that.

It says *expertise in these is knowing that, apart from these aggregates, the self and what pertains to the self do not exist.*

Continuing on, *the constituents are the eye and the others of the eighteen constituents*, which we just discussed. *Expertise in them is knowing the causal conditions by which those constituents arise from their own seeds. [493] The sources are the eye and the others of the twelve sources. Expertise in these is knowing that the six internal sources are the dominant conditions for the six consciousnesses, that the six external sources are the object-conditions, and that the mind which has just ceased is the immediately preceding condition.* It's quite a clear explanation here. The six internal sources (the six faculties or sense powers) are the dominant or governing conditions for the six primary consciousnesses. The six external sources are the six object-conditions.

*And that the mind which has just ceased is the immediately preceding condition.*

Primary sense consciousnesses are based on a physical sense power, a physical sense faculty - physical in the sense of possessing form. That is not the case with the primary mental consciousness. This is based upon a mental sense faculty or mental sense power which is not a possessor of form (something physical). The sense powers are the dominant conditions, whereas the preceding moment of mind or primary consciousness acts as a immediately preceding condition. Is that clear?

There are six types of consciousness. Of those, five are physical, form-possessors - physical in the sense that they depend upon form of some type. You have five, starting from eyes going down to a body consciousness.

These depend upon a specific sense faculty, and the sense faculty is the governing or dominant condition for them. These five sense faculties are said to possess form (be physical) in the sense that they are subtle forms. The nose, the eyeballs etc are the houses that support the sense faculties, not the sense faculties themselves. When this is translated into English it can be slightly confusing because when we say eye, we're actually referring to the eye sense faculty, not the eyeball which is the house that supports the eye sense faculty. So the term "eye" refers to or is a name given to the eye sense faculty.

The dominant condition for the mental consciousness is the mental sense faculty. The mental sense faculty is not form. In the text it says *the mind which has just ceased.*

Therefore, you can have five minds that have just ceased. From the primary eye consciousness down to the primary mental consciousness, which have just ceased, thereby acting as an immediately preceding condition. In fact in the root text of the Abhidharma, there is a quote which says that all six can be

© Chenrezig Buddhist Study Programme Lam Rim Chen Mo 2004 – lightly edited transcripts for course participants only immediately preceding conditions, in other words, the six primary consciousnesses act as immediately preceding conditions. It's stated so clearly in the text that Geshela wanted to bring it up.

*The mind which has just ceased is the immediately preceding condition.*

*Dependent-arising is the twelve factors.<sup>63</sup> Expertise in them is knowing that they are impermanent, suffering, and devoid of self.*

Next we have

*What is and is not possible.*

*What is and is not possible refers to such things as it being possible for a pleasant fruition to arise from a virtuous action, but not possible for a pleasant fruition to arise from a non-virtuous action. Expertise in this is knowing that things are this way.*

Earlier, when we talked about certain qualities that are conducive to practising the teachings etc, we saw that one needs complete faculties and faith in the *ne* (*gnas*). So if you translated it in the same way here, it would be faith in what's possible, but that's not actually the implication. Here the word *ne* refers to something different. Here *ne* or what is possible refers to the fact that pleasant effects come from virtuous causes etc. and unpleasant effects arise from non-virtuous causes.

What is not possible? It is not possible for the effect of suffering to come from virtuous causes. From non-virtuous causes to come happiness, from virtuous causes to come suffering, is not possible. Earlier when we talked about faith in the *ne* we talked about 'faith in the source' because the word *ne* there refers to the three scriptural baskets, or collections, the three pitakas or for instance the lam rim.

*Expertise in this is knowing that things are this way. This is a particular case of expertise in dependent-arising; the difference is that you understand diverse causes.*

What this sentence is saying is that you have a particular type of expertise, expertise in dependent arising, which is distinguished by the fact that you understand diverse causes, that is to say you know, you understand that happiness arises in dependence upon virtuous causes and suffering arises in dependence upon non-virtuous causes.

