



WISDOM ACADEMY

Restricted Dzogchen Teachings, Part 2: Buddhahood Without Meditation

B. ALAN WALLACE

Lesson 10:
Fulfilling the Path to Freedom:
Accomplishing Shamatha, the Three Yanas,
and Amitabha's Pure Land

Lecture Notes

The Achievement of Śamatha (Threshold to the First Dhyāna)

- Buddhaghosa (5th c.) (The Path of Purification):

- o “The difference between the two kinds of concentration [i.e., access concentration and absorption concentration] is this. The factors are not strong in access. It is because they are not strong that when access has arisen, the mind now makes the sign its object and now re-enters the ground of becoming, just as when a young child is lifted up and stood on its feet, it repeatedly falls down on the ground. But the factors are strong in absorption. It is because they are strong that when absorption concentration has arisen, the mind, having once interrupted the flow of the ground of becoming, carries on with a stream of wholesome impulsion for a whole night and for a whole day, just as a healthy man, after rising from his seat, could stand for a whole day.” IV: 33.

- o As a result of practicing śamatha, “the obscurations eventually become suppressed, the defilements subside, the mind becomes concentrated with access concentration, and the counterpart sign arises... the counterpart sign appears as if breaking out from the learning sign, and a hundred times, a thousand times more purified, like a looking-glass disk drawn from its case, like a mother-of-pearl dish well washed, like the moon’s disk coming out from behind a cloud, like cranes against a thunder cloud. But it has neither color nor shape; for if it had, it would be cognizable by the eye, gross, susceptible of comprehension and stamped with the three characteristics. But it is not like that. For it is born only of perception in one who has obtained concentration, being a mere mode of appearance. But as soon as it arises the obscurations are quite suppressed, the defilements subside, and the mind becomes concentrated in access concentration.” IV: 31

- Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra: “Lord, when a Bodhisattva directs his attention inwards, with the mind focused upon the mind, as long as physical pliancy and mental pliancy are not achieved, what is that mental activity called? Maitreya, this is not śamatha. It is said to be associated with an aspiration that is a facsimile of śamatha.”

- Mahāsiddha Ratnākaraśānti (c. 1000 CE) (Prajñāpāramitopadeśa): “Here, the Bodhisattva, dwelling alone in a solitary place, brings to mind his intended object. Ridding himself of mental conversation, he repeatedly brings to mind the actual nature of the mind as it appears in that way. So long as physical and mental pliancy do not arise, this is a mental engagement that is a facsimile of śamatha; but when they do arise, that is śamatha.”

· Tsongkhapa (The Medium Exposition of the Stages of the Path):

o “Well then, what plane incorporates the samādhi in which pliancy has not yet arisen? That samādhi is included in the plane of the desire realm.”

o “All samādhis prior to the achievement of the samādhi of the threshold [to the first dhyāna] are single-pointed attention of the desire realm. So judging by the great treatises, there seem to be very few who achieve even śamatha.”

o Asaṅga (Abhidharmasamuccaya): “What is pliancy? Due to the cessation of the continuum of dysfunctions of the body and mind, this is a fitness of the body and mind, having the function of dispelling all obstructions.’ The dysfunctions of the body and mind are the unfitness of the body and mind for voluntarily pursuing virtuous deeds.”

o “Thus, the master Sthiramati (6th c.) states: ‘The fitness of the body is that from which buoyancy and lightness arise in one’s physical actions. The fitness of the mind is the cause of the cheerfulness and lightness of the mind that participates in genuine mental engagement. If one is endowed with this transformative quality that arises from the mind, one engages with the meditative object without resistance. Therefore, this is called the fitness of the mind.’”

