

**The Far-reaching Attitude of Meditative Stabilization – Part 3 of 9:
Actual Way to Practice Calm Abiding: Objects of Meditation** (lightly edited transcript)
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Circumstances, refuge, motivation

Last time we talked about how to create a good circumstance for doing calm abiding meditation. This includes the external circumstance where you want to meditate and the internal circumstance in terms of having few desires, being content, having good ethical conduct and lessening one's preconceptions about sense objects. Then we talked about the cushion, the meditation seat and also your posture when you sit down to meditate.

After you sit down to meditate and are all ready to go, it is good to check your motivation to make sure that your motivation for doing the practice is pure. We want to be sure that we are not just aiming to achieve the state of calm abiding because it is something far out and wonderful. We also want to be sure that we do not want to achieve calm abiding because we ourselves want to be far out and wonderful. Instead we should aim for calm abiding because we see its place in the whole Dharma practice and its value in terms of giving us a more powerful, concentrated mind to be able to actualize the other attributes of the path.

To be free from cyclic existence, we need to realize emptiness. Our realization of emptiness has to be strong. In order for our realization of emptiness to be strong, we need calm abiding. So with refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and with an awareness of the importance of calm abiding, we make the decision or the determination to try and attain full enlightenment for the benefit of others. In this way we really permeate our meditation on calm abiding with bodhicitta.

It is quite important to keep a pure motivation in what we are doing, because anything we do with bodhicitta becomes karmically very powerful. When you have bodhicitta, any small action has behind it the wish for the welfare of all beings and for their enlightenment, so any action done with bodhicitta becomes extremely powerful and creates a lot of positive potential. That positive potential then enriches the mind and enables us to attain realizations quicker.

So you see, if you do the calm abiding meditation with the motivation of bodhicitta, it helps to create positive potential which then helps you to actually attain calm abiding. Also, it then ensures that if we do attain calm abiding, we are going to use it for the proper purpose and not just get side-tracked because it is so blissful. I think this is why many of the Tibetan lamas do not put their beginning students in calm abiding retreat because it is so tempting just to get blissed out. You can then stay blissed out for a long time and not develop all the other qualities on the path. But if you have bodhicitta, it ensures that even if you get calm abiding, you are going to use it to develop the other qualities and realizations on the path so that you can actually free yourself and others. Therefore, when you do calm abiding retreat it is very important to meditate on bodhicitta at the beginning of the session.

What to do first in preparation for the actual calm abiding meditation

Meditating on the breath and generating bodhicitta

When you first sit down to meditate your mind will be a little bit turbulent and distracted, therefore it is good to watch the breath for a couple of minutes to settle the mind down and then generate the motivation with prayers. We do prayers at the beginning of the session to remind us of our motivation. It is very good to learn to cultivate the motivation on your own by explaining it to yourself in your daily meditation sessions. In this way you learn to generate bodhicitta on your own. I do it very quickly each session here to remind people of it, but it is good if you take some time in your practice and learn to do it yourself.

Seven limb prayer

At the beginning of the session, maybe do a couple of minutes of breathing, and then generate the bodhicitta. Then it is good to do the Seven Limb Prayer before you start the actual calm abiding meditation. With the Seven Limb Prayer you purify lots of negative karma which obscures the mind and you also enrich the mind with a lot of positive karma. That is why we do the Seven Limb Prayer before our sessions here. It is a standard prayer and, in fact, many of the longer prayers and even deity meditations, focus very much around the Seven Limb Prayer. The Lama Chopa or Guru Puja is basically a long Seven Limb Prayer plus a *lamrim* review prayer and a few other things thrown in. It is basically a Seven Limb Prayer practice.

Requests

After the Seven Limb Prayer it is good to do some requests to the Guru-Buddha, to your spiritual teacher in the aspect of Shakyamuni Buddha. That is what we are doing here and why we do the request prayers. Requesting their inspiration helps to wake the mind up, tune it in and makes us feel close, sustained and helped in our practice. So the request is quite important too.

