



ZURMANG KAGYU | BUDDHIST STUDIES SERIES
COURSE ONE | MEDITATION IN THE MAHAMUDRA TRADITION I

NOTES | CLASS SIX

The Nine Stages of Settling the Mind (མེམས་གནས་དགུ)

1. Setting the Mind

At first you practice withdrawing your mind from the external world to place it on the object of meditation. At this stage you are able to stay on the object for a short time.

2. Continuous Setting

At this stage you are better able to maintain concentration on the object and the length of time you are able to hold the object increases.

3. Revitalizing the Concentration (patched placement)

Here, effort is made to keep the continuity of concentration. When you notice that you have forgotten your object, you are able to quickly return to the object.

4. Firmly Setting the Mind

Here, forgetting the object is no longer a problem, but effort is still made to improve the quality of the concentration so that it is stabilized with fewer distractions.

5. Mastery of Concentration

Here, reflecting on the advantages of tranquility, you take delight in improving your meditation. With this it becomes easier to deal with distractions and dullness.

6. Pacification

Here, by reflecting on the disadvantages of wasting your time, distraction towards objects of the senses is diminished such that as soon as they arise they are noticed and pacified.

7. Complete Pacification

Here, you are not disturbed by attachment to objects of the senses and even if emotions (secondary afflictions) such as worry arise, they are immediately eliminated.

8. One-Pointed Concentration

Here, you apply effort with uninterrupted mindfulness and vigilance, to engage with the object, and concentration becomes a single channel.

9. Setting the Mind in Tranquil Equipoise

Through familiarization with one-pointed concentration meditative absorption is spontaneous and effortless.

Source: The *Sūtrālamkāra* of Maitreya

Achieving Tranquility: The ninth stage is only an approximation of tranquillity,¹ since real dwelling in tranquility is accompanied with pliancy of body and mind.² Also, Dakpo Tashi Namgyal explains that without achieving pliancy, the meditation is merely one-pointed concentration in the desire realm which is not a state of absorption.

The Six Powers Needed to Achieve the Nine Stages (མོ་བས་དྲུག)

1. Listening to discourses: it is through the power of listening that we are able to enter the first stage of meditation, “setting the mind.”
2. Power of contemplation: through contemplation we become familiar with our object. This helps develop some continuity in our meditations and we reach the second stage, “continuous setting.”
3. Mindfulness: draws the mind back to the object after it has wandered. This “patching” the meditation allows us to achieve the third stage, “revitalizing the concentration,” and also the fourth stage, “firmly setting the mind.”
4. Introspection: allows us to achieve the fifth stage, “the mastery of concentration,” and the sixth stage, “pacification.”
5. Effort: allows us to eliminate even subtle disturbances and afflictions, so we can achieve the seventh stage, “the complete pacification of mental disturbances,” and also the eighth stage, “one-pointed concentration.”
6. Familiarity: allows us to achieve the ninth stage, “setting the mind in tranquil equipoise.”

Source: *Śrāvakabhūmi* by Asaṅga

The Four Types of Attention Needed to Achieve the Nine Stages (ཡིད་བྱེད་བཞི)

1. Concentrated exertion: describes attention on the first two stages since through exertion we engage the object.
2. Attention with intermittent pauses: describes attention on the third to seventh stages since on these stages our meditation is interrupted by agitation and dullness.
3. Attention without pauses: describes attention on the eighth stage.
4. Natural and spontaneous attention: describes attention on the ninth stage.

Source: *Śrāvakabhūmi* by Asaṅga

¹ *anuloma śamatha*, ཞི་གནས་རྗེས་མཐུན་པ་

² This is explained in the *Samdhinirmocana Sūtra*, དགོངས་པ་རེས་འགྲེ. Also, Asaṅga in the *Śrāvakabhūmi* explains the order of mental and physical pliancy and bliss.