*When you use these as objects of meditation for cultivating calm abiding, you keep your attention on just one of the perspectives in which the aggregates, etc. may be known.*

That's a brief discussion of how it is that these different aspects are taken to mind. Now moving on:

### ***Objects of meditation for purifying afflictions***

*Purifying afflictions means either merely reducing the strength of the seeds of the afflictions or else utterly eradicating the seeds. In the former case, the objects of meditation are the comparative coarseness of each lower stage and comparative calmness of each higher stage, proceeding from the level of the desire realm up to the level of Nothingness.*

This material is already familiar isn't it? Once you've achieved calm abiding, if you were to follow mundane paths, you could go all the way to what's known as the peak of existence. To attain the peak of existence, what affliction have you purified? What affliction do you purify in achieving the peak of existence. Having achieved calm abiding you go through the first, second, third, fourth meditative stabilisations and then go on to limitless space, limitless consciousness, nothing-at-all, into the peak of existence. The last of these is the peak of existence. In achieving that, what affliction do you purify? We're talking about objects of meditation for purifying afflictions, so ...

Student: the afflictions of nothingness / nothing at all.

Geshela: thank you

Geshela has already discussed how we proceed from lower to higher by purifying the disturbing emotions, the afflictions of the lower level. As it says here,  
*of each lower stage and comparative calmness of each higher stage, proceeding from the level of the desire realm up to the level of Nothingness.*

A person in this case cannot purify the afflictions of the peak of existence. There are no mundane paths which go beyond that. Therefore there are the afflictions of the peak of existence within the continuum of a being in the peak of existence, but that person cannot purify those through the practice of a mundane path. As it says here, in this case the person has merely reduced the strength of the seeds of the afflictions they have not utterly eradicated them. It says so in the text, doesn't it. Here, reducing the strength refers to stopping them from being manifest, or stopping manifest afflictions.

Now it says that of the two: merely reducing the strength of the afflictions or else utterly eradicating the seeds? Here in the latter case, where you utterly eradicate the seeds, *the objects of meditation are impermanence and the other of the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths.*

When the four features of each of the four truths are explained, there are 16 aspects. These are described in 70 Topics and related to the fourth chapter of the Ornament of Clear Realisation and Grounds and Paths ...

For instance, with the first of the four noble truths, then you have the four aspects of: impermanent, in the nature of suffering, empty and selfless. Similarly, you can talk about four aspects for each of the four truths, making 16.

They're not that difficult. *When you use these as objects of meditation for cultivating serenity, you do not analyze, but instead keep your attention on any one cognition of an aspect of those objects that appears to it.*

*Kamalasila's second Stages of Meditation states that objects of meditation are three. (1) After you have brought together everything that all twelve branches of scripture say about determining, settling into, and having settled into reality, you stabilize your mind upon it. (2) You observe the aggregates, etc., which include phenomena to some extent. (3) You stabilize your mind on the physical form of the Buddha, which you have seen and heard about.*

*How do you stabilize your mind on things such as the aggregates? [494] When you understand how all compositional things can be included within the five aggregates, you mentally collect them, gradually, into these five aggregates. Then you observe them and keep your attention on them. Just as discerning wisdom develops when you cultivate differentiation, so when you cultivate collectedness you develop concentration wherein your attention is brought together on the object of meditation without moving toward other objects. This is a personal instruction of the knowledge that is, Abhidharma tradition. Likewise, when you understand how all phenomena can be included within the constituents and sources, you mentally collect them into these categories and keep your attention on this.*

That's probably not an issue of vital importance at the moment. *Among these four types of objects of meditation, objects of meditation for purifying behavior, as explained, facilitate the stopping of attachment and such in those whose behavior is dominated by attachment and such.* We're talking about these four types of objects – and one of them was those that help us purify behaviours.

*They are special objects of meditation because you may readily attain concentration based upon them. Objects of meditation for expertise are conducive to the development of the insight that knows emptiness realises emptiness inasmuch as they refute a personal self that is not included among those phenomena.*



© Chenrezig Buddhist Study Programme Lam Rim Chen Mo 2004 – lightly edited transcripts for course participants only  
*Therefore, they are excellent objects of meditation for cultivating calm abiding. Objects of meditation for dispelling afflictions serve as general antidotes to the afflictions, so they have great significance.*

Next we talk about the universal objects of meditation. We have discussed each of these types of objects above. So here it says *the universal objects of meditation are not distinct from the aforementioned three.*<sup>68</sup> So other than those three, you don't have any particular universal objects of meditation. Universal objects of meditation are included within the earlier three categories. That's clear isn't it?