· Asaṅga (Śrāvakabhūmi):

o “The portent of the proximate occurrence of gross, easily discernible single-pointedness of mind and of mental and physical pliancy is a sensation of heaviness on the top of the head; but this is not a harmful symptom. As soon as this happens, mental dysfunction, which is included among the mental afflictions that obstruct delight in eliminating [the afflictions], is itself eliminated; and mental fitness and mental pliancy arise due to this antidote. Due to its occurrence, vital energies of the great elements that are conducive to the arising of physical pliancy course through the body. Because of their movement, one is freed of physical dysfunction affiliated with mental afflictions that obstruct delight in meditation; and it seems as if the entire body were filled with physical pliancy as the antidote for that. When that first arises, having taken delight in the extraordinary mental joy in superb mental engagement, there is supreme mental pleasure in accompanying the meditative object. At that time that is called the mind. That which arises first immediately thereafter is the force of pliancy, which incrementally becomes subtler. Pliancy occurs in the body, following it like a

shadow. The extraordinary mental joy is relinquished, the mind having a serene aspect becomes stabilized with śamatha with respect to the meditative object.”

- Wangchuk Dorjé, the Ninth Karmapa (1556–1603): “Thus, due to the experiences of bliss, luminosity, and nonconceptuality, craving for the allures of the desire realm subsides, there is no need to eat food, and the movements of the respiration are not sensed. Great joy arises with the thought, ‘Now this is what the Buddha had in mind,’ and there comes great certainty in thinking of your guru as a buddha. While tainted extrasensory perception, paranormal abilities and so on may also come up, do not obsess about them. If this experience of single-pointedness is cultivated for a year, afterwards, realization will be gained, and it will stabilize. The best indicator of having firm śamatha is that one cannot sense movements of the breath or body, and cannot even sense whether they are there; the middling indicator is that they are sensed only if examined; and the lowest indicator is that one is not bothered by the movements of the breath or the weight of the body.”[1]

[1] Karma pa dbang phyug rdo rje, Phyag rgya rgyas pa nges don rgya mtsho (Sarnath, India: Vajra Vidyā Institute Library, 2006), 102.

.....

Trait Effects of Having Achieved Śamatha

- Buddha: “Just as in the last month of the hot season, when a mass of dust and dirt has swirled up, a great rain cloud out of season disperses it and quells it on the spot, so too concentration by mindfulness of breathing, when developed and cultivated, is peaceful, sublime, an ambrosial dwelling, and it disperses and quells on the spot unwholesome states whenever they arise.”

- Tsongkhapa (The Medium Exposition of the Stages of the Path):
 - o “Moreover, in post-meditative experience the occurrence of the ideation of afflictions such as hatred is also utterly different than before, being feeble and incapable of being very prolonged. That phase is called the phase of complete pacification. The sense of clarity is so great that you feel that you could count the atoms of the pillars and walls of your house; and due to deep attentional stability, sleep does not occur as it did prior to achieving samādhi. Rather, you

feel as if your sleep was suffused with samādhi, and many pure dream appearances take place.”

- o “For the most part, the five obscurations, including hedonic craving and dullness, do not occur.”

- o “When one rises from meditative equipoise, one still possesses some degree of physical and mental pliancy.”

- Karma Chagmé (1613-1678) (Naked Awareness): “By cultivating that meditation for a long while, your mind will turn away from the eight mundane concerns, you will get rid of outer and inner parasites, and you will be able to display supernormal powers such as meditative manipulation and domination of the elements and so forth. When that happens, the qualities of [the yoga of] single-pointedness have arisen.”

- William James:

- o “Where preferences are powerless to modify or produce things, faith is totally inappropriate, but for the class of facts that depend on personal preference, trust, or loyalty for actualization, “faith is not only licit and pertinent, but essential and indispensable. The truths cannot become true till our faith has made them so.”[1]

- o “In what manner do we espouse and hold fast to visions? By thinking a conception might be true somewhere, it may be true even here and now; it is fit to be true and it ought to be true; it must be true; it shall be true for me.”[2]

[1] The Will to Believe and other Essays (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 80.

[2] A Pluralistic Universe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 148.

.....

