

The Perfection of Meditative Stabilization and Wisdom

How to Train in the Perfection of Meditative Stabilization

5 parts:

1. What Meditative Stabilization is
2. How to begin the cultivation of meditative stabilization
3. The divisions of meditative stabilization
4. How to practice
5. A summary

1. What Meditative Stabilization is

Meditative stabilization is a virtuous, one-pointed state of mind that stays fixed on its object of meditation without distraction to other things

It is the one-pointed state of mind-- stabilized on virtue, and either mundane or supramundane -- of bodhisattvas who have first studied and reflected on the bodhisattvas scriptural collections. Whether it is oriented toward meditative serenity, toward insight, or toward both as the path that conjoins them, understand that this one-pointed state of mind is the bodhisattva's meditative stabilization.

Asanga - Bodhisattva Bhumis

Having thus generated joyous perseverance,
Set your mind in meditative concentration

Shantideva

2. How to begin the cultivation of meditative stabilization

Think over the benefits of meditative stabilization and the faults of not cultivating it. I will explain this in the meditative serenity section.

3. The divisions of meditative stabilization

In line with the above citation from Asanga, if you subdivide meditative stabilization according to:

according to nature: 1. mundane 1. supramundane

according to orientation: 1. serenity 1. insight 1. both conjoined

according to function: 1. **meditative stabilization that stabilizes mind and body in bliss within this life** - meditative stabilizations that generate mental and physical pliancy when you enter them with equipose 1. **meditative stabilization that achieves good qualities** - meditative stabilizations which accomplish good qualities shared with the shravakas - the superknowledges, liberations, totalities, masteries, etc. 1. **meditative stabilization that carries out the welfare of living beings** - meditative stabilization that accomplishes the eleven activities for others welfare

4. How to practice

Whenever you practice any virtuous meditative stabilization you do so in association with the six supremacies and all 6 perfections. The generosity of meditative stabilization is maintaining meditative stabilization yourself and then establishing others in it. Understand the other perfections from earlier explanation.

5. A summary

The recollection and the cultivation of the spirit of enlightenment -- the basis of the bodhisattva deeds-- is what inspires you to train in order to set all living beings in uncontaminated meditative stabilization. After you have increased the stability of this spirit, aspire to the high meditative stabilizations and train in these. Even if you are unable to fully develop the stabilizations, you must strive to train from time to time in one-pointed concentration to whatever extent you are able.

If you do not do so, you will be continually stained with the fault of breaking the precepts, and in other lives as well you will find it most difficult to learn the trainings for entering the many doors of the bodhisattva's meditative stabilization.

Whereas, if you never give up your effort, even in this life your mind will become steadily less distracted, making your accumulations of virtues very powerful. In future lives you will have physical and mental bliss and a joyful mind, thereby easily completing the perfection of meditative stabilization.

How to Train in the Perfection of Wisdom

5 parts:

1. What wisdom is
2. How to begin the generation of wisdom
3. The divisions of wisdom
4. How to practice
5. A summary

1. What wisdom is

In general, wisdom is what thoroughly discerns the ontological status of the object under analysis, but in this context wisdom refers to proficiency in the five topics of knowledge and the like.

Know that bodhisattva's wisdom is the thorough analysis of phenomena that engages or has engaged all of what is to be known and that operates through focusing on the five topics of knowledge -- Buddhist knowledge, grammar, logic, technical arts, and medicine.

Asanga Bodhisattva Levels

Here, the wisdom that "engages" refers to wisdom prior to attaining the bodhisattva levels; wisdom that "has engaged" refers to wisdom after attaining such levels.

2. How to begin the generation of wisdom

The way to begin the generation of wisdom is to contemplate the benefits of generating wisdom and the faults of not generating it. The benefits and faults of having or lacking the wisdom of **selflessness** will be explained later, so here he will discuss the remaining types a little.

With respect to indicating wisdom's benefits, wisdom is the root of all good qualities for this and future lives.

Wisdom is the root of all good qualities,
Seen and not yet seen.
To achieve both of these,
Embrace wisdom.

