Chapter 3 – Focusing the Mind on the Object of Meditation

- 1. Purpose of Chapter 3
  - Moves from choosing an object to training the mind on that object
  - Śamatha is a trained mental ability, not passive calm
  - Calm without correct method does not produce śamatha
- 2. Definition of Śamatha
  - Two inseparable qualities
    - Single-pointed stability
    - Vivid mental clarity
  - Bliss may arise but is not defining
  - Stability is emphasised first; clarity develops later
- 3. The Flawless Method
  - 3.1 Mindfulness (dran pa)
    - Holds the object without analysis
    - Prevents forgetting the object
    - Requires balanced effort: neither too tight nor too loose
  - 3.2 Introspection (samprajanya)
    - Spy or Sentry
    - Monitors the quality of attention
    - Detects laxity and excitement
    - Operates simultaneously with concentration
  - 3.3 Cooperation of Mindfulness and Introspection
    - Mindfulness holds the object
    - Introspection checks and corrects
    - Without both, śamatha cannot arise
- 4. Correct Relationship to the Object
  - Buddha object is best
  - Object must be clearly defined and familiar
  - Begin with simple characteristics (e.g. colour)
  - Do not improve, analyse, or elaborate the object
  - Only add more detail when Śamatha at that level is stable
  - If object changes (colour, size, posture, number)
    - **Stop the session**
    - Reset the visualisation
    - Begin again correctly
  - Continuing with a corrupted object trains instability
  - Corrective Questions (Introspection Prompts)
    - Is the object **exactly as intended?**
    - Is attention **vivid or merely stable?**
    - Is effort **too tight or too loose?**
    - Am I **holding** or merely **resting**?
- 5. The Two Principal Obstacles
  - 5.1 Excitement
    - Undermines stability
    - Coarse: mind leaves the object
    - Subtle: attraction to other objects while staying
  - 5.2 Laxity
    - Coarse: dullness or sleep
    - Subtle: stable but weak, unclear attention
      - **Most dangerous error**
    - Undermines clarity
    - Most dangerous fault because it mimics progress
- 6. Eliminating Flawed Methods
  - Relaxation alone is not Śamatha meditation
  - Over-tight focus leads to agitation
  - Over-relaxed focus leads to subtle laxity
  - Non-thinking or objectless methods still require mindfulness and introspection
  - Correct balance likened to tuning a musical instrument
  - Applying antidotes when no fault is present undermines stability
  - Kamalaśīla: mindfulness holds, introspection checks — simultaneously
- 7. Role of Introspection During Meditation
  - Introspection does not interrupt concentration
  - Functions like a mental spy or sentry
  - Detects faults before they fully arise
  - Becomes subtler and more integrated with experience
- 8. Length of Meditation Sessions
  - Protecting enthusiasm
    - Multiple short sessions recommended for beginners
  - End sessions while practice is going well
  - Session length determined by quality, not time
  - Longer sessions possible as mindfulness strengthens
  - Adapt length to physical and mental condition
- 9. Core Message of Chapter 3
  - Śamatha is not calm, silence, or pleasant feeling
  - Śamatha arises from repeated, precise mental training
  - Correct object + correct method + vigilance
  - Without this, years of meditation may not lead to śamatha

Why resetting is necessary

Allowing change trains instability

Peace without clarity ≠ śamatha

Absence of thought without mindfulness ≠ śamatha

Re-establish object, shorten session, strengthen mindfulness

End session, reset posture, re-energise

Gently relax effort, stabilise without loosening

Increase clarity, refresh object, strengthen mindfulness

Sharpen attention, re-establish vividness

Indicates: Subtle excitement due to over-effort
Response: Slightly relax effort without loosening the object

Diagnostic Layer How to Read My Experience

- I feel peaceful, so this must be śamatha
- I'm not thinking, so I'm meditating well
- The image keeps changing, but that's natural
- The object disappears entirely
- The mind sinks or sleepiness appears
- The object is clear but the mind feels restless or pulled elsewhere
- The mind feels calm, quiet, pleasant, but slightly foggy
- The object remains, but attention feels weak or distant
- The image is very sharp, but the mind feels tense or brittle