

Meditating in Solitude, Meditating in Cities

There are some people who wish to practice shamatha and vipashyana in solitude. Those people should practice in isolated places in retreat. There are some people who wish to practice these teachings focusing upon their thoughts. Those people can practice while they are in towns and cities. They can take the sounds that are present as the focus for the meditation. Or they can take thoughts as the focus for meditation and can practice in towns and cities, wherever they live.

One can try these different ways of practicing meditation and see what they are like. One can practice in isolation—doing solitary practice—and see what that is like, or one can practice shamatha and vipashyana in large cities, where there are lots of distractions, and one can see what that is like. Having done that, one can distinguish between practicing in those two different types of situations.

Some methods of meditation focus upon suffering; some focus upon mental afflictions. There are many different methods of meditation. If one takes a method of meditation where the focus is suffering, for example, it does not matter if one has a lot of suffering—that's fine. If one takes as one's focus one's mental afflictions, or kleshas, it does not matter if one has a lot of kleshas. In those contexts, the suffering or kleshas will arise as assistance, or an aid, for one's meditation upon mahamudra.

When one is taking suffering as one's focus for meditation, if one starts thinking a lot about the future, one will think that a lot of suffering will arise. But what one is to do when focusing on suffering is to look at the essence of suffering. That is the focus.

—From *Mahamudra Shamatha and Vipashyana*, Rocky Mountain Shambhala Center, 1991, pp.37-8. Translated by Elizabeth Callahan.

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