

# INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM

Readings and Materials



Tushita Meditation Centre  
Dharamsala, India

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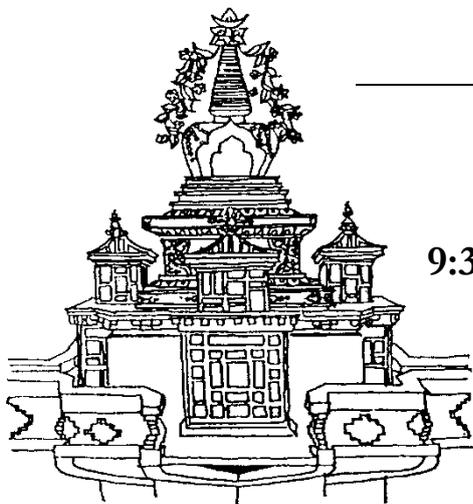
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### PREPARATION OF THIS BOOKLET

The material in this booklet was compiled using the "Introductory Course Readings and Materials" booklet prepared by **Ven. Sangye Khadro** for introductory courses at Tushita, and includes several extensive excerpts from her book, *How to Meditate*.

**Ven. Tenzin Chogyi** made extensive additions and changes to this introductory course material in November 2008, while further material was added and some alterations made by **Glen Svensson** in July 2011, for this version.



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# INTRODUCTION

## WHO IS THE BUDDHA?

The Buddha was born as Prince Siddhartha in 563 BCE in Lumbini, which is in present-day Nepal, near the border with India. Sages prophesied that the child would become either a great ruler or a great saint. His father preferred the former, so he raised his son to become the ruler of his kingdom. Siddhartha was very intelligent and quickly learned all he was taught. He was also kind-hearted and sensitive.



In his late 20s he ventured outside the protected environment of his palace and encountered some of the tragic realities of life: sickness, old age and death. Realizing that all beings are subject to such sufferings, he aspired to find a way to end suffering both for himself and for others. A fourth encounter, with a wandering monk who looked serene and happy, inspired him to renounce his princely life and meditate in the forest in order to find truth and freedom. He left his home, spent six years practicing intensely in the forest, and finally attained his goal: enlightenment.

After his enlightenment, he first taught five of his former companions in Sarnath, near Varanasi, and the topic of this first teaching was the Four Noble Truths. Lord Buddha then spent the last 45 years of his life traveling throughout the Ganges plain, practicing and teaching, and then passed away in Kushinagar, in northern India, at the age of 80.

## THE HUMAN PREDICAMENT AND THE BUDDHA'S SOLUTION

Everyone wants happiness yet few of us seem to find it. In our search for satisfaction we go from one relationship to another, one job to another, one country to another. We study art and medicine, train to be tennis players and typists; have babies, race cars, write books and grow flowers. We spend our money on home entertainment systems, mobile phones, iPods, hand-held computers, comfortable furniture and vacations in the sun. Or we try to get back to nature, eat whole-food, practice yoga and meditate. Just about everything we do is an attempt to find real happiness and avoid suffering.

There is nothing wrong with wanting happiness; there is nothing wrong with any of these attempts to find it. The problem is that we see things like relationships, possessions and adventures as having some inherent ability to satisfy us, as being the cause of happiness. But they cannot be—simply because they do not last. Everything by nature constantly changes and eventually disappears: our body, our friends, all our belongings, the environment. Our dependence on impermanent things and clinging to the rainbow-like happiness they bring cause only disappointment and grief, not satisfaction and contentment.

We *do* experience happiness with things outside ourselves, but it doesn't truly satisfy us or free us from our problems. It is poor-quality happiness, unreliable and short-lived. This does not mean that we should give up our friends and possessions in order to be happy. Rather, what we need to give up are our misconceptions about them and our unrealistic expectations of what they can do for us.

Not only do we see them as permanent and able to satisfy us; at the root of our problems is our fundamentally mistaken view of reality. We believe instinctively that people and things exist in and of themselves, from their own side; that they have an inherent nature, an inherent thing-ness. This means that we see things as having certain qualities abiding naturally within them; that they are, from their own side, good or bad, attractive or unattractive. These qualities seem to be out there, in the objects themselves, quite independent of our viewpoint and everything else.

We think, for example, that chocolate is inherently delicious or that success is inherently satisfying. But surely, if they were, they would never fail to give pleasure or to satisfy, and everyone would experience them in the same way.

Our mistaken idea is deeply-ingrained and habitual; it colors all our relationships and dealings with the world. We probably rarely question whether or not the way we see things is the way they actually exist, but once we do it will be obvious that our picture of reality is exaggerated and one-sided; that the good and bad qualities we see in things are actually created and projected by our own mind.



According to Buddhism there *is* lasting, stable happiness and everyone has the potential to experience it. The causes of happiness lie within our own mind, and methods for achieving it can be practiced by anyone, anywhere, in any lifestyle—living in the city, working an eight-hour job, raising a family, playing at weekends.

By practicing these methods, we can learn to be happy at any time, in any situation, even difficult and painful ones. Eventually we can free ourselves of problems like dissatisfaction, anger and anxiety and, finally, by realizing the actual way that things exist, we will eliminate completely the very source of all disturbing states of mind so that they will never arise again, and reach the goal of liberation or enlightenment.

### WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT?

Enlightenment is a state of mind in which all negative, harmful qualities—anger, hatred, greed, pride, ignorance, etc.—have been eliminated, and in which all positive, beneficial qualities—universal compassion and love, generosity, patience, wisdom, etc.—have been perfected. Someone who has attained enlightenment is free of all problems and suffering: pain, sickness, death, fear, sadness, loneliness, and so forth.

Any person who attains the state of enlightenment is called a Buddha. There isn't only one Buddha, there are many—past, present and future. All of us have the potential to attain enlightenment and become Buddhas—this is called our “Buddha nature.”



## THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

Buddha was once like ourselves: an ordinary being, deluded and suffering. Through his own effort, he attained enlightenment, and then taught the way so that others can follow. Buddha cannot “save” us, cannot make us enlightened. We have to do it ourselves, by following his advice, practicing his teachings. So Buddha is like our teacher and guide, or like a doctor who tells us what’s wrong and prescribes the cure. Therefore, in order to attain enlightenment, we need to study the Buddha’s teachings and put them into practice as well as we can.

The first teaching the Buddha gave, on the Four Noble Truths, summarizes the essence of his entire message. The Four Noble Truths are: 1) suffering, or dissatisfaction; 2) the causes of suffering; 3) the cessation of suffering; and 4) the path leading to that cessation.

### THE FIRST NOBLE TRUTH: THE TRUTH OF SUFFERING

The first noble truth simply means that every being (i.e., those who are not enlightened) experiences suffering to some extent. “Suffering” refers not only to severe physical or mental pain, but to any type of unpleasant, unwanted experience. It includes sickness and other kinds of physical discomfort, as well as emotional problems such as disappointment, loss, loneliness, depression, stress, fear, dissatisfaction, and so forth.

Some people accuse Buddhism of being pessimistic because it speaks so much about suffering. However, Buddha was merely pointing out what is true—that no one is able to get through life without difficulties. And he did not speak *only* about suffering; he also explained that it’s possible to become free of suffering, and *how* to do this.

Suffering is explained in various ways. One way is to speak of the kinds of suffering the Buddha saw: sickness, old age, and death.

Another list enumerates three types of suffering:

- **The suffering of suffering:** gross suffering. Even animals understand this and take steps to avoid it.
- **The suffering of change:** relates to experiences we normally identify as pleasurable. We perceive them as states of pleasure or joy because in comparison to painful experiences, they appear as a form of relief. We’re attached to things (relationships, possessions) but if they were pleasurable in themselves, the more we indulged in them, the more our pleasure would increase, but it’s not the case. They are impermanent, they change, they run out, so we suffer. Ex.: chocolate cake
- **Pervasive suffering,** the suffering of conditioned existence: the mere fact of being born in *samsara*, or cyclic existence. Because our existence and everything that happens in *samsara* is due to ignorance, so there is no possibility of a permanent state of happiness—some kind of trouble always arises. The bare fact of our unenlightened existence.

Again, the point of meditating on and gaining an awareness of these sufferings is not to become depressed, but to generate a wish to be free of these sufferings. This wish is known as renunciation, and is the beginning of the spiritual path.

## THE SECOND NOBLE TRUTH: THE TRUTH OF THE CAUSES OF SUFFERING

The second truth is that suffering has causes. We all try to find solutions to our problems, but what we do doesn't always work because we fail to recognize where our problems come from, what their real causes are.

Buddha discovered that the source of problems and suffering lies within, and also that the solution lies within. He discovered that there are two main causes of suffering: karma and delusions. The principal of these is delusions—disturbing, negative factors within our minds.