Tsongkhapa (Medium Exposition of the Path to Enlightenment): “One cause [of mindfulness] is to focus the attention on an apprehended aspect such as of the body of a deity, or to an apprehending aspect such as the sheer awareness and the sheer clarity of experience. Then by devoting yourself to mindfulness, as

explained previously, sustain the attention by continuously monitoring whether or not there is scattering elsewhere. Recognize this as a critical factor for sustaining introspection... Finally, when you settle in meditative equipoise, only the aspects of the sheer awareness, clarity, and vivid joy of the mind appear, without the appearance of the signs of visual form, sound, and so on.”

Düdjom Lingpa (The Essence of Clear Meaning): “Whether or not you have identified pristine awareness within yourself, you who become muddled due to distraction and sloth should first mount your discursive mind, which is like a cripple, onto your vital energy, which is like a blind, wild steed. By tethering [your mind] with meditative experience and sustained attention so that you can meditate uninterruptedly, eventually all coarse and subtle obsessive thoughts will seem to be purified—and uncontrived, primordially present consciousness will manifest. When you alight upon the great nonmeditation of pristine awareness, it is easy to connect with the guru’s introduction to pristine awareness. Given how very important it is for disciples not to stray onto false paths, this needs to be clearly taught, as was implied in the preceding passage.”

.....

The Importance of Achieving Śamatha

Buddha: “I thought of a time when my Sakyan father was working and I was sitting in the cool shade of a rose-apple tree: quite secluded from sensual desires, disengaged from unwholesome things I had entered upon and abode in the first dhyāna, which is accompanied by coarse and precise investigation, with well-being and bliss born of seclusion. I thought: ‘Might that be the way to enlightenment?’ Then, following that memory, there came the recognition that this was the way to enlightenment.”

Atīśa’s (982 - 1054 CE) Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment:

“Just as a bird with undeveloped wings

Cannot fly in the sky,

Those without the power of extrasensory perception

Cannot work for the good of living beings.” (vs. 35)

The merit gained in a single day
By someone with extrasensory perception
Cannot be gained even in a hundred lifetimes
By one without extrasensory perception. (vs. 36)

Without the achievement of śamatha
Extrasensory perception will not arise.
Therefore, make repeated effort
To accomplish śamatha. (vs. 38)
As long as the conditions for śamatha are incomplete,
Samādhi will not be accomplished
Even if you meditate diligently
For a thousand years. (vs. 39)

When a contemplative has achieved śamatha
Extrasensory perception will also be realized.
But if one does not cultivate the Perfection of Wisdom,
One's obscurations will not come to an end." (vs. 41)

- The Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorjé (1284–1339) (The Great Instructions)
 - o Single-pointedness occurs when a contemplative focuses his experience, without scattering away from the immaculate, vivid clarity and non-conceptuality of the mind, and remains single-pointedly in the stream of unified śamatha and vipaśyanā.
 - o The small stage of the yoga of single-pointedness correlates with the Mahāyana Path of Accumulation, the first of the five paths culminating in

perfect enlightenment.

- Tsongkhapa (1357–1419) (The Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path): “Therefore, the śamatha that serves as the basis for vipaśyāna by which one achieves the ārya paths of all stream-returners and once-returners...is the threshold to the first dhyāna.”

- Tselé Natsok Rangdröl (b. 1608) (The Lamp of Mahāmudrā): “One-pointedness, the first yoga of Mahāmudrā, has three levels: small, medium and great. One-pointedness, for the most part, consists of śamatha and the gradual progression through the stages of śamatha with support, without support, and finally to the śamatha that delights the tathāgatas. During that process, grasping gradually diminishes.”

From the Autobiography of Shabkar Tsokdruk Rangdröl (1781-1851):

“The distance covered by a great ship

Pulled on land by a hundred men for a hundred days

Can be covered in a day when it is put to sea

In the same way, a single day of meditation

Performed with real stability of mind

Brings more progress than a hundred days

Practicing development and completion stages

Before stability of mind has been attained.”