The text says: *Therefore, since you must achieve concentration using an object of calm abiding that has a particular purpose, those who achieve concentration using things like pebbles and twigs for objects of meditation are clearly ignorant of the teachings on objects of concentration.*

Generally speaking a person could achieve concentration depending upon a pebble or a twig. You could develop one-pointedness but in doing so you're not engaged in any particularly virtuous activity, you're not engaging in a particularly virtuous focus. It's not going to help you to develop wisdom.

*There are those who suppose that if you focus on an object of meditation and keep your attention on it, this is an apprehension of signs. They claim that meditation on emptiness means just stabilizing your mind without any basis, without focusing on any object of meditation.*

There was a similar issue brought up earlier in the text in the section on the way to rely upon the spiritual teacher when we discussed how to sustain the meditation. There is an extensive explanation in the section on "how to sustain the meditation in brief", in this latter section.

The text mentions the object of meditation, or more literally, the reference point for your meditation. Now there are some people that assert that any time you have a reference point in your meditation, then you have an apprehension of signs. Remember that the apprehension of signs is usually a reference to grasping at true existence. This person would assert that anytime there's a reference point in your position, you are meditating on true existence, or meditating on grasping at true existence. They assert then that meditation on emptiness means just stabilising your mind without any basis, without any reference point, without focusing on any object of meditation.

Our tradition would say, on the other hand, that you must have a focus for meditation.

This other person's idea *is a total misunderstanding of how to meditate on emptiness* and Lama Tsong Khapa goes on to explain why he says that you must have an object or a reference point in meditation. He says that *if you have no consciousness at the time you're meditating, then neither will you have a concentration that cultivates emptiness.* He's saying basically, first of all, is there a consciousness present when you're meditating?

If you don't have consciousness, then how can you have a concentration that's focused on emptiness?

*On the other hand, if you have consciousness, then you are conscious of something, so you have to accept that there is an object of consciousness in terms of which consciousness is posited.*

Consciousness is posited in terms of your being aware of or conscious of something, so when you have consciousness, then you have an object of consciousness as well.

*If there is an object of consciousness, then precisely that is the object of meditation of that mind, so there's the reference point, there's the object, it's what that mind is directed toward: because "object," "object of meditation," and "object of consciousness" have the same meaning. In that case, they would have to accept that even their method of concentration would apprehend signs. Thus, their approach is not correct or reasonable.*

© Chenrezig Buddhist Study Programme Lam Rim Chen Mo 2004 – lightly edited transcripts for course participants only

Some time back, a young man came to visit Geshela who was trying to practise Dzogchen and asked about how the mind works when you don't take anything as the object and don't place your attention on anything at all. Geshela then tried to explain it in these terms, talking about how we talk about there being an object because consciousness is understood in terms of what it is focused upon. The thing that consciousness focuses upon is then called an object in this tradition and thus if you have a consciousness or meditation then you must have a particular object. It seems that this explanation didn't really sit well with him and he thought there must be meditations which have no object - object-less meditations. This is a point of discussion, something we need to look into. Some people to talk about objectless meditation.

You can achieve calm abiding focused on mind. In this case, what is it that calm abiding is focused upon? Your own mind. That's what you'd have to say.

Oh, so it follows that your mind is not the observer, it is the observed? What would you say?

In this case, perhaps you'd have to say that the mind that is the observer and the mind which is the object that you're observing are different conceptual isolates.

When the introduction to mind is given in the Dzogchen tradition, then the practitioner, the student is introduced to the aspect of mind that is clear and knowing - luminous and aware. So perhaps this is how we should understand 'objectless'.

Some time ago Geshela had the opportunity to discuss these issues with a monk from Namgyal Monastery who was said to know about Dzogchen and to be a student of Namkhai Norbu Rinpoche. Unfortunately he couldn't give much explanation at all of what the process was. If you're interested in this type of meditation, then you best seek the guidance of somebody who really knows the material well. Because if you rely upon people with very superficial understanding or sort of a patchy understanding then it's quite possible that you'll be mistaken and misled.