### DELUSIONS (SKT. KLESHAS)

Delusions cover both afflictive emotions and their cause, ignorance. And out of the many delusions that exist in our minds, the “three poisons” of ignorance, attachment, and anger are the main causes of suffering.

**Ignorance** is the root of suffering—suffering comes because we are misperceiving the way in which things exist—it is this fundamental ignorance about the nature of reality that is the cause of suffering.

This occurs at different levels. One example is not understanding cause and effect, or karma: that skillful actions lead to happiness and unskillful actions lead to suffering. Due to this, people engage in unskillful actions like killing and stealing, hoping to obtain happiness, but getting problems instead. And they *avoid* doing skillful actions like being generous with their time and resources, thinking that they will lose out, therefore they avoid creating the causes of happiness. Ignorance is actually the root cause of all the other delusions, of karma, and of all problems and suffering.

Two other ways of classifying ignorance:

- Acquired ignorance: learned theories or beliefs from our culture.
- Innate ignorance—spontaneous, not learned, like when things are going wrong, we blame other people, even if we haven't learned to, just naturally.

Because of this fundamental confusion, we have afflictive emotions. The definition of “afflictive emotion” is emotions that arise that, merely by their presence, immediately disturb our minds—any kind of emotion that disturbs our peace of mind.

**Attachment** is defined as a mental factor that perceives its object as attractive, exaggerates its attractiveness, regards it as a cause of happiness, and wants to possess and retain it. It is wanting to possess and not lose things that we find attractive and pleasurable. You might wonder what's wrong with that? Attachment is usually based on ego and selfishness, so indulging in it perpetuates those attitudes. It is also unrealistic, because it wants people and things to be permanent, when in reality they are impermanent. It can lead us to commit unskillful actions such as stealing, lying, cheating, or harming others, and this behavior in turn leads to further problems. Also, instead of bringing the satisfaction we hope for, it just leads to more discontent. The great Indian Buddhist master Shantideva said that attachment never leads to happiness and satisfaction, because if we desire something but don't get it, we will be unhappy, but even if we *get* it, we will be unhappy.

Attachment is also the cause of some social problems such as alcoholism, drug abuse, infidelity, stress, suicide, sexual abuse, poverty, and even violence and murder. Therefore, it causes problems both to oneself and to others, both now and in the future.

**Anger** is defined as a mental factor that perceives its object as unattractive, exaggerates its unattractiveness, becomes antagonistic, and wishes to harm the object. It disturbs our mind, prevents us from feeling peaceful and happy, harms our health, and can lead us to harm others. It can motivate us to commit unskillful actions such as killing or hurting others, speaking harshly to them, and so forth. These actions leave imprints on our mind, which will give rise to problems and suffering in the future.

There are also six primary afflictions explained in Vasubhandu's *Abhidharmakosha*: ignorance, attachment or craving, anger, pride or conceit, afflictive doubt, afflictive views (transitory aggregates, ascetic practices, etc.) and twenty secondary afflictions such as distraction, pretension, concealment of one's vices, laziness, envy, cruelty, spite, etc.

The scriptures mention six factors leading to the growth of disturbing emotions:

1. Seed: the fundamental cause of the deluded mind is the imprints left on your consciousness by previous non-virtuous actions. When the conditions are right, these seeds ripen and the deluded mind rises again.
2. Object: when the object is near you and the seed is there in your mind – bang! – delusion arises. This happens most often with objects of attachment. The object causing the deluded mind to arise must have some relationship to the seed, so technically it is called a “related object.” There has to be the proper combination of both the imprint on the mind and the object's characteristic qualities. If there is no contact with an appropriate object, it is impossible for the subjective delusion to function.
3. Society: exposure to the influence of people who engage in non-virtues.
4. Media: not checking teachers carefully, following wrong concepts taught by teachers. This refers especially to teachings that seem to contradict basic morality and the teachings of cause and effect. It's also important to be careful about exposure to negative influences such as violence on television, pornography, anything that doesn't uplift your mind.
5. Habit: you have a certain experience with an object, and then when you meet a similar object you remember the first experience, and each time you repeat the action the strength of that memory increases, becoming more powerful and distorted in your imagination. Habit builds up associations so that whenever a similar situation arises, your mind automatically runs toward delusion.
6. Inappropriate attention: you exaggerate the qualities of something so much it doesn't even resemble the original at all, it's just a product of your mistaken conceptualizations. This factor involves overestimation of qualities, whether good or bad. Also, the object seems so permanent and self-existent not at all a function of your own conceptualization.

## KARMA

The Sanskrit word *karma* literally means “action.” Karma refers to volitional action, and the effects are experienced primarily in terms of your experience of your external reality. Karma is the cause, not the result—the volitional action, not the result of that action. When we do an action, we create the causes to experience results or consequences. In general, if we do positive actions we will experience positive results, and if we do negative actions we will experience negative results. Karmic actions are the reactions to afflictive emotions, and the result of these karmic actions is suffering.

The law of karma is not like the law of a country which is invented by people—it was not invented by Buddha or anyone else. It’s a natural law, like the law of gravity, which Buddha came to understand and then explained to us. So when we “break” the law of karma by doing something negative, the bad results we experience occur naturally. It’s not that we are punished by anyone! Also, the law of karma works for everyone, whether or not they know about and believe in it, in the same way that eating poison makes everyone sick, whether or not they know or believe that it’s poison.

Four characteristics of karma:

1. Karma is definite: whatever karma is created will bring a corresponding result: negativity will only lead to suffering, virtue will only lead to happiness, in the same way that rice seeds produce rice and chili seeds produce chili.
2. Increase: a small action can bring a big result if it is nurtured through being happy to do it and repeating the action again and again, in the same way that one small seed can produce a big tree if it is nurtured (eg. with water, sunlight etc.)
3. We will not experience the results if we didn’t create the cause: we won’t experience problems if we don’t do anything bad, and we won’t experience happiness if we don’t do anything good.
4. Karma doesn’t disappear, even after many lifetimes: we carry karma from one lifetime to the next, until the right conditions come together for that karma to ripen and bring its results. However, it’s possible for non-virtuous karma to be purified by doing the practice of purification with the **four opponent powers**: regret, reliance, remedy and resolve. Also, our virtuous karma can be destroyed by anger.

Which actions are good, and which actions are bad? Good actions are those that produce happiness for oneself and others, and bad actions are those that produce unhappiness for oneself or others. An action is therefore good or bad according to the result it brings in the future. Most of us can’t see the future to know what the results of our actions will be, so to help us, Buddha mentioned a list of ten actions which are the most unskillful and should be abandoned if we do not wish to suffer:

**The ten unskillful actions (ten nonvirtues) are:**

**Three of body:**

1. killing
2. stealing
3. sexual misconduct

**Four of speech:**

4. lying
5. divisive speech
6. harsh speech
7. gossip

**Three of mind:**

8. covetousness
9. ill-will
10. wrong view

There is also a list of ten skillful actions, which should be practiced if we wish to experience happiness. They are the contrary to the ten unskillful actions: they involve recognizing that these actions are wrong because they bring harm to oneself and to others, and then making the conscious effort to refrain from them, and to practice a contrary action. For example, when we understand that killing is negative and causes suffering, and we make the effort to refrain from killing and, furthermore, attempt to save lives, we create not only the virtue of non-killing but also the merit of protecting life.

But this doesn't mean that there are only ten virtuous and ten non-virtuous actions! These are simply the main ones, but there are many others.

The four components of a karmic action:

- Basis or object: there has to be an object of the karmic action.
- Intention: there are three components to intention: the motivation or will, wanting to do something, which can be positive, negative, or neutral. This motivation can be very subtle, even subconscious. The motivation needs to have some delusion mixed in with it. The third component of intention is recognition of the object.
- Action: the action itself, physical, verbal, mental.
- Completion: satisfaction, completion of the deed, which occurs when you've done the action, are conscious of it, and satisfied that you've done it.

The four effects of a given karmic action: (using the example of the result of killing karma)

- Ripened result: the next rebirth
- Result similar to the cause:
  - Similar experiences: being killed, having a short lifespan, much sickness, etc.
  - Similar tendencies: having the habit to kill
- Environmental result: experiencing a place with a lot of warfare, etc.

The severity, weight and results of our actions are affected by different factors such as our motivation, the object of the action, the way we carry it out, and so on. Some of the factors that determine the heaviness of an action:

- Heavy by nature: killing most heavy, idle speech lightest.
- Heavy because of intention: the intention is a strong delusion. Also, having an intention that precedes the action—not just the intention while the action is being performed. Premeditation makes the karma heavier. (Also strong regret afterwards lightens the karma.)
- Heavy because of the deed: an example would be killing sadistically.
- Heavy because of the basis, the object: someone close to you, guru, parents, Bodhisattvas, etc.
- Heavy because of always being done: idle gossip, heavy just due to frequency.
- Heavy because no antidote has been applied: actions done by someone who never performs a single virtue.

