

2019_10_27_am1_Shamatha_LMC.mp4

talking of 'all' things including meditation and concentration being in opposition to each other

[00:06:16] This morning seemed to me like a good day to... talk about all things. ... So, we have many small things that we normally put together to make big things. So rather than that usual thing, perhaps this morning we could talk about *all* things. ... But, even all things have a foundation. And, so this morning we'll begin as usual, our turning of the mind towards refuge, away from all of our usual activities and thinking. And then we'll come back and talk about *all* things.

Sangha [00:08:07] reciting Refuge & Bodhicitta Prayer

[00:10:34] In order to talk about and understand all things... we have to have an abiding curiosity... and an ever-deepening understanding of the truth of interdependence. And, fortunately we already have experience. Maybe even we could say, *profound* experience of interdependence. The way in which all things *fit* together and *influence* one another. Likely everyone here has an understanding of that interdependence, even if you never thought about it. ... We're all clear... that we came into this world, not *this* time, by our own effort. Someone else gave birth to us. And the many things that we encounter in this experience of this life... come about by virtue of a myriad of causes and conditions. And those causes and conditions are what we, of course, refer to as interdependence.

[00:13:05] But we often take for granted our understanding of interdependence. Maybe sometimes because it is so obvious that everything influences everything. But, if we look also into our own minds... into our habits, our experiences, especially those we are having in this very moment, we can have another level of understanding. And when we sit and practice this calm abiding or shamatha, we put our awareness on our breath, at least that's one of the options. And the idea is to rest our awareness on the ebb and flow of that breath. But of course there are many more things taking place than just our *intention* to rest our awareness on our breath. Simultaneously we are recalling what we did yesterday, what we intend to do this afternoon and so on. All of these things... arising and many, many more. And, for the most part... we barely notice it.

[00:15:12] It might be fair to say that... we owe it to ourselves to pay attention to our experiences. Since every experience that we have leads to another experience, which leads to another experience and so on. And if we're not careful, we end up in place that were not even clear how we got there. So when we place our awareness on our breath, which is the classic formula...of course we are also experiencing other things. Things we did yesterday, things we hope we'll do this afternoon and tomorrow and so on. And, maybe we also remember we were angry yesterday or... something else. ... But, merely remembering is not sufficient. We want to bring our awareness to all of our experiences. Not to cheat ourselves out of some of those experiences which we would rather forget. ... When we place our awareness on the experiences which arise in our bodies, physical experiences, those which arise in our minds... our hopes and fears, our attachments and aversions, they also need feeding [laughs] and if we don't take care of them, *they will eat us*.

[00:18:21] When we bring our awareness to... any experience that we have, we tend to isolate that experience... in a way which is not helpful. ... The kind of classic instruction in shamatha is

to bring our awareness to an experience that we have chosen... or given to us to use something as the object of our awareness. ... Sometimes we place our awareness on an object such as our breath or something else... and we concentrate on that object or that awareness. ... So I want to make a case this morning for not doing that. ... A case I think can be made, that meditation and concentration are in opposition to each other. The concentration is an *excluding* activity. It is not certainly an all-encompassing activity. We're trying to narrow the field of our experience. There is nothing really fundamentally wrong with that. ... But, we are not simply our breath. And, if we are to become *intimate* with ourselves... which of course is a prerequisite for becoming intimate with others... in a healthy way, we must pay attention to all of our experiences. In order to pay attention to *all* our experiences, we have to practice placing our awareness on the experiences which arise *in* our mind and in our bodies, whether they are experiences we *wanted* or not.

[00:22:05] So, we can begin resting our awareness on our breath. ... The small beginning... where we *watch* our breath come and go. ... Not very interesting maybe, unless one was having difficulty breathing. In which case watching the breath come and go might be *exceedingly* interesting. We want to see *all* aspects of our experience... as they arise and as they dissolve. Without any exceptions at all. And, were still not in the... talking about *everything*, just about ourselves.

[00:23:25] But beyond that, when we see the interconnectedness of our thought patterns and our memories and our hopes for the day... and fears and so on, we see all of those things and they *ripen* into something positive if our mind is clear. And, just resting, at first one at a time... one experience, one memory, one thought. ... Conceptually, we can understand... that what I think about in this moment will affect the experience that I have in the next moment. And, what I did yesterday is affecting my experience today. And the experience I have today will effect my experience this afternoon and tomorrow And in *this* way, experientially rather than merely conceptually, we can bring ourselves to the place of understanding *all* of the ethical teachings. ...Is that not clear?

[00:25:33] All of our ethical teachings, such as... telling the truth... to the best of our ability, provides us with a new experience which arises from the effort to tell the truth. And sometimes it arises from the effort, the *failed* effort, to tell the truth. Placing our awareness on that *also* brings insight. So, little by little we can see that *all* of our experiences no matter what it is... can be embraced as part of the path.

[00:26:32] So, *concentration* on a small thing is just concentration on a small thing. More importantly... we need really to rise to the larger thing of the interdependence that *each* of us manifests... by virtue of all the things that we have done in this life, including all our hopes and fears.

[00:27:10] So it's not easy to place our awareness like that. But it's *critical*. To remain interested in the path, it's not just a series of trite formulas. ... The objective is to witness the totality of our experience as we have raised before and come home to that totality. Rest our awareness, rest our being with it. Knowing that the seeds planted in that way will ripen in our own stream of consciousness and by extension we will, through all of that, influence others in a *positive* way.

[00:28:20] So to the best of your ability let's spend a little time with shamatha. ... Placing your awareness, perhaps on your breath for a few moments or a few minutes. And then expanding the scope... bringing your awareness to *whatever* experiences you are having, your wishes for

the day, the discomfort in your legs, whatever it is. Do not focus too hard. Just softly, in a relaxed way, with the mind and the body... maintain as stable an awareness as possible. Relax in it. With neither hope nor fear... just an abiding curiosity.

[00:29:45] period of meditation

[00:36:48] During the meditation, if it becomes... a little wobbly, and you feel distracted... it is often best not to try to repair it. Just begin afresh again. As we have talked about before, each of your sessions is fresh. In truth... every session, whether we notice it or not, has never occurred before. The experiences are fresh, whether we want them or not. ... So when you are feeling distracted and having a difficult time, it's best to just let all of it go. ... And come back to the practice... as if the truth were the truth. Let the session you begin is utterly fresh. You can begin again over and over... unlimited times... without having to drag the mistakes and failures behind you. Best just to drop it all. ... Your awareness should be light... lighthearted even. Not tense, not tight.

[00:39:33] period of meditation

Sangha [00:50:58] dedicating the merit