

Successful retreats by Lama Yeshe

If you want your retreat to be successful, you should have the right attitude toward it. You should not feel that it is some kind of prison sentence during which you are locked up... Instead you should feel joyful and fortunate that you have the chance to do something highly beneficial for yourself and others.

Lama Thubten Yeshe
"The Tantric Path of Purification"

"Retreat is the only way to really transform your mind...With transformation, the solution to your problems comes...Sitting in a cave while your mind keeps wandering back home is not being in retreat. Your body, speech and mind should be focussed on the same thing. Most of the time your mind is split and agitated, and you cannot do mundane things without coming down from a state of higher awareness. In retreat you must learn how to unify the two—the mundane and the transcendent...

Our minds are somewhat crazy and out of control; therefore, we need to treat them firmly. However, change must be sought voluntarily, gently, and skilfully. Sometimes retreaters are unskilful. They imagine that they are great ascetic meditators...and push themselves until their nervous systems explode. You cannot change your mind as simply as you change your clothes. Discipline yourselves wisely...

To give yourself the best chance of success you must keep environmental distractions to a minimum. You have to create an environment that suits your needs...

The meditation room should be comfortable, clean and very tidy...

You should avoid, as much as possible, talking with people. The news they bring and their vibration can disturb your concentration. If you are feeling tense and need to talk in order to relax, the conversation should be about Dharma.

One of the most important things you can do to ensure the success of your retreat is to stay healthy...Some people equate retreat with what they imagine to be asceticism: uncomfortable conditions, an unhealthy environment, poor food,...not sleeping,...and so forth. This is completely wrong...

If you do not eat properly, there is the danger that your nervous system and the energy winds of your body will become disturbed...Such disturbances manifest as nervous breakdowns, "spacing out," or physical pains, especially in the heart chakra...

Be kind to yourself. When you do a good session, pat yourself on the back and congratulate yourself.

Conclusion

If you get the chance—or make the time—to retreat, you are extremely fortunate. Few things are as beneficial...

Therefore start your retreat with great determination and no expectations...It's enough that you are trying to control your mind and relax in this peaceful, tranquil atmosphere."

L. Yeshe, Vajrasatva