

**The Far-reaching Attitude of Meditative Stabilization – Part 6 of 9:
Review Session Excerpts** (lightly edited transcript)
by Ven. Thubten Chodron© at Dharma Friendship Foundation, Seattle. 11 May 1994

Choosing the object of meditation depending on the predominant affliction*

To counter attachment, anger, wrong conceptions, or pride

We talked a little bit about choosing an object of meditation to develop calm abiding. The Buddha taught about many, many different objects for meditation.

I talked before a little bit about meditating on ugliness. If your problem is with attachment, you meditate on ugliness as the antidote.

If your problem is with anger and aversion, you develop calm abiding by meditating on love.

If you have a lot of wrong conceptions, you meditate on dependent arising to free your mind from that.

If you have a lot of pride, you meditate on the eighteen constituents, the twelve sources and the six objects. If you are saying, "What are these?", well that is exactly the point. Because as you meditate on them, you realize you do not know very much and your pride decreases.

[In response to audience:] For instance, you visualize all the different components of the body and once you have done that, you hold that image firmly in your mind. Or you visualize a corpse and you hold that image firmly in your mind. Or you do a meditation to develop love and think of the kindness of others. Once that feeling of love comes and your mind gets transformed into love, then you hold that feeling in your heart. So you have to cultivate the object of meditation in a sense.

To counter mental chatter

If your mind has a lot of discursiveness, a lot of mental chatter, then meditating on the breath is recommended. Meditation on the breath is used in all the Buddhist traditions. There are many different ways to meditate on the breath. They all work; they are all valid. The breath is a very common object of meditation.

When the afflictions* are about equal

Then it is also recommended that if all your afflictions* are equal and if you feel up to it, you could use the visualized image of the Buddha as your object of meditation. They say that this has special advantages. It helps you develop the ability to visualize and the image of the Buddha remains really strong in your mind so it increases the feeling of refuge. It also helps that image come to mind at the time you die, or when you are in trouble, or when there are difficulties. It helps to increase that spirit of faith and connection too. It also serves as a good preparation for doing tantric practice later on where a lot of visualization is done.

That is why in the Tibetan tradition, they often emphasize that if you can do it and if it is comfortable to you, use the image of the Buddha as your object to develop calm abiding. But there are many other objects of meditation too and it is completely up to the individual because we all have different temperaments, different dispositions.

More advice on cultivating mindfulness

Our Mind Is Like A Kid In Kindergarten

They say that we have to keep renewing our mindfulness because our mind is like a little kid that goes to kindergarten – he enters the classroom but runs right out. You have to bring the kid back. Then the kid runs out again and you have to bring him back. He runs and you bring him back. Likewise with our attention. It keeps running out and it is on anything else but the object of meditation. So we have to keep bringing it back with mindfulness.

But then, just like the child eventually gets the point and gets tired of running here and running there and

decides to stay calm and do some work, they say that with our mind too, eventually all of our wild thoughts will settle, our mind gets a little calmer, the mindfulness gets steadier and we are able to focus more continuously. This comes from just this process of constantly bringing the mind back again and again.

Do Not Get Angry With Yourself

It is really important that when your mind gets distracted during meditation, you do not get angry with yourself. Getting angry when we're distracted is another big mistake that we make. We think that we are going to develop concentration right away. But when we sit down, we lose the object of meditation right away and we get angry with ourselves. We spend the rest of the meditation session telling ourselves how awful we are and how we are never going to progress and how everybody else from the Dharma group is certainly better. We waste a whole lot of time that way.

So do not get into this whole thing of being judgmental and critical. Just bring the mind back. Just bring your attention back.

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>

*'Afflictions' is the translation that Ven. Chodron now uses in place of 'disturbing attitudes'.