The great source of what you seek
And for liberation is knowledge.
So, esteeming it from the start,
Adhere to wisdom, the great mother.

Nagarjuna 'Hundred Verses on Wisdom'

Wisdom functions like an eye for the other 5 perfections.

If the gold ornament of the 5 perfections from generosity to meditative stabilization is adorned with wisdom, which is able to distinguish right from wrong, they become more magnificent, because wisdom makes them much purer.

The merits of generosity and so forth
Are more powerful with wisdom as their lord,
Just as an array of fine gold jewelry
Shines more brightly when inset with jewels.

It is this wisdom that renders vast
The capacity for virtue in the purpose of each one,
Just as the mind's additional power clearly displays
The respective objects of the sensory faculties.

Aryasura 'Compendium of Perfections'

Similarly, wisdom is also crucial for other faculties such as faith and so on. When wisdom is present as lord, your generosity, faith, etc, understand well the merit of virtue and the faults of stinginess and so forth, so you will become skilled at eliminating afflictions and increasing good qualities.

Bodhisattvas depend on wisdom to purify the other 5 perfections. If when they give their flesh to someone who asks for it, they are unaffected by such thoughts as pride, discouragement, etc. It is as though they were taking a cut from a medicinal plant. **This is because their wisdom makes reality manifest.**

With the wisdom that sees the trouble of both cyclic existence and the peace of nirvana, they accomplish ethical discipline for the sake of others welfare, so they practice pure ethical discipline.

Through wisdom they know the faults of impatience and the merits of patience, and they then discipline their minds so they are not over powered by suffering and others misperceptions of them.

With wisdom they understand well everything at which they joyously persevere, so their perseverance brings great success on the path.

And through wisdom based on reasoning they accomplish the supreme delight and bliss of the meditative stabilization that is fixed upon the meaning of reality.

Two good qualities which may appear to be mutually exclusive prove to be non contradictory for those who have wisdom.

Even bodhisattvas possessed of great kingdoms,
Who have sensory objects similar to divine substances,
Remain uncorrupted in their very nature.
This is the power of having the virtue of wisdom as their minister.

Their love, inseparable from helping others,
Is utterly free of stain from attachment.
Their compassion, unable to bear for others suffering,
Never succumbs to laziness due to the burden of distress.

Possessed of supreme joy, they do not waver from the real.
Their great impartiality never neglects the welfare of beings.
Great wisdom removes all that would counteract
These good qualities, and so it beautifies them.

Compendium of Perfections

and also:

Without rejecting the real nature,
You are also in accord with the conventional

Matrceta

Thus, you do not have to forsake the real nature that gives great certainty that there is not even an atom of what your cognitive processes apprehend as signs of true existence. And also you are in accord with and do not contradict the conventional that gives deep certainty that effects arise from their respective internal and external causes and conditions. For others these appear to totally exclude each other, but for those who have wisdom, there is compatibility and a lack of contradiction.

Regarding your proscriptions and prohibitions,
Some of your world is definitive
While some of it is not,
But between these, there is no contradiction

Matrceta

The two facts- that there are many dissimilarities in proscriptions and prohibitions between higher and lower vehicles and between sutra and tantra, and that these are all the practices of a single person -- are contradictory for those who are confused and lack

the power of intelligence to seek the intended meaning of the innumerable scriptures. Yet through wisdom the learned know that these are not mutually exclusive.

There are limitless things that the unwise see as contradictory and the wise see as lacking contradiction.

In short, all good qualities come from wisdom.

The faults of not having wisdom are as follows

Without wisdom, generosity and the other perfections are as if blind.

How could billions of blind people without a guide,
Who do not know the way, enter the city?
Once these 5 perfections lack wisdom, they are blind;
As they lack a guide, they cannot reach enlightenment.

Verse Summary of the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines

Consequently, generosity and the other perfections do not become pure, and you do not find the correct view.

If those intent upon the final fruit are without wisdom,
Their generosity does not purify them. The Buddha said,
"Giving for others' sake is supreme generosity."
Other kinds of giving serve only to increase ones wealth.