Duration of the session

Then when that is completed, you can actually start the calm abiding meditation. It is good, especially at the beginning, to make the session short. The quality of the session is more important than the length. You then slowly extend the sessions as your ability to hold the object of meditation increases.

The object of meditation

Now we come to the topic of what object of meditation to use to develop calm abiding. This is quite an interesting subject because it is going to vary a lot from person to person. The Buddha actually gave quite extensive teachings on what we call the 'object of observation' or the 'object of meditation' – what you are holding as the focal thing to concentrate on to develop calm abiding. The Buddha made many different kinds of objects because people have different tendencies and dispositions and what is good for one person may not be good for another person.

It is quite interesting. I will not go into this in-depth, but it is as if almost anything there is could be an object of meditation. You can meditate on impermanence. You can meditate on the different sorts of phenomena. There are a few quite standard objects of meditation that people very often use to develop calm abiding. One is the breath. A second one is the image of the Buddha. Some people might use the nature of mind and other people might use emptiness – these last two are much more difficult. Some people might use loving-kindness and develop calm abiding doing that.

The Buddha divided the objects with which we can develop calm abiding into four general categories:

- 1) Pervasive or extensive objects
- 2) Objects for purifying behavior
- 3) Skillful objects of observation
- 4) Objects for purifying afflictions

Objects for purifying behavior

I thought I would explain more specifically the second category 'objects for purifying behavior' because it contains a lot of information about how to counteract the behaviors and attitudes that get in our way. There are objects for purifying desire, objects for purifying anger and hatred, objects for purifying obscuration, objects for purifying pride, and objects for purifying discursiveness, or distraction. If you master these, it will help you no matter what other object you meditate on.

Even if you do not choose one of these as your object of meditation for developing calm abiding, even if you choose something else like the image of the Buddha, if you know these particular objects, it is going to be easier to develop calm abiding, because it will help you to eliminate distractions. In the process of explaining the objects for purifying behavior, we will also get into a lot of the nitty-gritty teachings found in all the traditions. I am going to explain these more in-depth because I find them quite helpful in dealing with the day-to-day stuff that arises. As I start to describe these some of you are going to go, "Yikes!" so I am warning you now and if you begin to feel that way, you will know that I have told you so. [Laughter]

Purifying desire

The first one is 'objects to purify desire.' The kind of desire that we are talking about is attachment. There are different kinds of desire, there is a positive kind of desire and there is a negative kind of desire. Positive desire is when you have an aspiration for enlightenment, but here the word 'desire' is being used in a negative sense. Examples are clinging attachment, craving, obsession or compulsion. I am not using the terms 'obsession' and 'compulsion' in the psychological sense of you needing to check for your keys every five minutes or something like that. Rather I am talking about your regular obsession and how we get obsessed with objects like our paycheck, or our physical looks, or a person whom we are attached to, or our image. So we are talking about the mind that is full of attachment and really gets stuck.

You probably notice this type of obsession when we do the breathing meditation before class. What floats through the mind as we are trying to concentrate on the breath? Food, sex, money, image. These are standard stuff and you are not the only one who does it. [Laughter] We often think, "Oh goodness, if anybody read my mind when I was meditating I would be so embarrassed." In actual fact, all of us are basically the same.

Meditate on ugliness

Very often, what our mind gets stuck with is our own body or somebody else's body. We have lots of attachments of this kind. When we are attached to our own body we are concerned with "How much do I weigh? Am I good looking enough? Is my hair the right color? Am I athletic enough?" You know how obsessed we get with our bodies. We become exactly what the media teaches us we should be. So when you follow media instructions and are all obsessed with your body, meditation on ugliness is the meditation to do. [Laughter] It is also good when we are obsessed with other people's bodies – when you are trying to meditate and somebody that you are physically attracted to floats through your mind, and there goes your single-pointed concentration.