## REBIRTH

There are different views about what happens to us when we die. Many people believe that death is annihilation: that we become non-existent, nothing. This is the materialist view. Other people believe that we have just one life, and after death our soul goes to heaven or hell, depending on how we lived our life. Some people believe in rebirth or reincarnation; this is the Buddhist view. According to Buddhism, death is the point at which our mind separates from our body; then, if we have not attained *nirvana* (liberation) or enlightenment, our mind takes rebirth into a new body, and we begin a new life. The mind is impermanent—it changes every moment—and it does not have any permanent characteristics or personality traits, but takes on a different personality each life.

People often ask “is there any evidence of rebirth?” There are actually many cases of people who remember their past lives and are able to give detailed, verifiable information. Dr. Ian Stevenson, a professor at the University of Virginia in the US, has collected thousands of such cases, some of which are published in his book *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*. There are also many people who remember past lives under hypnosis, as part of treatment for physical or mental problems, and such treatment (known as hypnotherapy) has proved highly effective. And many people have near-death experiences, which are evidence that consciousness is able to function independently of the brain and the body.

On the other hand, we can ask: is there solid, concrete evidence that rebirth does *not* exist? If a person shows no sign of life—no breathing, heart-activity or brain-activity—does this prove that there is no longer any mental activity, awareness or consciousness?

Professor Robert Thurman, in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (p. 25) writes: “... a considerable body of credible evidence supports the probability of post-death existence of consciousness and sentient future life continuity. First, it is the natural thing to expect, since everything else in nature exhibits continuity through. Second, many credible witnesses report that they died and experienced certain adventures. Some clinically died and were revived. Some remember as children details and circumstances of former lives, and some of their memories are corroborated by other people, standing up to the investigation of reputable researchers. Some codify the data collected in various ways and present it in manuals in traditions of dying used in many cultures. And the majority of humans in most civilizations feel they must have some concern for the state of their awareness in the future lives they will be obliged to face.”

The Buddhist view of rebirth originated from the Buddha, who had direct, actual experience of remembering his own former lives, as well as perceiving other beings dying and taking rebirth. Some Buddhists believe that the new birth takes place immediately after death, others believe that it can occur anytime up to 49 days after death.

After we die, where will we be reborn? The new birth may or may not take place in the same life-form as the previous one. In other words, if we are human in one life, it doesn't necessarily mean we will be human in the next. The new birth could take place in any of six life-forms, or “realms” of existence. Three of these are unfortunate realms, three are fortunate. The three unfortunate realms are those of animals, hungry-ghosts (pretas), and hell-beings (naraks). The three fortunate realms are those of humans, gods (devas) and demigods (asuras). Which of these realms we take birth in depends upon our karma.

## THE THIRD NOBLE TRUTH: THE TRUTH OF THE CESSATION OF SUFFERING

It is possible to become free of suffering. This is possible because the causes of suffering are in our mind, and it's possible to eliminate them, thus making the mind free of all delusions and negativities. When this happens, one's mind is always in a state of peace and happiness, and one will no longer experience any sufferings such as sickness, pain, aging, death, fear, etc. This state of mind is known as nirvana, or liberation.

The term for nirvana in Tibetan means “gone beyond sorrow,” transcended suffering. It means overcoming all delusions and mental afflictions and the seeds that trigger them, overcoming even the potential for those thoughts, when the conditions are ripe. So it refers to the permanent cessation, the permanent, unchanging absence of delusions and afflictions and their seeds in one's mind.

Since the mind is by nature only clear and knowing, all emotions, including delusions and afflictive emotions, are just fleeting, adventitious, not the nature of the mind.

It's logical that if we can achieve temporary cessation, then by extension, it shows it should be possible to achieve complete cessation. Because our mental afflictions are based on a mistaken belief about reality, and emptiness is the true nature of reality, it makes sense that since emptiness has a valid support, the more we deepen our understanding of emptiness, and the greater the power of our insight becomes, the weaker our mental afflictions will be until they will finally cease completely.

The Theravada tradition says almost all beings stop at liberation, only very few special beings attain full enlightenment. The path to liberation emphasizes development of insight into true nature of reality; the emphasis is on the three higher trainings of ethics, concentration, and wisdom. The goal of the path is to become an “Arhat”—Foe Destroyer.

The Mahayana tradition says all beings will eventually attain full enlightenment, not just liberation. Buddhahood involves eliminating both afflictive and cognitive obscurations. The path involves both direct insight into the nature of reality, and also the development of bodhicitta. Cognitive obscurations can only be eliminated in the mindstream of a being who has developed bodhicitta. The Mahayana path emphasizes the six perfections, and the result of the path is Buddhahood.

### *Are liberation and enlightenment the same?*

No, they are two different goals reached by two different paths:

- Obscurations of defilements (afflictive obscurations) eliminated → liberation = nirvana, complete freedom from rebirth and karma, not a realm or place.
- Obscurations of defilements AND cognitive obscurations eliminated → enlightenment, freedom from defilements, rebirth, karma, also removal of a subtle obscuration for the propensity for the misconception of reality. Other special features, especially the two *kayas* (bodies of a Buddha).

**THE FOURTH NOBLE TRUTH:  
THE TRUTH OF THE PATH THAT LEADS TO THE CESSATION OF SUFFERING**

The path that leads to the cessation of suffering includes what we need to do in order to free our minds from delusions and karma, the causes of suffering. The Buddha taught many methods that we can use to gradually decrease and eventually eliminate the causes of suffering, and to cultivate the causes of happiness, peace and liberation.

**The Three “Scopes,” or Levels of Capability,  
described in the Stages of the Path (*lamrim*)  
Teachings**

The *lamrim*, or “Stages of the Path” teachings, explains the path in terms of the progressive development of the realizations necessary for beings at three levels of aspiration. The “lower capable being” aspires to be free of the lower realms, the “intermediate capable being” aspires to be free of samsara altogether, and achieve liberation, and the “highest capable being” wishes for the goal of full enlightenment, or Buddhahood. In the *lamrim* teachings, we are told that we need to progress in our practice through all three levels, so we speak of the path *shared* with the lower and intermediate capable beings, meaning that even if our goal is full enlightenment, we still need to develop the realizations of the path at this level.

The Buddha’s teachings are known as the Dharma. Dharma here means “that which protects us from suffering.” The Dharma can be compared to a mirror that enables us to see our minds, and to recognize which aspects of our minds are unskillful or mistaken and need to be corrected. So when we learn the Dharma we should apply it to ourselves, and learn what we need to abandon and what we need to cultivate.

There are several ways that the path to enlightenment can be explained. The presentation that follows is in terms of “The Three Principle Aspects of the Path,” or the realizations that need to be cultivated in order to progress along the path. The “six perfections,” or deeds of a bodhisattva, will also be explained. This presentation of the path is explained in the context of the Mahayana, with the goal of the path being full enlightenment, or Buddhahood.



## THE THREE PRINCIPAL ASPECTS OF THE PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT

### 1. RENUNCIATION, OR “THE DETERMINATION TO BE FREE”

Renunciation is a state of mind that involves wanting to be free from suffering and its causes (the first two noble truths). It isn't simply *not wanting* to experience pain—that's something every being has already. It must involve understanding where suffering comes from—what its causes are—and making a conscious effort to avoid these.

There are two types of renunciation or “the determination to be free”:

1. The determination to be free from suffering in our future lives, which is the level of motivation of the “lower capable being” as explained in the lamrim, or “Stages of the Path” teachings.
2. The determination to be free from cyclic existence/samsara in general, not just the lower realms. This is the level of motivation of the “intermediate capable being” of the lamrim.

#### The Path of the Lower Capable Being

It was explained earlier that after death we will be reborn in one of the six realms. Three of these are unfortunate—the realms of animals, hungry ghosts, and hell-beings—in which we would experience terrible sufferings. To avoid such a rebirth, we need to cultivate certain attitudes and ways of behaving, to live our lives wisely. The way to do this is to reflect on the following:

- The preciousness of our human life and the importance of using it for spiritual (Dharma) practice;
- The inevitability of death;
- The sufferings of the three unfortunate realms;
- Taking refuge and living in accordance with karma, the law of cause and effect.

#### The Path of the Intermediate Capable Being

Even if we take rebirth in the “fortunate realms”—the realms of humans, gods and demi-gods—we will still experience suffering. We still have to die and be reborn, separate from loved ones and cherished possessions, experience dissatisfaction, confusion, anger, jealousy, and so forth. The solution is to become free from samsara, the cycle of death and rebirth, and to attain liberation or nirvana.