Compendium of Perfections.

You do not repel the darkness of delusion's confusion as long as wisdom's great light does not shine, but when it does, you cast away the darkness, so you must make an effort to generate wisdom with whatever capacity and strength you have.

What are the causes of confusion? they are relying on bad friends, laziness, indolence, oversleeping, taking no pleasure in analysis and discernment; lack of interest in the vast variety of phenomena; **the pride of thinking "I know" when you do not.**, the major wrong views, and being discouraged and thinking "Someone like me cannot do this", and thus not taking pleasure and relying upon the learned.

Therefore, as the **Compendium of Perfections** says

Serve and venerate a guru worthy of trust,
And study to achieve wisdom.

Once you rely upon a learned person, you must study in accord with your capacity, for if you do not, you will not produce the wisdom that arises from study and the wisdom that arises from reflection, whereupon you will not know what to meditate upon. And if you do study, you will produce the wisdom that arises from reflection by thinking over the meaning of what you have studied, and from this you will gain the vast wisdom that arises from meditation.

Little study is like blindness -- you do not know how to meditate.
Without study, what could there be to reflect upon?
Therefore, from the cause of making an effort to study
You meditate in accord with reflection and thereby gain vast wisdom.

Aryasura

The conceptualizations of the three spheres
Are asserted to be cognitive obscurations,
While conceptualizations such as stinginess and the like
Are asserted to be afflictive obscurations.

Solely wisdom is the cause
Of their elimination, nothing else,
So wisdom is supreme. Study is its basis,
So study is supreme.

Maitreya 'Sublime Continuum'

Be forbearing and then study,
Stay in a forest, and then
Persevere at meditative equipoise

Shantideva - Compendium of the Trainings in Verse

His auto-commentary to this says:

With impatience, you become disheartened and cannot forbear,
so your perseverance at study, etc, decline. And without study,
You do not know the means for either meditative stabilization or for clearing
away afflictions.
Therefore, without become disheartened, study.

Shantideva

Just so, child of good lineage, if you study, wisdom will come. If you are
possessed of wisdom, the afflictions will be stilled. Once you have no
afflictions, demons do not have a chance with you

Questions of Narayana Formula

Those who wish to properly practice the teaching need a broad study of the stainless scriptures and their commentaries, the unexcelled cause that gives rise to the wisdom which thoroughly distinguishes phenomena, which is the sacred life force of the path. However, not achieving wisdom while thinking that a broad study is necessary to develop it is simply the fault of your not being convinced that you need the analytical meditation of discerning wisdom when the time comes for practice, and of having the mistaken conviction that thinks that analytical meditation is not necessary. **Therefore, those of you who want what is best for yourselves should eliminate such a mistaken conviction as though getting rid of poison**

Pu-chung-wa placed an opened sacred text beside his pillow and said We must learn the texts, so even though you do not get a chance to read them, make a wish to read them all. If someone said that you should practice the teaching without understanding it, how would you do?

Until you become a buddha, your studies are not finished. They are finished when you are a buddha.

Sharawa

It is precisely the meditator who must study to avoid straying from the path

Ga-ma-pa

Thus you must be convinced that wisdom and the study that causes it are indispensable

for proper practice. Moreover, unless you reach certainty about the need for analytical meditation when you practice, you will have a very hard time getting anywhere.

There are just 2 kinds of teaching: teaching as scripture and teaching that has been put into practice; the former makes known the procedures for practice; and the latter is assimilating the practice after you have understood the procedures. Therefore, doing the practice without error is the best way to uphold the teaching. **Moreover, unerringly upholding the teaching in the sense of practice depends upon an unerring understanding of scriptural teaching.**

Therefore, it is not right to forget what you have studied at the time of practice, for you must first know many teachings and then put their very meaning into practice when the time comes to do so.

