

Lama Aria Drolma

*Building a Strong Foundation: Four Guided Meditations*

Week 2: "Calm Abiding Meditation"

September 12, 2020



Hello and welcome to the Tricycle online Dharma Talk series. My name is Lama Aria Drolma, and today I will be continuing week two of my Dharma Talk series titled "Building a Strong Foundation."

This week the topic is guided tranquility meditation with the power of your breath. This is one of the most important foundations for all other meditations. The practice helps you cultivate focus, clarity, and a sense of genuine well being. Right now, we are all facing a very challenging time. How does one deal with anxiety, stress, fear, depression, and uncertainty?

The Buddhist philosopher Shantideva wisely reminds us that although the world is covered with rocks and thorns, we need not cover it all with leather to protect ourselves, we can put on a pair of sandals. By transforming our own minds, attitudes, and behavior, we can become part of the solution rather than the problem. Here I want to share a story with you. There was once a kingdom where all the people walked barefoot. Even the kings and queens did not wear shoes. When they left the palaces they were carried on a litter or a palanquin. One day the queen was taking a walk in the park near the palace with her mates, and she fell and cut her foot on a sharp stone. Immediately the king was very concerned and called all the advisors and asked them how they could prevent people from cutting their feet. After a lot of thought they advised the king to wrap the entire village with leather. In this way, they said, the sharp stones would all be covered. They brought in all the architects and plans began to cover the whole village and the surrounding areas with leather. There was a long discussion about how much leather would be needed and how to attach the leather to the ground.

There was this wise man in the courtyard who was quite amused by all this. Finally, the wise man spoke up and said, "Instead of covering the whole village with leather, why don't you just cover your feet?" They realized that the wise man was right! Instead of covering the whole village with leather, all they had to do was just cover their own feet and that way they would be protected from all the stones and thorns, and the villagers could walk everywhere, all over the palace and the village.

So how does one deal with the anxiety, stress, fear, depression, and uncertainty right now? Where is all the suffering coming from? It's coming from our own mind. According to Buddhist philosophy, essentially, our suffering—our happiness and unhappiness—depends on our own mind. We often blame external circumstances, other people, the world, for all the problems. And yes, this may seem to be true in the relative sense, but if we carefully examine we'll find the real problem lies within our own minds. This is really good news because we may not be able to



change others or the rest of the world but we can learn to change ourselves. The negative emotions which make us unhappy lie within our own mind stream. The good news is we can train our mind to find lasting and stable happiness. Everyone has the potential to experience it. The cause of happiness lies within our own mind and the methods can be practiced by anyone, anywhere.

Meditation is one of the best tools out there where we can learn to be happy at any time, even in difficult and painful situations. Meditation teaches you how to develop a peaceful state of mind. When you have a peaceful state of mind, you have a joyful state of mind. When you have inner peace and joyfulness you will be able to stay calm and happy all the time, even in the most difficult circumstances. So today we will do a guided meditation with a focus on our breath.

The meditation is called calm abiding meditation or peace abiding meditation. Calm abiding meditation is known as *shinay* in Tibetan, and *shamatha* in Sanskrit. In Tibetan, the word shinay, the first syllable shi means peace, or to pacify, and the second syllable knee ne to abide to abide or rest. So shinay meditation, or calm abiding meditation, does two things: first, we need to pacify our thoughts, and second, we rest or abide in that peaceful state. Why? Because the mind is like a monkey mind, it jumps from one thought to another. That's why we need to pacify our thoughts, and then we can rest in that peaceful state.

So when we practice calm abiding meditation we need an anchor or a support to focus our attention. This anchor or support can be an object, a sound, a taste or tactile sensation, or our breath. Today we'll use our breath as an anchor to focus attention. This is a very popular method and it's very easy, since we breathe all the time. So when we start the actual meditation, there are two essential points. One, the essential points of the body, and the essential points of the mind.

The essential points of the body is the posture. Posture is a very important factor. One needs to keep the spine straight and sit upright. It's best to be comfortable while keeping your spine upright. The second essential point is the mind. It's the mind that actually does the meditation. So the mind should be relaxed in the present moment of awareness. You know, your mind is sometimes still in the office or somewhere else, so you need to bring your mind press to the present moment of awareness.

Today we are focusing our awareness on our breath. So let's put our minds' attention on our breath. Feeling each breath as it goes in, and as it comes out, and letting the breath just be as it is,

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without trying to change or regulate in any way. Allowing the breath to breathe normally in its own rhythm, breathe naturally.

So in today's session, we will do a guided meditation. Please sit upright and just relax. I will lead the guided meditation, and it's very simple and easy to follow. So again, please sit upright. Breathe in and breathe out normally. As you breathe in, see the breath going in all the way to your abdomen. As you breathe out, see the breath come up out of your nostrils and then into space in front of you. Imagine it fills the whole space in front of you. Just rest in that present moment of awareness. [Pause.]

Inhale and exhale. Breathe normally and see your breath come out of your nostrils into space in front of you and just rest in that present moment of awareness. [Pause.]

follow your thoughts. Just return to your breath. Just follow your breath going in and you can stop for a second and then breathe out. And as you breathe out, see your breath fill the entire space in front of you and just rest in that present moment of awareness. [Pause.]

Do not follow the past, the past is finished. Do not think of the future, "I must do this" or "I must do that." Just rest in that present moment of awareness without any distraction. [Pause.]

Continue to breathe in and out. And as you breathe out, let your breath fill the entire space in front of you and just rest in that present moment of awareness. [Pause.]

Meditation allows you to look inward. So when you meditate, you'll see a lot of thoughts, lists of things you want to complete, and so on. Thoughts are going to come and go. Depending on the thoughts, emotions are going to rise. But as soon as you realize your thoughts, just say "thinking" and gently let go and tell yourself it's time to meditate. Little by little, with practice, you'll begin to enjoy meditation, and looking inwards feels so peaceful, it feels so spacious, and you will have more clarity and focus. Milarepa, who was one of the greatest yogis of Tibet, said "When mind looks at mind, it's blissful."

Thank you for joining me for this week's Dharma Talk and I hope you'll join me next week. Next week I'll lead a guided meditation for cultivating happiness during challenging times. Thank you again. Be well, be safe.