To achieve nirvana we need to free our minds from delusions—especially the three main delusions of attachment, anger and ignorance—which are the root causes of samsara and all of its suffering. And the main practices to be done to achieve nirvana are the Three Higher Trainings: ethics, concentration and wisdom.

The energy and will-power to practice these three come from renunciation of samsara, which can be developed by reflecting on the suffering, dissatisfactory nature of samsara, e.g., meditating on the three kinds of suffering, the sufferings of samsara in general, and the 12 links of dependent origination.

## 2. BODHICITTA

### The Path of the Highest Capable Being

In the subject of renunciation, we looked at samsara (cyclic existence) and the need to develop the determination to be free from it. We have already been reborn in samsara numberless times and we will continue to be reborn in samsara life after life, and continue to experience suffering—such as sickness, pain, aging, death, loneliness, loss, fear, etc.—until we develop the determination to be free, and follow the path that leads to liberation.

There are two main traditions of Buddhism: Theravada and Mahayana. The main difference between them lies in the goal of one's practice. In Theravada, the goal of one's practice is to free oneself from samsara and attain nirvana. In Mahayana, the goal is to help all living beings become free from samsara. In order to do this, one needs to become enlightened, a Buddha. The aspiration to attain enlightenment in order to help all living beings is called **bodhicitta**, and the one who has such an aspiration is a **bodhisattva**. This aspiration is characteristic of the path of the highest capable being, according to the lamrim.

It's possible for anyone to develop bodhicitta and become a bodhisattva. Developing bodhicitta brings many benefits both now and in the future. For example, doing Dharma practice with the bodhicitta motivation enables us to accumulate an extensive amount of merit, purify an extensive amount of negative karma and defilements, and creates the cause for our future attainment of enlightenment. Although it normally takes many lifetimes to actually attain enlightenment, we can start now, by having the bodhicitta motivation for our practice of Dharma, and even for our ordinary activities like eating, sleeping and going to work. In addition to getting closer to enlightenment, we will also experience greater happiness here and now. This is because bodhicitta is opposite to self-centeredness, which is the cause of many problems. Bodhicitta will naturally make us a kinder, more considerate and compassionate person. People will naturally be attracted to us and feel comfortable in our presence, and our interactions with others will go more smoothly.

How to develop bodhicitta? There are two main methods. One is known as the **Seven-Point Cause and Effect Method**. As a preliminary, we need to develop equanimity: equal concern for all beings instead of discriminating between those we like, those we dislike, and those we feel indifferent to.

Following that, we meditate on these seven points:

1. Remembering that all beings have been one's mother
2. Thinking about the kindness of one's mother
3. Wishing to repay the kindness
4. Loving-kindness
5. Compassion
6. The Superior Intention, or the altruistic thought
7. Bodhicitta

The second technique is known as **Equalizing and Exchanging Self and Others Method**. The points of this technique are as follows:

Preliminary practice: equanimity meditation, as with the technique above.

1. Equalizing oneself with others
2. Reflection on the disadvantages of the self-cherishing attitude
3. Reflecting on the advantages of the thought cherishing the welfare of others
4. The actual exchange of oneself with others
5. Giving and taking: *tonglen* meditation

If we meditate on and become familiar with these points, we can gradually develop bodhicitta. When the experience of bodhicitta becomes natural and spontaneous, we become a bodhisattva, a person who is dedicated to attaining enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. The actual way to become enlightened is by practicing the Six Perfections, which are explained on page 14.

### 3. THE CORRECT VIEW OF EMPTINESS

All Buddhist teachings are for the purpose of leading one gradually to the realization of emptiness. Here, emptiness means the emptiness of inherent, concrete existence, and the total eradication from our mind of this false way of seeing things marks our achievement of enlightenment, Buddhahood.

What *is* “emptiness of inherent existence”? In practical terms, what does it mean? So-called inherent existence—of which all things are said to be empty—is a quality that we instinctively project onto every person and everything we experience. We see things as fully, solidly existing in and of themselves, from their own side, having their own nature, quite independent of any other cause and condition or of our own mind experiencing them.

Take a table, for example. We see a solid, independent table standing there, so obviously a table that it seems ridiculous to even question it. But where is the table? Where is its table-ness located? Is it one of its legs? Or its top? Is it one of its parts? Or even one of its atoms? When did it start to be a table? How many parts do you take away before it ceases to be a table?

If you investigate thoroughly, you will discover that you simply cannot find the table you think is there. There is, however, an interdependent, changing from moment to moment, non-inherent table but this is not what we see. This is the crux of the problem. We experience not the bare reality of each thing and each person but an exaggerated, filled-out image of it projected by our own mind. This mistake marks every one of our mental experiences, is quite instinctive and is the very root of all our problems.

This pervasive mental disorder starts with the misapprehension of our own self. We are a composite of body—a mass of flesh, bones and skin—and mind—a stream of thoughts, feelings and perceptions. The composite is conveniently known as “Mary,” “Harold,” “woman,” “man.” It is a temporary alliance that ends with the death of the body and the flowing on of the mind to other experiences.

These stark, unembellished facts can be rather disquieting. A part of us, the ego, craving security and immortality, invents an inherent, independent, permanent self. This is not a deliberate, conscious process but one that takes place deep in our sub-conscious mind.

This fantasized self appears especially strongly at times of stress, excitement or fear. For example, when we narrowly escape an accident there is a powerful sense of an “I” that nearly suffered death or pain and must be protected. That “I” does not exist; it is a hallucination.

Our adherence to this false “I”—known as self-grasping ignorance—taints all our dealings with the world. We are attracted to people, places and situations that gratify and uphold our self-image, and react with fear or animosity to whatever threatens it. We view all people and things as definitely this way or that. Thus this root, self-grasping, branches out into attachment, jealousy, anger, arrogance, depression and the myriad other turbulent and unhappy states of mind. The final solution is to eliminate this root ignorance with the wisdom that realizes the emptiness, in everything we experience, of the false qualities we project onto them. This is the ultimate transformation of mind.

Emptiness sounds pretty abstract but in fact is very practical and relevant to our lives. The first step towards understanding it is to try and get an idea of what it is we *think* exists; to locate, for example, the “I” that we believe in so strongly and then, by using clear reasoning in analytical meditation, to see that it is a mere fabrication, that it is something that has never existed and could never exist in the first place.

But don’t throw out too much! You definitely exist! There is a conventional, interdependent self that experiences happiness and suffering, that works, studies, eats, sleeps, meditates and becomes enlightened. The first, most difficult task is to distinguish between this valid “I” and the fabricated one;

usually we cannot tell them apart. In the concentration of meditation it is possible to see the difference; to recognize the illusory “I” and eradicate our long-habituated belief in it.

## Emptiness and Dependent Arising

One of the main methods for gaining an insight into emptiness is to understand dependent arising. Dependent arising and emptiness are like two sides of a coin: because things arise dependently, they are empty, that is, empty or devoid of being anything other than a dependent arising. The meditation on dependent arising is known as the “King of Reasonings” for gaining an insight into emptiness.

There are three levels of dependent arising:

- Dependence on causes and conditions: all compounded phenomena are dependent on causes and conditions, both the direct cause and the conditions that contribute to that phenomenon’s arising.
- Dependence on parts: things exist in dependence on their parts – if their component parts did not exist, they would not exist. They don’t exist solidly, concretely, in any way independent of their component parts.
- Dependence on conceptual designation/imputation: things become what they are when we apply a label to a valid basis of imputation. For example, a cup is not a cup from its own side – it only becomes a cup when we apply the label and concept “cup” onto a small cylinder that has the function of holding liquid.

Understanding these three levels of dependent arising, especially the third level, which is the subtlest level according to the Middle Way Consequence philosophical system, enables one to understand emptiness.

## THE SIX PERFECTIONS

Bodhicitta is the aspiration to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all living beings. It is what makes someone a true follower of the Mahayana.

Once we have the bodhicitta motivation, we then need to practice the Six Perfections, the actual causes for becoming enlightened. The Sanskrit term is *paramita*, which means “gone beyond.” “Gone beyond” refers to the state of enlightenment, the goal of our practice, which is beyond samsara, beyond all suffering and the causes of suffering. The actual Six Perfections are attained when we are enlightened, but by training in them now, we are creating the causes to become enlightened.

