

Orientation for the Retreat

Joshua Tree 3

01-Mar-08

Bhante Vimalaramsi

Extract on Walking Meditation:

Now, when you are done with your sitting, and some people can sit for forty-five minutes, some people sit thirty minutes, some people sit an hour, it's not any set thing that everybody gets up and starts walking and then stops and then comes back, it's not like that. Because you have your own rhythm. But don't break your own rhythm, stay with your rhythm. When your meditation is good, continue with the meditation. When it's not so good, at thirty minutes, get up and do your walking. Now when you're doing your walking you want to stay with your spiritual friend. Don't put your attention on your feet. Walk at a normal pace. At first the walking is going to be somewhat difficult because you're not used to it, and you'll start thinking about this and that. But that's OK. As soon as you notice it just gently let it be and relax and come back to your spiritual friend. When you're doing your walking meditation, please don't be looking around. Keep your eyes, oh, two or three meters in front of you, and, just a light gaze--that stops you from falling in holes and things like that. When your walking is good, walk longer. Now what your walking is for is to help get the circulation going in your body. So walk at a normal pace. Don't walk really slow. You don't get a lot of circulation when you're walking slow.

One of the things that can happen with the meditation if your energy starts to go down, and people come and they simply think, "Oh this is really great, I hit something, this is really wonderful," and they come and they talk to me and they say, "You know, I got this blank spot and I have no idea what happened while I was sitting with that blank spot." And my answer to that is: "Sloth and torpor That's what you were experiencing. It's no special big deal. It's because your body

energy is too low. So you gotta get up and you have to walk for longer.”

Now, when you’re doing your walking meditation, you can walk as long as an hour but please don’t walk any longer than that. An hour is about as long as you want to walk. Because, if you walk any longer, your body starts to get tired.

Stay with your object of meditation, don’t let your mind ho-hum around. When you’re sitting in meditation and you let your mind just kind of take off and not pay attention to your object of meditation, that’s the first part of sloth and torpor. And then your mind dulls out, and then you start getting a little bit dreamy, and then your back starts slumping, and before long your bobbing up and down like one of those lizards that bob their heads. When that happens, two things you need to do: One, pay more attention to your object of meditation—take more interest in your friend and really sincerely like them. And sincerely do wish them well. And, sit a little bit straighter than normal. Now when you’re sitting in meditation, I want your back nicely straight without tension in it. When you have sloth and torpor arising, you can sit a little bit straighter, not so it causes a lot of pain but just a little bit straighter, and then when you see that you’re starting to slump a little bit, you’ll catch that more quickly and you’ll be able to let go of the sloth and torpor without really getting caught by it.

Now there’s other remedies for the sloth and torpor when it comes. When you do your walking meditation, pick a place that’s, oh, fifty feet or so. Walk back and forth. Now when you have sloth and torpor in your sitting, you get up and you start your walking meditation. You walk the length and then you stop but you don’t turn around. Walk backwards. You have to start paying more attention when you walk backwards. And then you get to the end of that, then stop and then walk forwards, staying with your spiritual friend all of the time. That helps pick up your energy; you come in and you start doing your sitting and you see that your sitting is much better.

Transcript prepared by Uma Sarason
March 2009