So when the mind is stuck on attachment, it is very good to meditate on ugliness. The Buddha described many meditations for ugliness. The following meditation is incredibly effective. It sounds awful, but it is effective and it really works if you do it. It works one-hundred percent. You can meditate on internal ugliness and external ugliness. Internal ugliness is when you meditate on what is inside the body. Nothing is made up in this meditation. We are just going to take a good, honest look at what is inside the body.

Meditation on the internal ugliness of the body

The Buddha talked about thirty-six organs that you can meditate on. So you can just sit there with the wandering, fantasizing mind of attachment and start looking at your body. There is hair, nails, teeth, sweat, body odor (If you are getting all hot and bothered about somebody in your meditation, remember what they smell like), skin, flesh, bones, channels, arteries, ducts, veins, kidneys, heart, liver, lungs, small intestine, large intestine, stomach and the upper part of the stomach, bladder, spleen, rectum, saliva, snot, oily connective tissue, limb, marrow, fat, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, brain, the membrane over the brains, urine and old age spots. [Laughter]

This really works for attachment. It is very good when you are all infatuated about your own body or

worried about your own body.

This is also quite effective when the mind gets nervous about dying and is thinking things like, "I'm going to leave this body. Who am I going to be without this body? Well, I'm going to be without this body that is lungs, guts, snot, etc." Then you begin to realize, "Oh, why am I so afraid about dying? Giving up this body is not giving up some kind of pleasure palace." It really eases the fear of death, because it makes us think, what is there to hang on to in this body? What is there to be attached to? It is no great beautiful thing.

Purpose of the meditation is not to cultivate hatred of the body or person

In doing this meditation we have to work against our old Judeo-Christian upbringing that says the body is bad and the body is dirty. The Buddha is not saying the body is bad. I repeat...the Buddha is not saying the body is bad. This meditation is not to cultivate hatred of the body or a neurotic fear and distrust of our body. We do this meditation simply to counter-balance the mind of attachment that creates an image of a body that has nothing to do with the body that actually exists. This meditation is done simply to bring the mind into equilibrium. We get all stuck on attachment to our own body, or we get all involved in sexual fantasies about somebody else's body, and this meditation makes us check up on what exactly we are getting all hot and bothered about. So it is used to bring the mind into equilibrium and it works one-hundred percent.

This meditation is not designed to make the body out as evil, sinful, or hateful and it is not designed to make us blame or criticize the other person for their body. I say this because sometimes when people have a lot of sexual desire and do this meditation thinking of the ugliness of the body of the person that they are attached to, they start disliking the person. That is not the purpose of this meditation, it is not the person's fault that they have that body. Well, they created the karma and the afflictions [['afflictions' is the translation that Ven. Chodron now uses in place of 'delusions.'](#)] to get born like that, but we are not meditating this way to develop dislike for another sentient being. This meditation is directed towards the mind that is imagining the body to be more beautiful than it is.

[Audience:] It seems like with this meditation you would be cutting yourself down because you don't like your body.

That is like having one mind saying, "I want this body to be beautiful!" and then another mind saying, "But it isn't because you are a creep." We are already doing this in our life, so this is not the purpose of the meditation. When we think like this, we are not really giving up attachment to the body, because we are still identifying very much with our body and still very attached to the body.

What the meditation does, is it is saying, "Hey! If you want to be beautiful, don't look to your body to be beautiful, because you have other stuff inside that can be more beautiful." It is really helping us to stop this gross identification with "I am this body." It is to help us stop thinking that this body reflects everything about who we are.

Venerable's long, beautiful hair

This meditation was very useful for me when I first met the Dharma. You people did not know me at that time, but I had long, beautiful hair. I was very attached to my hair, because it took me years to grow it down to my waist. When I started hearing about attachment and the disadvantages of attachment, I started realizing how attached I was to my appearance, especially my hair. I then decided that I needed to counteract this attachment.