1. **Giving:** Giving is the wish to give. It’s mainly a mental attitude and not so much the actual act of giving. Sometimes we are unable to give, but as long as we have the *wish* to give, we can practice giving. It’s opposite to miserliness. There are four kinds of giving:
  - a. Material giving: food, clothes, money, etc.
  - b. Giving protection: saving lives, or helping beings who are frightened or in danger
  - c. Giving love: cultivating the wish for all beings to be happy, and putting this into practice by being kind and by helping those who are in need of comfort, friendship, etc.
  - d. Giving Dharma: teaching Dharma, reciting prayers for others, etc.
2. **Ethics:** refraining from negative actions of body, speech and mind, and wanting eventually to completely abandon all negative actions. There are three kinds of ethics:
  - a. The ethics of refraining from unskillful actions
  - b. The ethics of doing skillful actions
  - c. The ethics of working to benefit others

3. **Patience:** a calm, positive state of mind that can bear hardship or harm without getting upset. There are three kinds of patience:
  - a. The patience of not getting angry and retaliating to harm
  - b. The patience of accepting difficulties
  - c. The patience of understanding and practicing Dharma
4. **Joyous Effort:** taking delight in virtue; being happy to do positive actions and Dharma practices. It's the opposite of laziness, of which there are three types: procrastination, attraction to meaningless activity, and discouragement.
5. **Concentration:** keeping the mind focused one-pointedly. To develop concentration we must overcome obstacles such as forgetfulness, mental agitation and dullness. The purpose of developing concentration in Buddhism is not to experience bliss, but to go on to cultivate wisdom and attain nirvana or enlightenment. More will be explained about developing single-pointed concentration in the section "Stabilizing Meditation" on page 18.
6. **Wisdom:** there are different kinds of wisdom, but the principal one is the wisdom understanding selflessness. This is the key factor that will enable us to become free from samsara, as the root of samsara is the ignorance believing in a self, and wisdom is the direct antidote to that. This wisdom is explained above in the section "The Correct View of Emptiness" on page 13.

## THE FIVE PATHS

The five paths are an elucidation of the stages you go through and realizations that develop in your mind during the path to enlightenment.

- **Path of accumulation:** This level is reached with true renunciation and bodhicitta. During this path, one works on accumulation of merit, and also develops basic realizations at a conceptual level, like the understanding of impermanence. Single-pointed concentration is also developed on this level.
- **Path of preparation:** This level is reached when one experiences what is known as a "union of calm abiding and special insight." On this level, one works on refining one's intellectual understanding of emptiness, and prepares to go beyond a conceptual understanding, to realize emptiness and impermanence directly. The meditation on emptiness on the conceptual level is repeated over and over until the understanding reaches an intuitive level.
- **Path of seeing:** When one experiences a direct perception of emptiness and thereby permanently abandons the belief in self existence, this level has been reached. Out of meditation, one still sees things as self-existent. The First Bodhisattva Bhumi starts here. The direct perception of emptiness experienced here is an antidote to intellectually acquired wrong views.
- **Path of meditation:** The practitioner becomes more and more accustomed to the ultimate nature of reality, and works on eliminating the inborn habit to see things as self-existent. The practitioner still has imprints or seeds to see things as self-existent. The antidote for destroying these seeds is repeated experiences of the direct perception of emptiness in meditation.
- **Path of no more learning:** enlightenment, or Buddhahood, which is the first time that the practitioner sees true nature and conventional nature simultaneously. A Buddha doesn't see, think, or have seeds to perceive anything as self-existent.

# THE MIND AND MEDITATION

## WHAT IS THE MIND?

Mind, or consciousness, is at the heart of Buddhist theory and practice, and for the last two-and-a-half thousand years meditators have been investigating and using it as a means of transcending unsatisfactory existence and achieving perfect peace. It is said that all happiness, ordinary and sublime, is achieved by understanding and transforming our own mind.

A non-physical kind of energy, the mind's function is to know, to experience. It is awareness itself. It is clear in nature and reflects everything that it experiences, just as a still lake reflects the surrounding mountains and forests.

Mind changes from moment to moment. It is a beginningless continuum, like an ever-flowing stream: the previous mind-moment gave rise to this mind-moment, which gives rise to the next mind-moment, and so on. It is the general name given to the totality of our conscious and unconscious experiences: each of us is the centre of a world of thoughts, perceptions, feelings, memories and dreams—all of these are mind.

Mind is not a physical thing that *has* thoughts and feelings; it *is* those very experiences. Being non-matter, it is different from the body, although mind and body are interconnected and interdependent. Mind, consciousness, is carried through our body by subtle physical energies, which also control our movement and vital functions. This relationship explains why, for example, physical sickness and discomfort can affect our state of mind and why, in turn, mental attitudes can both give rise to and heal physical problems.

Mind can be compared to an ocean, and momentary mental events such as happiness, irritation, fantasies and boredom to the waves that rise and fall on its surface. Just as the waves can subside to reveal the stillness of the ocean's depths, so too is it possible to calm the turbulence of our mind to reveal its natural pristine clarity.

The ability to do this lies within the mind itself and the key to the mind is meditation.

## WHAT IS MEDITATION?

Subduing the mind and bringing it to the right understanding of reality is no easy task. It requires a slow and gradual process of *listening* to and reading explanations on the mind and the nature of things; *thinking* about and carefully analyzing this information; and finally transforming the mind through *meditation*.

The mind can be divided into *sense consciousness*—sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch—and *mental consciousness*. Mental consciousness ranges from our grossest experiences of anger or desire, for example, to the subtlest level of complete stillness and clarity. It includes our intellectual processes, our feelings and emotions, our memory and our dreams.

Meditation is an activity of the mental consciousness. It involves one part of the mind observing, analyzing and dealing with the rest of the mind.

Meditation can take many forms: concentrating single-pointedly on an (internal) object, trying to understand some personal problem, generating a joyful love for all humanity, praying to an object of devotion, or communicating with our own inner wisdom. Its ultimate aim is to awaken a very subtle level of consciousness and to use it to discover reality, directly and intuitively.



This direct, intuitive awareness of how things are, combined with love and compassion for all beings, is known as enlightenment and is the end result of Mahayana Buddhist practice. The purpose of reaching it—and the driving force behind all practice—is to help others reach it too.



The Tibetan term for meditation (*gom*) means, literally, “to become familiar” or “to habituate.”

What arises in our mind is what we are most familiar with. If someone treats us unkindly or disrespectfully, we immediately feel hurt or angry, because these are the reactions that we are most familiar with, or habituated to. Buddhist meditation involves making our mind familiar with positive states such as love, compassion, patience, serenity, and wisdom, so that these become more natural and spontaneous. Then, when we encounter an unkind or hostile person, we’ll be more likely to remain calm and patient, and even feel compassion for them

There are many different techniques of meditation; each technique has specific functions and benefits and each is a part of the framework for bringing our mind to a realistic view of the world.

It might be best to start by saying what meditation is *not*, because there are many misunderstandings about it. For one thing, meditation is not an activity of the body: it is not simply a matter of sitting in a particular posture or breathing a particular way, nor is it done for the purpose of experiencing pleasant bodily sensations. Rather, it is an activity of the mind, and is done for the purpose of transforming the mind, making it more positive. Although the best results usually come when we meditate sitting in a quiet place, we can also meditate while working, walking, riding on a bus or cooking dinner. One Tibetan meditator realized emptiness while chopping wood and another attained single-pointed concentration while cleaning his teacher’s room.

First, we learn to develop the meditative state of mind in formal, sitting practice, but once we are good at it we can be more freestyle and creative and can generate this mental state at any time, in any situation. By then, meditation has become a way of life.

Meditation is not something foreign or unsuitable for the Western mind. There are different methods practiced in different cultures, but they all share the common principle of the mind simply becoming familiar with positive, beneficial states. And the mind of every person, Eastern or Western, has the same basic elements and experiences, the same basic problems—and the same potential.

Meditation is not spacing-out or running away. In fact, it is being totally honest with ourselves: taking a good look at what we are and working with that in order to become more positive and useful, to ourselves and others. There are both positive and negative aspects of the mind. The negative aspects—our mental disorders or, quite literally, delusions—include jealousy, anger, desire, pride and the like. These arise from our misunderstanding of reality and habitual clinging to the way we see things. Through meditation we can recognize our mistakes and adjust our mind to think and react more realistically, more honestly.



The final goal, enlightenment, is a long-term one. But meditations done with this goal in mind can and do have enormous short-term benefits. As our concrete picture of reality softens we develop a more positive and realistic self-image and are thus more relaxed and less anxious. We learn to have fewer unrealistic expectations of the people and things around us and therefore meet with less disappointment; relationships improve and life becomes more stable and satisfying.

But remember, lifelong habits die hard. It is difficult enough simply to recognize our anger and jealousy, much less make an effort to hold back the old familiar tide of feeling or analyze its causes and results. Transforming the mind is a slow and gradual process. It is a matter of ridding ourselves, bit by bit, of instinctive, harmful habit patterns and “becoming familiar” with habits that necessarily bring positive results—to ourselves and others.

