

Profound Instruction on Śamatha

by Jamgön Mipam Rinpoche

I prostrate to Mañjuśrī!

The Benefits of the Practice in Brief

If you focus mind [upon itself] you'll come to achieve śamatha, and gradually insight (*vipaśyanā*) into the nature of things will dawn.

The Actual Instruction

Draw your ordinary awareness – that which is vividly clear, open, and brilliant – into the empty center of your heart and allow it to settle; this is what is meant by mind being turned upon itself, and within this experience there is nothing whatsoever to focus upon.

If mind exists, it should be found within the body; but it isn't to be found, not in the heart and not anywhere else for that matter.

When thoughts run wild look toward their source and remain there with a gentle tranquility.

There is no need to search for mind; simply relax, and abide where you find yourself. Nor is there any need to investigate whether there is a 'place' to abide—simply abide within mind.

It is perfectly alright simply to relax as if preparing to sleep. This is the mode of resting; anything else is unnecessary.

Just as the brilliance of sunlight increases when it refracts and reflects on turbulent waters, emotions and thoughts proliferate in an agitated mind; attempting to stop thoughts simply will not work. However, when the waters are no longer agitated but settled and calm, the reflection of the light-rays will decrease. Just like that, allow the mind, which is the source, to settle calmly without mental agitation.

Don't forget this experience, but rather use an uninterrupted flow of mindfulness and alertness to remain within the natural [empty-clear] calmness of mind – focused and fresh.

If there is an experience of blankness, relax into its natural calmness.

If there is an experience of intense clarity, relax into its natural calmness.

If there is an experience of mind going wild and giving rise to many thoughts, relax into its natural calmness.

In the naked, direct experience of whatever there is in that moment, simply relax, no matter what arises.

When these experiences of blankness, clarity and thought arise, recognize them, but don't follow or chase after them. Simply rest within the space that is the recognition of their nature.

With familiarity this [recognition] will last longer and longer. Allow any analysis or coarse thinking to subside in its own place.

On occasion, the mind may appear dull and devoid of all movement [of thought]. Clear this drowsiness and simply rest.

At other times the mind may seem as if full of movement – giving rise to all kinds of thoughts. At such times, since the movements are none other than mind, look into its nature and relax.

Don't try to prolong the experience that follows movement but stand your ground. Thought will naturally subside, and you'll come to see how agitation, calmness, or even strong feelings and emotions are all on the surface of mind – relax into its depths.

Placing mind within your heart or simply letting your mind be, these are essentially the same. The key point is to relax the mind. When mindful, the knots of thought will untie in and of themselves. [Just as a snake can loosen knots in its body without relying on another, mind, when left to rest genuinely, frees itself.]

The Faults of Being Continually Under the Influence of Discursive Thought

There is no end to discursive thoughts; they won't disappear in and of themselves. For all their multiplicity and number, they bring no real results or benefits. They can't put an end to negative mental states or suffering.

[Should you wish to be free of suffering you must get rid of its respective causes]

To this end you must recognize the faults of discursive thought and emotion.

Since time immemorial you have been under the control of these thoughts and, as a result, have not acquired any genuine qualities.

Now, give up attachment to such thoughts and do all that you can to cultivate stillness of mind.

The Qualities That Arise from Overcoming Discursive Thought

If you can do this, you will gain many qualities, such as concentration and [uncontaminated] clairvoyance. You will gain the power to abide by the natural state and find supreme bliss.

Reasons to Apply Great Effort to The Practice

With such an understanding of the faults and benefits, and having gained a degree of control over the mind, continue to practice with unflagging diligence until you achieve calm abiding. [Where you have passed through the meditative experiences of movement, achievement, familiarity, stability, and ultimate experience and achieved the samādhi of the pinnacle of saṃsāra.]

Through familiarity with this method of meditation, the moving energy/wind of activity [which gives rise to so many thoughts] will converge at your heart and enter the central channel. Wild hard-headed thoughts will be gradually pacified and your mind will become increasingly workable and positive.

[The activity wind – movement of the subtle energy/wind within the body – will naturally come to dissolve into the central channel. The effect of this is that the rider of said energy, discursive thought, will be without its mount and will naturally dissolve into empty/awareness and you will be without thought. Discursive thought will be calmed and you will abide in the open luminosity of their absence.]

Showing How Profound and Yet Easy to Practice This Particular Method of Meditation Is

Even without other modes of introduction from the guru, these pith instructions of mind resting upon itself offer a simple way to calm the mind that has none of the dangers associated with the forceful manipulation of energy.

If you are able simply to place the mind upon itself in this way, workable concentration will be won swiftly and with little difficulty.

Here there is no need for meditation upon subtle bindus/drops in the heart, nor upon letters, nor any shape and form for that matter. Nor is there a need to manipulate the breath.

The most profound method of calm abiding is simply to view and rest in the nature of your own mind and sustain its continuity mindfully. This is easy to practice and brings fast results.

A Summary of the Points: How Calm Abiding Naturally Gives Rise to Insight

First, rest quietly and let the mind settle. Then, allow the mind to look into itself. Just as when you stare into space and there is nothing to observe, discursive and negative thoughts will naturally be liberated in and of themselves. Then the secret of mind—*dharmatā*, the union of [the view of Madhyamaka, the subject of the turning of the second dharma wheel] emptiness and clarity [the subject of the third turning of the dharma wheel and the subject of mantra, the Buddha Nature]—will naturally arise. And, through the blessings of the realization of a perfect qualified master, his/her lineage and your perfect devotion, an experience of the empty clarity of the great Natural State—the spontaneous, self-emergent wisdom, which is the meaning of the Luminous Great Perfection— will arise.

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Bibliography

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