It sounds grotesque, but it is completely within the realm of what this meditation is doing. I would say to myself, "Okay, there you are. You are so vain about your hair and your physical appearance. When you die you are going to be a beautiful corpse with long beautiful hair." Then I imagined myself to be a corpse with long beautiful hair and go, "Is that what you want to be?" I put that question to myself, "Is that what you want to be? Is this the purpose of your life? Is this the whole meaning of your precious human life, to go around being so vain about your hair that at the end you are a corpse with long beautiful hair?" When I put that question to myself it became real clear that this was not the purpose or meaning of life. This was not what I wanted to have to show for myself when I died. This meditation really helped my mind let go of clinging to appearance and to hair. It was what enabled me to finally be able to cut my hair and be happy about it.

The first time I cut my hair, I didn't shave it, I cut it short. That was like my biggest Dharma practice. My hair was a real object of attachment, so when I cut it off I put some on the altar in the room I was sharing with some other women during a course I was attending. I put some of my beautiful hair on the altar. Then somebody walked in afterwards and said, "Eww, who put all this hair on the altar?" [Laughter] That was certainly a lesson in emptiness and on how the mind creates the object, because what was so beautiful and valuable to me was something disgusting to somebody else. [Laughter]

Meditation on external ugliness

If you are attached to the color of the body, there are meditations to do to counteract it, and these are practiced especially in Theravada countries. People actually go to the cemeteries and do these meditations. You contemplate the four colors of a rotting corpse. These are: putrid blue, putrid black, pus colored and putrid red. They say if you cannot go to a cemetery to do this meditation, you can buy a piece of meat in the summer and just watch what happens to it, because basically our body is a piece of meat, isn't it?

This meditation is very effective because it helps us develop the determination to be free from cyclic existence. This body that is made of flesh, blood and guts and decays like this, what are we hanging on to it for? When we can have a body of light that is completely pure, what are we hanging on to this decaying thing for? It is useful as a tool for the practice of Dharma, but it is hard to find any other value for it. So the meditation helps us center on what really is the purpose of our life. It helps us focus on what we want to do and what it is we want out of life.

Do we just want a happy, beautiful body? If what we want is a happy beautiful body, we can try our whole life to get that body but we are never going to succeed. The very nature of the body is that it gets old and is prone to illness, aging and disease. If you do not like this kind of body, then cut the ignorance, attachment and anger that cling to it and are attached to it, and get a body of light. This is really emphasizing why Dharma practice is so important, what our potential is and what the purpose of our life is.

We keep coming back to this in a whole bunch of different ways. But it is very important, because if we do not have this kind of understanding, if we do not even have the basic desire to get out of cyclic existence, then even if we do high tantric meditation, where are we going to get to? How are we going to realize any higher kind of meditation if we are so attached to cyclic existence? Is this making some sense? I find in my own practice that it is so important to keep coming back to this point.

[In response to audience:] When I go places and see people all decked out in finery, I feel an incredible sense of sadness. It is as if that is all they see as valuable in their life. That is the meaning of their life, to deck themselves out and look beautiful. But where does that get you? On the one hand, I feel sad when I see this. But on the other hand, I can look and say, "This is beautiful. I offer it to the Buddha." So you develop some flexibility of mind. You can see things in a variety of ways and in a variety of situations. You do not have to go around all day, "Yikes, this is ugly!"

So I think that it is helpful to develop that flexibility of mind and be able to see the same thing in a variety of ways. It also prepares us to understand emptiness at some point, because we stop grasping onto the way an object appears to us as being the way that it really exists.

More antidotes for attachment to a person

If you are attached to the shape of the body, for example somebody's face, the shape of their face and how good-looking they are, you can visualize it as if an animal had chewed part of it off. Scatter the body parts all over. This works for sexual desire. If you are distracted in your meditation by sexual desire, this meditation works. Your mind will not wander anymore when you do this one.

If you are attached to the touch of the body, then as you meditate you think of the flesh with worms in it or it being like a skeleton. You imagine touching a person's bones. And if you are attached specifically to sexual pleasure, then you meditate on the person as being a movable corpse, which is basically what we are, movable corpses.