There are many meditation techniques but, according to the Tibetan tradition, all can be included in two types: *stabilizing* and *analytical*.

## **STABILIZING MEDITATION**

In general, this type of meditation is used to develop concentration, and eventually to attain calm abiding (*samatha*), a special kind of concentration which enables one to remain focused on whatever object one wishes, for as long as one wishes, while experiencing bliss, clarity and peace. Concentration and calm abiding are necessary for any real, lasting insight and mental transformation. In stabilizing meditation, we learn to concentrate upon one object—the breath, the nature of one’s own mind, a concept, a visualized image—without interruption.

Concentration without interruption is the exact opposite of our usual state of mind. If you turn inward for a few moments you will notice your mind jumping from one thing to another: a thought of something you will do later, a sound outside, a friend, something that happened earlier, a physical sensation, a cup of coffee. We never need to say to the mind, “Think!” or “Feel!” It is always busy doing something, speeding along, with an energy of its own.

With such a scattered and uncontrolled mind there is little chance of success in anything we do, whether it is remembering a telephone number, cooking a meal or running a business. And certainly, without concentration successful meditation is impossible.

Stabilizing meditation is not easy, but it is essential for bringing the mind under control. Although the development of actual single-pointed concentration and calm abiding is the work of full-time meditators, we don’t need to retreat to the mountains to experience the benefits of this kind of meditation: even in our day-to-day city life we can develop good concentration by regularly doing ten or fifteen minutes a day of stabilizing meditation. It can bring an immediate sense of spaciousness, and allows us to see the workings of our mind more clearly, both during the meditation and throughout the rest of the day.

## **ANALYTICAL MEDITATION**

This type of meditation is for the purpose of developing insight, or correct understanding of the way things are, and eventually to attain special insight (*vipasyana*) that sees the ultimate nature of all things. Analytical meditation brings into play creative, intellectual thought and is crucial to our development: the first step in gaining any real insight is to understand *conceptually* how things are. This conceptual clarity develops into firm conviction which, when combined with stabilizing meditation, brings direct and intuitive knowing.

However, even before we can “know how things are” we must first identify our wrong conceptions. Using clear, penetrative, analytical thought we unravel the complexities of our attitudes and behavior patterns. Gradually, we can eliminate those thoughts, feelings and ideas that cause ourselves and others unhappiness, and in their place cultivate thoughts, feelings and ideas that bring happiness and peace.

In this way we become familiar with the reality of, for example, cause and effect—that our present experiences are the result of our past actions *and* the cause of our future experiences—or with the fact that all things lack an inherent nature. We can meditate point by point on the benefits of patience and the disadvantages of anger; on the value of developing compassion; on the kindness of others.

In one sense, an analytical meditation session is an intensive study session. However, the level of conceptual thought that we can reach during these meditations is more subtle and therefore more potent than our thoughts during day-to-day life. Because our senses are not being bombarded by the usual frantic input we are able to concentrate more strongly and develop a finely-tuned sensitivity to the workings of our mind.

Analytical meditation can also be used as self-therapy. Lama Yeshe said, “Each of us should know our own mind; you should become your own psychologist.” When we have a problem or we feel emotionally upset, we can sit down and make our mind calmer with a few minutes of breathing meditation. Then, taking a step back from our thoughts and emotions, we can try to understand what’s going on. “What kind of thoughts are going through my mind? What emotions are arising?” Within the calm, clear space of meditation it will be easier to recognize where our thinking is erroneous, and to adjust it by bringing in more realistic and beneficial ideas that we have learned from our spiritual study and practice.



Some people think that meditation is necessarily stabilizing, or single-pointed, meditation, and that when we meditate, our mind should be free of all thoughts and concepts. This is not correct: single-pointed meditation is *not* the only kind of meditation that there is, and thoughts and concepts, when used skillfully, play a crucial role in the positive transformation of our mind. At the root of our problems and confusion are mistaken concepts about reality, and the only way to be free from these is to first identify and transform them by using analytical meditation. Staying focused on these new insights with single-pointedness enables the mind to become thoroughly and deeply familiar with them. This is how real, lasting transformation of the mind takes place.

Stabilizing and analytical meditations, then, are complementary and can be used together in one session. When doing a meditation on emptiness, for example, we analyze the object (emptiness) using information we have heard or read, as well as our own thoughts, feelings and memories. At some point an intuitive experience of or conviction about the object arises. We should then stop thinking and focus our attention single-pointedly on the feeling for as long as possible. We should soak our mind in the experience. When the feeling fades we can either continue analyzing or conclude the session.

This method of combining the two kinds of meditation causes the mind literally to become one with the object of meditation. The stronger our concentration, the deeper our insight will be. We need to repeat this process again and again with anything we want to understand in order to transform our insight into actual experience.

Stabilizing meditations such as the breathing meditations will also go better if some skilful analysis is used. When we sit down to meditate we should start by examining our state of mind and clarifying our motivation for doing the practice, and this involves analytical thought. During the meditation itself we might find concentration especially difficult; at such times it is good to analyze the problem for a few moments, then to re-place the mind on the breath. And sometimes it is useful to check on the mind during the meditation to make sure it is not day-dreaming but doing what it is supposed to be doing.

## THE DAILY MEDITATION SESSION

In order to have a successful meditation session, it is necessary to engage in certain preliminaries before the main meditation. These six preliminary practices, known as jorchö, help to prepare the mind for meditation by creating a conducive environment for the meditation, settling the mind, purifying negativities, and accumulating merit.

1. **Clean the room and set up the altar:** straighten and sweep the room, make it neat. This also wakes you up. Dedicate a separate part of the room to your practice, and meditate there every day. As you clean the room and the altar, think of cleaning your mind.

Set up an altar with representations of body (statue), speech (text), and mind (stupa). It's not good to use holy images as decoration—always set up offerings in front of holy images.



2. **Make offerings:** Can use the traditional water bowls to represent these offerings: water for washing, water for drinking, flowers, incense, light, perfume, food, and music.
  - Never leave water bowls upright and empty
  - When filling them, pouring from one to another signifies passing along the lineage
  - Empty them and turn upside down at the end of the day—this signifies that you are ready to die. Stack them up in dependence on each other
  - Obtain offerings through proper means (i.e., not stealing, etc.)
  - Don't be miserly—offer the nicest stuff, not just the things you don't want.
  - Can offer real objects—food offerings should be light in color
  - Don't eat the food offerings at the end of the day—we need to be careful due to attachment. Give them to your friends, or put in a high, clean place.
3. **Posture, refuge, bodhicitta:**
  - Seven-point posture
  - Breath—always do for a few minutes of breath awareness meditation to get the mind into neutral (10-20 breaths)
  - Going for refuge: real refuge is the Dharma, practicing the Dharma methods to eliminate your suffering and saving yourself from non-virtue.
  - Bodhicitta: generate the aspiration to do your practice for the benefit of all beings.
4. **Visualize the merit field:** This can vary depending on the practice you are doing. A simple way is to visualize the embodiment of all enlightened beings in the aspect of Shakyamuni Buddha. Don't visualize the Buddha as flat, lifeless, 2-D, but rather alive and pleased with you that you are meditating. (In our practice booklet, this is done just before refuge.)
5. **Purify obstacles and accumulate merit:** Just before you do the actual meditation, do a powerful practice to purify negativities and collect merit. Best way is through the seven limbs.
  - a) Prostrations: don't get back up, the prostrations are mental. Think of one of the qualities of the holy being and prostrate to that.
  - b) Offering: mental, make as extensive as possible, both actual substances that you offer and also visualized offerings (scenery, rainbows, beautiful landscapes, etc.). The highest offering is your practice—virtue is a great offering. This is the place that you offer the bowls, flowers, etc., that you set out earlier.
  - c) Confession: admit your nonvirtues, the actions you regret, think of something specific

- d) Rejoicing: find something specific to be happy about. Your own and others' virtues, also those of your teachers and other holy beings. Rejoicing in your own good deeds: antidote to low self-esteem. Rejoicing in others' good deeds: antidote to envy, jealousy.
- e) Request teachings: ask your teachers to keep giving you teachings, to continue to guide you.
- f) Request your teachers to have a long life, to continue to guide you in this life, and keep showing up life after life to guide you.

→**Main meditation:** stop and meditate here: your mind is prepared for the meditation. Then after the meditation:

- 6. **Requesting blessings:** request the blessings and inspiration of the holy beings. They rise up off the ground, get smaller, turn in midair to sit on top of your head, facing the same way you are, then melt into light and absorb into you, bestowing you with all their qualities. You identify with them, they have absorbed into you, so you act and think like them now.