- Nine kinds of activity (Tib. bya ba dgu sprugs). The nine kinds of activity include the body’s (1) outer activities, such as walking, sitting, and moving about, (2) inner activities of prostrations and circumambulations, and (3) secret activities of ritual dancing, performing mudrās, and so on; the speech’s (4) outer activities, such as all kinds of delusional chatter, (5) inner activities, such as reciting liturgies, and (6) secret activities, such as counting propitiatory mantras of your personal deity; and the mind’s (7) outer activities, such as thoughts aroused by the five poisons and the three poisons, (8) inner activities of mind

training and cultivating positive thoughts, and (9) the secret activity of dwelling in mundane states of dhyāna.

.....

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (Enlightened Courage: An Explanation of Atīśa's Seven Point Mind Training): "There exist many teachings, profound and vast, such as Mahamudra and Dzogchen. But our mental capacity is small, we are without perseverance and lack sufficient respect and devotion to be freed through teachings such as these. Nonetheless, if we practise this Mind Training, we will experience great benefits. It is an extraordinary instruction, the very essence of the Bodhisattva teachings, and has been praised again and again. Therefore let us practise it without distraction."

My oral commentary to the Seven-Point Mind Training, which provides a sound basis for understanding and practicing Dzogchen:
<https://archive.org/details/retreatmindtraining>

Karma Chagmé (1613-1678) on Sukhāvātī (A Spacious Path to Freedom):
"Machik Lapdrön (1055-1149) says:

Apart from Sukhāvātī, one cannot take birth in the supreme pure realms without having reached the eighth [Bodhisattva] level. For the middling pure realms, one must have achieved at least the path of meditation on which the subtle afflictive obscurations have been eliminated; without that, one will not take birth there. For the five pristine abodes such as Akaniṣṭha and Aṭakāvātī, one must have achieved the path of seeing, on which the truth of ultimate reality is seen after having severed the root of self-grasping; without that, one will not take birth there. However, without having reached the path of seeing, if one is without even the slightest infraction of one's samayas and vows and applies oneself to prayer and to virtue alone, it is just possible to take birth in a small pure realm such as Tuṣita, but it is difficult. Therefore, it is utterly hopeless for an individual with mental afflictions to take birth in a Buddha realm.

However, the Protector Amitābha himself has promised that one may take birth in his pure realm due to the power of his prayers. Thus, you should strive with your body, speech, and mind in prayer to be born in the realm of Sukhāvātī. Ridding yourself of doubt, uncertainty, and spiritual sloth, with great and swift certainty and enthusiasm bring to mind the splendor and benefits of the realm of

Sukhāvatī, and pray. Sukhāvatī is superior to the realms of other buddhas in these ways: It is greater because it is possible for ordinary individuals with mental afflictions to be born there. And if you take birth there, all you that you wish for is accomplished as soon as you think of it, you are not tainted by even subtle mental afflictions, and you may go from there to the realms of other buddhas. Thus, it is superior. Sukhāvatī is endowed with inconceivable benefits, including the swifter attainment of buddhahood there than in other pure realms. There is no other pure realm that is within closer reach than Sukhāvatī, so it is extremely important to strive in prayer to be reborn there.”

Sera Khandro:

- “The best [form of service] is to establish the teachings of the practice lineage through rendering service by way of your spiritual practice. Middling is to render service with your body and speech, which can merely purify obscurations of the body, speech, and mind. And the least form of service is to please the guru with material goods, which adds to your accumulations of the two kinds.”

- “The mind is subdivided into the mind that clings to delusive appearances, the mind that seeks the path by way of affirmation and negation, and the mind that sees naked consciousness. The first refers to the minds of ordinary sentient beings who seek the path but do not perceive the entrance to the actual path. The second refers to the mind observing the mind, thoughts observing thoughts, consciousness observing thoughts, modifications by the intellect and mentation, rejecting [vices], nurturing [virtues], and merely arousing joys and sorrows. Because you are seeking the path, this is called taking the mind as the path. The third refers to the actualization of unimpeded conditioned consciousness, which is the ground of the mind. Because it does not realize the view, outer appearances are reduced to an ethically neutral state; and since appearances are grasped as things, reification is not averted.”