If you are attached not so much to the physical aspects of sex, but more to the emotional part and to the person's good qualities and how wonderful that person is, how good that person's mind is, that they are well-respected because they have a good nature, or a good personality, then you can still meditate on

them as being a corpse, because a corpse does not have a personality. So again it shows you that the person might be a very nice person, but it makes you think about why you are attached because a corpse does not have a personality. Getting in touch with what our body is, is very effective for developing the determination to be free.

When I was in Singapore, one of my students died. They cremate people there, so I went before the cremation and we did some prayers. Then they put the body in the crematorium and you go back a few hours later and go through the ashes and pick out the pieces of bones with chopsticks. This is very good for developing compassion, because here is this person that you care about, who was so attached to a body and at the end the body is ashes and bones.

Also, this thing of picking up the bones with chopsticks – what a meditation on impermanence it is. You go through your whole life creating this thing of, “Me! Here I am – notice me!” and at the end what is left is just bones that your friends pick out with chopsticks.

A reality check

This meditation helps get our mind very clear. It is not morose, it is not revolting and it is not seeing the body as evil. It is just thinking about what is going on here and is a reality check. Meditating on death and impermanence poses some important questions: What is the meaning of our life? What is important in our life? What do we have to show for our life when we die? This puts us right back into the Dharma, because our mind and our karma are what we have to show for ourselves when we die, not our body, not our possessions, nor our reputation. The Dharma is what goes with us. The body and all the physical things stay here, but our mind, our karma and the habitual attitudes that we have cultivated – those go on with us.

Sometimes we get very jealous of somebody who can do something better than we can, or who has something that we do not have. It is very helpful to remember that that person is like a moving corpse. Then compassion comes for that person instead of jealousy. Here is this person who thinks that they have something valuable. Basically they have a body and they have a mind, but what are they doing with their mind? Then compassion comes and jealousy very quickly goes away, because we realize that there is nothing to be jealous of anyway. This kind of meditation breaks our karmic patterns of being obsessed about the body and physical things. It breaks the habit of clinging. This frees the mind greatly and makes it much more powerful for meditation.

A field of bones

There is one meditation they do where you imagine your own body. You imagine the skin and the flesh slowly dissolving so that there is just the skeleton. Then you imagine that skeleton getting bigger and it becomes a huge field of bones. Then you develop single-pointedness on this image of the field of bones. That is your object of meditation. It makes the mind really calm.

All these meditations are done to bring the mind into balance. They are not done to create hatred for the body or to become morose. We have to learn how to properly use these meditations. If we are doing too much of these and our mind starts getting depressed or something, then we definitely have to meditate on loving-kindness and remember that sentient beings have a mind also and that they have been kind to us and want happiness. In this way, we open our hearts towards them.

Purifying hatred

Next are the objects for purifying hatred. Here we do the metta or loving-kindness meditation. This is done quite a bit in the Theravada tradition. We start out by thinking of ourselves and wishing ourselves to be well and happy. Then we think of friends and wish them to be well and happy and free of distress. Then we move on to strangers, then to people whom we do not know and develop that same wish for them. Then finally we think of people we do not get along with and really think, “Wouldn’t it be wonderful if they had happiness and the causes of happiness? May I cause them to have these.”

You might be visualizing and thinking about other sentient beings and opening your heart to them. What you concentrate on is your feeling of love. So the meditation on love is not thinking of the definition of love and holding the definition of love in your mind with single-pointed concentration. That is not the meditation on love. It is not that you develop a concept of love and focus on that. Rather you do this whole meditation of really wishing others well and imagining them being well and happy. You develop

the kind of joyous, buoyant mind that is full of love, then you remain single-pointed on that feeling of love. You go through the whole meditation to cultivate the feeling of love and then you develop single-pointedness on it.