Then last of seven limbs, dedication.





**The Wheel of Life** painting graphically illustrates the Buddha's teachings on impermanence, suffering, karma, death, and rebirth into one of the six realms of cyclic existence, and the twelve links of dependent origination.

At the central hub of the painting are a pig, a cockerel, and a snake, which bite each other's tails and symbolize the three primary poisons of ignorance, desire and aversion.

The next circle of the painting depicts beings ascending to the three upper realms on its white segment, and beings falling to the three lower realms on its left dark segment.

The third circle is divided by spokes into either five or six sections, with the three lower realms of animals, hungry ghosts (preta), and the various hell (narak) realms in the three lower segments, and the three upper realms of humans, demi-gods (asura), and gods (deva) in the two or three upper segments. Birth into one of these six realms is characterized by a particular mental state or poison:

1. the god or deva realm (pride),
2. the demi-god or asura realm (jealousy),
3. the human realm (desire or all five poisons),
4. the animal realm (ignorance or confusion),
5. the hungry ghost or preta realm (greed and miserliness), and
6. the hell or narak realm (anger and hatred).

The first three 'upper realms' are considered favourable, and the last three 'lower realms' miserable. Sometimes only five realms are listed, with the devas and asuras forming a single realm.

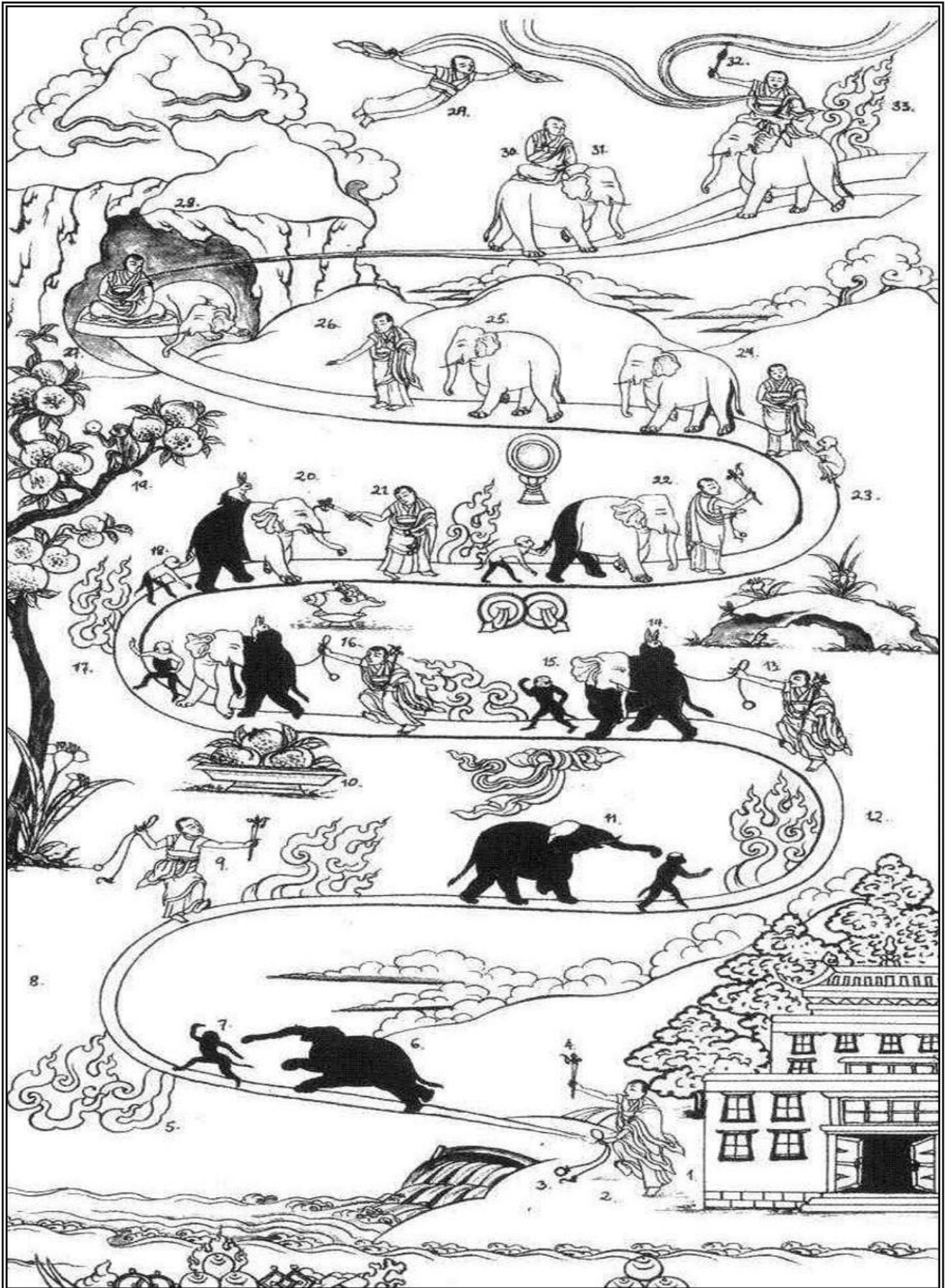
The outer circle of the wheel depicts in a clockwise sequence twelve metaphorical images of the twelve links of dependent origination. The twelve links in the chain of dependent arising is one of the most important doctrines on the Buddhist view of causation and interdependence, showing how suffering arises from ignorance and its motivational actions.

1. **Ignorance** (avidya), represented by a blind man.
2. **Conditioned or formative actions** (samskarakarma), as a potter making pots.
3. **Consciousness** (vijñana), as a playful monkey attracted by objects.
4. **Name and form** (namarupa), as two men in a boat.
5. **The six sense spheres** (ayatana), as a house with five windows and a door.
6. **Contact** (sparsha) and its desire for an object, as a couple kissing or making love.
7. **Feeling** (vedana) or desire giving rise to feelings of pleasure and pain, as a man blinded by an arrow in one eye.
8. **Craving** (trishna) or thirst, as a man drinking alcohol.
9. **Grasping** (adana), as a monkey plucking all the fruit from a tree.
10. **Becoming** (bhava) or maturing towards rebirth, as a pregnant woman.
11. **Birth** (jati) leading to endless rebirth, as a woman giving birth.
12. **Ageing and death** (jaramarana) leading to endless cycles of life and death, as a corpse being carried to a cemetery.

The wheel itself is held in the claws of Yama, the 'lord of Death' – symbolizing impermanence – who bites and consumes the wheel with his deadly fangs.

Above and outside of this wheel stands the form of Shakyamuni Buddha, who raises his right arm to point towards the moon as a symbol of the Buddhist teachings that lead to liberation from the endless wheel of cyclic existence.

# SHAMATHA



**Shamatha** is attained by progressing through the nine stages, relying on the eight antidotes to abandon the five faults. This is accomplished through the six powers and the four mental engagements.

Fault	Antidote
1. laziness	1. faith 2. aspiration 3. effort 4. pliancy
2. forgetfulness	5. mindfulness
3. laxity and excitement	6. introspection
4. non-application	7. application
5. over-application	8. equanimity

1. The first stage is attained through the *power of hearing*.
2. **Stage 1 - Setting the mind**
3. Mindfulness
4. Introspection
5. From here until the seventh stage the flame progressively decreases in size until it becomes absent. This difference denotes the measure of the strength of effort required regarding mindfulness and introspection.
6. The elephant is the mind and the black colour symbolises laxity.
7. The monkey is the proliferation of thoughts and the black colour symbolises excitement.
8. The second stage is attained through the *power of thinking*.
9. **Stage 2 - Continuous setting**
10. Excitement has the five sense pleasures as its objects.
11. From here, the black colour progressively becomes white. This symbolises the factor of clarity and the factor of stability progressively increasing.
12. The third and fourth stages are attained through the *power of mindfulness*.
13. **Stage 3 - Resetting**
14. The rabbit is subtle laxity. From here, one can individually identify coarse and subtle laxity.
15. Looking back means that having recognized that the mind has wandered, it is again directed back to the object.
16. **Stage 4 - Close setting**
17. The fifth and sixth stages are attained through the *power of introspection*.
18. The potential for excitement to arise prior to meditation has weakened.
19. Since virtuous thoughts are an interruption at the time of shamatha meditation, it is necessary to stop them. At other times it is not necessary.
20. Due to introspection the mind does not fall into scattering and through being uplifted, it is drawn into concentration.
21. **Stage 5 - Disciplining**
22. **Stage 6 - Pacifying**
23. The seventh and eighth stages are attained through the *power of effort*.
24. **Stage 7 - Thorough pacifying**  
At this stage it is difficult for subtle laxity or excitement to arise and even if they do arise a little, they are immediately eliminated with the slightest effort.
25. The black colour of the elephant is gone and there is no monkey. This means that in dependence on initially applying a little mindfulness and introspection, the mind can engage continuously in concentration without any potential of being interrupted by laxity, excitement or thoughts.
26. **Stage 8 - Making one-pointed**
27. The ninth stage is attained through the *power of familiarity*.
28. **Stage 9 - Setting in equipoise**
29. Physical pliancy
30. Mental pliancy
31. Attainment of **shamatha**
32. The root of samsara is cut by the union of shamatha and vipashyana observing emptiness.
33. Equipped with mindfulness and introspection, seek the correct view of emptiness.