Do not make study and practice into separate things. **Rather, the thing that you practice must be exactly what you first study and reflect upon.**

Therefore, if instructions are accurate and complete, then although summarized, all the key points of the sutra and tantra paths and the paths of the higher and lower vehicles must be covered; once they have been explained at length, you must be able to go through all the teachings. Until you reach something like this, it is possible to feel delight about just some portion of your practice, but it is impossible to become certain about the key points of practice for the complete corpus of the teachings

So make sure to:

- rely upon excellent teacher and companions
- make a foundation of pure ethical discipline to which you commit yourself
- listen again and again to the instructions
- do 4 sessions of meditation
- then sustain the object of meditation and its subjective aspects
- after you have made fervant supplications to the deities and gurus, strive at all the causes of engaging from many perspectives in accumulating the collections and purifying obscurations

If you do this, you will become profoundly certain that the good qualities in your mind will steadily improve.

a good quote here pg 221-222

3. The divisions of wisdom

3 parts:

1. Wisdom that knows the ultimate
2. Wisdom that knows the conventional

3. Wisdom that knows how to act for the welfare of living beings

1. Wisdom that knows the ultimate

Wisdom that knows the ultimate cognizes the reality of selflessness, either by means of a concept or in direct manner

2. Wisdom that knows the conventional

Wisdom that knows the conventional is wisdom that is proficient at the 5 topics of knowledge.

Without making effort at the five topics of knowledge,
Even the supreme noble beings do not reach omniscience.
So they must strive for these so as to refute others,
To care for others, and to know everything.

Ornament for the Mahayana Sutras

The topics are distinguished by the different sorts of purposes for pursuing them. To refute those who do not believe in the teaching, you pursue knowledge of grammar and logic. To help those who do not believe, you pursue knowledge of the arts and medicine. To achieve knowledge of all yourself, you pursue buddhist knowledge. But to attain buddhahood, there are no such distinctions between them; you must pursue all topics of knowledge.

3. Wisdom that knows how to act for the welfare of living beings

Wisdom that knows how to act for the welfare of living beings knows the way to accomplish blamelessly the welfare of beings in their present and future lives.

d. How to Practice

When you develop the 3 types of wisdom, you do so in association with the six supremacies and all six perfections. The generosity of wisdom is establishing others in wisdom after you have stabilized yourself in it.

e. A summary

Even if you have the wisdom that perceived emptiness, it does not become a bodhisattva deed without the spirit of enlightenment, so steadily increase the spirit of enlightenment - the basis of the bodhisattva deeds.

Next, aspire to the wisdom of those at high levels and then train your mind in it.

From this moment you must strive to produce the three the three types of wisdom -- the

method for completing the peerless, great collection of sublime wisdom -- and you must study. If you don't do this you will contradict the principal precept and then be destroyed by infractions and downfalls. In future lives as well you will not take pleasure in broad learning and consequently not be able to learn the bodhisattva trainings

Whereas, if in this life you strive at the methods of developing wisdom, you prevent the infraction of not training in the six perfections as promised; then in other lives as well, you will easily be able to complete the perfection of wisdom.

Nowadays from among the 6 perfections -- the center post of both the sutra and tantra paths -- there exists in slight measure the stages of the practice of meditative stabilization, but the stages of the practice of the other 5 perfections have disappeared, therefore I have explained the key points of their practice in abbreviated form and a little of the method for generating certain knowledge of them.

Below I will teach at length two topics that come from the classic texts: the stages of how to practice insight -- wisdom that observes the real nature and the diversity of phenomena -- and the stages of the practice of meditative serenity, which is meditative stabilization.

All Bodhisattvas who will attain buddhahood do so in reliance upon the 6 perfections. The Bodhisattva Bhumis says this emphatically at the conclusion of its discussions of each of the 6 perfections. Hence, these 6 perfections are to be known as the one path traveled by bodhisattvas of the past, present, and future. And because these 6 are the great ocean of all virtues, they are the perfect summary of the key points of practice.

Bodhisattvas who attain unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment by these 6 perfections are called a great river, a great ocean of virtues; generosity and so forth are the most precious causes of all excellent things for all living beings. Accordingly, there is nothing comparable to the perfections' immeasurable completion of the collections of merit and sublime wisdom and their fruit of unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment.

Bodhisattva Bhumis