In this meditation, start with yourself and think, "May I be well and happy. May I be free of attachment to my body and all the craziness in my life and my mind that makes my life crazy." Then you spread it towards the people you care about. Think of specific people. Then think of relatives. Then spread it to strangers, people whom you don't know, and wish the same thing for them. Then spread it towards people whom you don't like very much and with whom you do not get along. Really think, "How wonderful it would be if they had happiness and its causes," because if they were happy we would probably like them a whole lot. Basically, it is because they are unhappy that they do things that we find distasteful. So this meditation on loving-kindness helps us alleviate our hatred. This is why it is called the meditation for purifying hatred, anger and aversion. It is a very nice meditation to do.

Purifying obscuration

The third one in this category is for purifying obscuration. Obscuration is ignorance, the mind that does not understand things very well. So here what we do is we meditate on dependent arising, and we meditate on how things that exist arose from causes, and how things that exist now become causes for future results. This meditation is quite effective. We begin to see how things do not exist as external, objective entities, but that they arise simply because the causes for them exist. We begin to see that there is no creator of the universe and manager of the universe that brought things into existence, but that they come into existence because the causes for them exist...

[Teachings lost due to change of tape.]

Purifying pride

The next one is the object for purifying pride. Pride is an over-inflated view of self, the big "I am so wonderful," or the complementary "I am so terrible." [Laughter] Either way you look at it, it is the big 'I.' We are making this "I" big and solid, so what we do to purify it is to meditate on the constituents, the different factors that compose the body and mind. You dissect the body and the mind into its constituent elements.

You think of the warmth element in the body, the solid element, the fluid element and all these different qualities of the body. Or you think about the different consciousnesses and sense organs that enable us to perceive objects and so on. We start looking at ourselves as basically a composition of many constituent parts instead of a big solid 'I'. As we start analyzing the various constituents the feeling of pride goes away because we realize that there is no big 'I' that is in charge of the whole show. It really helps to settle the mind down.

Another method for eliminating pride is to meditate on the twelve links, twelve sources, eighteen constituents & other difficult subjects. Trying to understand these can be difficult, and that automatically makes our pride go down because we recognize that we are not so big and smart after all.

Also, what I find effective for pride is remembering that everything I know, or everything I have, came from other people. It is not mine to begin with or end with. It is just something that is in transit, so what is there to get so proud about?

Purifying discursiveness

The next one is the object for purifying discursiveness. This is used if you think too much, or if you have lots of concepts. In Tibetan the term is 'nam-tog' which means preconceptions or superstition. Basically this is when you have a brain that does not shut up. These thoughts or concepts may wind up as the object of meditation. What is recommended for discursiveness, or this chattering mind, is meditation on the breath.

Here we come to the breathing meditation and cultivating single-pointedness on the breath. Actually, the Tibetans do not emphasize meditation on the breath very much. But many of the Westerners that I have talked with agree that it is quite important for us (Westerners). We think that the Tibetans do not always understand how noisy and chatty our minds are and how helpful it is to do the meditation on the breath.

On the other hand, I have met people who tell me that when they meditate on the breath, they cannot

concentrate at all. But when they use a visual object, like when they visualize Tara or they visualize the Buddha, then they can concentrate much better. So what we are getting at is that people have different dispositions and that is why the Buddha taught a whole bunch of different objects to use for meditation. Different people are going to have different things that work better for them. You can either meditate on the breath or a deity if you have a problem with discursiveness.

You can also meditate on the breath if, in your personality, all the other defilements are about equal and you do not have a special problem with any of them.

Ways of meditating on the breath

There are different ways to meditate on the breath. One way is to count the breath. You can count the inhale as one, exhale as two, inhale as three, exhale as four, until you get to ten and then count backwards down to one. Or you can count a whole cycle of in and out as one, another cycle of in and out as two, and so on. Or you can do a cycle of out-and-in as one, and out-and-in as two, and so on. Counting in this way makes it quite different. Also you can count up to ten and then start over. Some teachers say count to twenty-one and then start over. If you get distracted in the middle of it, start over at one. If you get to five, you are doing really great. [Laughter]

I have heard of teachers in Thailand who say that when you are inhaling, to say “Bud” and when you are exhaling, say “dho”. So you are going “Bud-dho”, “Bud-dho”. I don’t know why it’s not “Bud-dha”. They say “Bud-dho”. Saying that in your mind is a way to help you to focus on the breath and stay on the breath. After you get focused then you do not need to count or say “Bud-dho”.

In Mahasi Sayadaw’s tradition you concentrate on the abdomen and say to yourself, ‘rising’, ‘falling’, ‘rising’ and ‘falling.’ Other traditions have you say ‘in’, ‘out’, ‘in’, ‘out’. The purpose of saying all these is just to help you concentrate on your breath. Every so often you will find yourself saying ‘rising’ but you are in the process of exhaling and then you realize you have been distracted and come back to your breath. Or you are saying “out” when you are breathing in and that helps you realize you have gotten distracted.

So if you happen to be using any of these methods, you silently say something to yourself as you breathe. It is a silent kind of noting or checking. You do not say it out loud. It is just a small part of the mind noting the rising and falling.

Again, there are different ways to meditate on the breath. One way is that you concentrate just on the whole process of the air entering and leaving, the process of the air coming in and filling and then going out. So the concentration is on the movement, or on the whole feeling of the breath. That’s one way.

Another way is, you concentrate specifically at the nostrils and the upper lip and focus more on the sense of touch, the sense of pressure as you exhale and the breath touches your lip. Or you can focus on the sense of heat and cold as the breath is going in and out. If you are focusing on your abdomen, then you are watching the rising and falling of the abdomen, the feeling of the belly against the clothes, the internal feeling of the abdomen rising and falling.

Gen Lamrimpa recommended starting out just on the whole process of the breath coming in and breath going out which is the first of these that I described. He recommended just focusing on the process of the movement of the air in and the movement of the air out and then after a while, shift the focus to the nostrils. That is what he recommended, but you will find other teachers who will do it in other ways.

Getting drowsy

One thing that works if you are getting drowsy while you are observing the breath, is to imagine that the dull, heavy mind is leaving in the form of smoke as you exhale, and the mind that is bright and alert is entering in the form of light as you inhale. It can really help you to overcome the drowsiness.

Getting angry, anxious or fearful

If your mind is getting angry and full of anxiety or there is much fear, then you can imagine exhaling that in the form of smoke, and inhaling a peaceful, tranquil mind in the form of light that fills your body and mind.

It is important when you imagine exhaling things as smoke, that the smoke is not filling up the room and

choking everybody else in the room. One time somebody asked, "What do I do with the smoke because it is all around me?" [Laughter] They were quite worried about polluting the room. I assured them that it was quite okay. Nobody was going to be choked by it.

Summary

For purifying attachment, we meditate on the ugly aspects, particularly of the body.

For purifying hatred we meditate on loving-kindness.

For purifying obscuration we meditate on cause and effect.

For purifying pride we think of the constituent elements of the body and mind.

For purifying discursiveness or chattering, preconceptions or superstition, we meditate on the breath.

These are all included in the category of objects to meditate on to purify behavior.

Are there any questions?

[In Response to Audience:] You analyze until the object gets clear to you, then when the object is clear you remain single-pointed on it. If we are doing the meditation more for the purpose of understanding, we will emphasize the analysis. When we are doing general *lamrim* meditation and thinking about a topic, we use more of the investigating mind. But at the end when you get some kind of conclusion, feeling or experience, you then single-pointedly hold on to that. That helps the understanding sink into your mind and become part of you.

For instance, if you are meditating on the ugly aspects of the body and you come to a conclusion of, "Wow! What am I doing being so attached to this body when I have this incredible human potential?" That kind of thought can bring a really strong feeling in your mind. Then you just hold that feeling. The longer you can hold that feeling, the more it becomes imprinted in your mind and part of you. In this way we are retraining our minds and re-conditioning our minds.

This teaching is based on the *Lamrim* or *The Gradual Path to Enlightenment*. Please refer to the following web-page for its outline and other transcripts or to listen to the audio recording of these talks: <http://www.thubtenchodron.org/GradualPathToEnlightenment/outline.html>