## DHARMA GLOSSARY

<i>ENGLISH / Original Term</i>	DEFINITION
<i>Aggregates</i>	The association of body and mind; a person comprises five aggregates: form, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors, and consciousness.
<i>Anger</i>	A mental factor that perceives its object as unattractive; it exaggerates the object's unattractiveness and wishes to harm it; one of the six root delusions.
<i>Arhat (Skt)</i>	Literally, foe destroyer. A being who has destroyed the afflictions and their seeds and thus attained liberation from cyclic existence.
<i>Arya (Skt; Tib: phag-pa)</i>	Literally, noble. One who has directly realized emptiness.
<i>Asura (Skt)</i>	A demi-god or titan, a class of samsaric being who lives within sight of the realm of gods of the desire realm.
<i>Atisha (982-1054)</i>	The renowned Indian Buddhist master who came to Tibet to help in the revival of Buddhism and established the Kadam tradition. His text <i>Lamp on the Path to Enlightenment</i> was the first Lam Rim text.
<i>Attachment</i>	A mental factor that perceives its object as attractive; it exaggerates the object's attractiveness and wishes to possess it; one of the six root delusions.
<i>Avalokiteshvara (Skt; Tib: Chenrezig)</i>	The buddha of compassion. A male meditational deity embodying fully enlightened compassion.
<i>Bardo (Tib)</i>	The intermediate state between death and the next rebirth.
<i>Bhikshu (Skt)</i>	See <i>gelong</i> .
<i>Bhikshuni (Skt)</i>	See <i>gelongma</i> .
<i>Bhumi (Skt)</i>	Ground, or level, as in the ten bodhisattva levels.
<i>Bodhgaya</i>	The small town in the state of Bihar in north India where Shakyamuni Buddha became enlightened.
<i>Bodhicitta (Skt)</i>	The aspiration to achieve enlightenment in order to liberate all living beings.
<i>Bodhisattva (Skt)</i>	Someone whose spiritual practice is directed toward the achievement of enlightenment. One who possesses the compassionate motivation of bodhicitta.
<i>Buddha (Skt)</i>	A fully enlightened being. One who has removed all obscurations veiling the mind and has developed all good qualities to perfection.
<i>Buddha-nature</i>	Refers to the emptiness, or ultimate nature, of the mind. Because of this nature, every sentient being possesses the potential to become fully enlightened, a Buddha.
<i>Buddhist (Tib: nang-pa)</i>	One who has <i>Taken Refuge</i> in the Three Jewels of Refuge: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and who accepts the philosophical world view of the "four seals": that all composite phenomena are impermanent, all contaminated phenomena are in the nature of suffering, all things and events are devoid of self-existence, and nirvana is true peace.
<i>Calm abiding</i>	See <i>shamatha</i> .
<i>Chakra (Skt)</i>	Energy wheel. A focal point of energy along the central channel (shushuma) upon which one's concentration is directed, especially during the completion stage of highest yoga tantra. The main chakras are the crown, throat, heart, navel, and secret.
<i>Chenrezig (Tib)</i>	See <i>Avalokiteshvara</i> .
<i>Clear light</i>	Very subtle mind. This subtlest state of mind occurs naturally at death and through successful tantric practice, and is used by practitioners to realize emptiness.
<i>Compassion (Skt: karuna)</i>	The sincere wish that others be free from suffering and its causes.

<b>Consciousness</b>	See <i>mind</i> .
<b>Conventional truth</b>	As opposed to ultimate truth, which is the understanding of the ultimate nature of reality (emptiness), conventional truth is what is true to the valid conventional consciousness. It is also called concealer truth or all-obscuring truth because, although true on one level, it obscures the ultimate nature. Conventional and ultimate truth form the important subject in Buddhist philosophy called the two truths. See also <i>Ultimate Truth</i> .
<b>Cyclic existence</b> (Skt: <i>samsara</i> ; Tib: <i>khor-wa</i> )	The six realms of conditioned existence, three lower—hell, hungry ghost (Skt: <i>preta</i> ) and animal—and three upper—human, demigod (Skt: <i>asura</i> ) and god (Skt: <i>sura</i> ). It is the beginningless, recurring cycle of death and rebirth under the control of delusion and karma. It also refers to the contaminated aggregates of a sentient being.
<b>Daka</b> (Skt; Tib: <i>kha-dro</i> )	Literally, a "sky-goer". A male being who helps arouse blissful energy in a qualified tantric practitioner.
<b>Dakini</b> (Skt; Tib: <i>kha-dro-ma</i> )	Literally, a "female sky-goer." A female being who helps arouse blissful energy in a qualified tantric practitioner.
<b>Defilement</b>	See <i>Delusion</i> .
<b>Deity (Tib: <i>yidam</i>)</b>	An emanation of the enlightened mind used as the object of meditation in tantric practices, eg, <i>Chenrezig</i> , <i>Tara</i> , <i>Vajrasattva</i> etc – not a God in any theistic sense.
<b>Delusions (Skt: <i>klesha</i>; Tib: <i>nyön-mong</i>)</b>	The negative states of mind that are the cause of suffering. The three root delusions are ignorance, anger, and attachment.
<b>Dependent origination</b>	Also called dependent arising. The way that the self and phenomena exist conventionally as relative and interdependent. They come into existence in dependence upon (1) causes and conditions, (2) their parts and, most subtly, (3) imputation or labelling. See also <i>Twelve Links of Dependent Origination</i> .
<b>Deva (Skt)</b>	A god dwelling in a state with much comfort and pleasure in the desire, form or formless realms.
<b>Dharma (Skt)</b>	Spiritual teachings, particularly those of the Buddha. Literally, that which holds one back from suffering. The second of the Three Jewels of refuge.
<b>Dualistic view</b>	The ignorant view characteristic of the unenlightened mind in which all things are falsely conceived to have concrete self-existence. To such a view, the appearance of an object is mixed with the false image of its being independent or self-existent, thereby leading to further dualistic views concerning subject and object, self and other, this and that, etc.
<b>Eight Mahayana precepts</b>	One-day vows to abandon killing; stealing; lying; sexual contact; intoxicants; high seats; eating at the wrong time; and singing, dancing and wearing perfume & jewelry.
<b>Emptiness</b>	The absence, or lack of, inherent existence. Every phenomenon is empty of existing inherently, truly, from its own side, or independently.
<b>Enlightenment</b>	Buddhahood; omniscience; full awakening; the ultimate goal of Mahayana Buddhist practice, attained when all limitations have been removed from the mind and all positive potential has been realised; a state characterised by unlimited compassion, skill, and wisdom.
<b>Eon (Skt: <i>kalpa</i>)</b>	A world period, an inconceivably long period of time. The life span of the universe is divided into four great eons which are themselves divided into twenty lesser eons.
<b>Equanimity</b>	Absence of the usual discrimination of sentient beings into friend, enemy and stranger, deriving from the realization that all sentient beings are equal in wanting happiness and not wanting suffering and that since beginningless time, all beings have been all things to each other. An impartial mind that serves as the basis for the development of great love, great compassion and bodhicitta.
<b>Eternalism</b>	The belief in the inherent existence of things, as opposed to nihilism; one of the two extremes.

<b>Four immeasurables</b> (Skt: <i>apramana</i> )	Also known as the four immeasurable thoughts or the four sublime attitudes (Skt: brahmavihara), these are four states of mind or aspirations: loving kindness (Skt: maitri), compassion (Skt: karuna), joy (Skt: mudita) and equanimity (Skt: upeksha). They are usually expressed in the prayer:—may all sentient beings have happiness and its causes, be free from suffering and its causes, be inseparable from sorrowless bliss and abide in equanimity—or longer variations of the same.
<b>Four Noble Truths</b>	The subject of the Buddha's first discourse: truth of suffering, truth of the cause of suffering, truth of cessation of suffering, and truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering.
<b>Four seals</b>	The four basic tenets that define Buddhism. They are: all compositional phenomena are impermanent, all contaminated phenomena are by nature suffering, all phenomena are empty of self-existence and nirvana is true peace.
<b>Gelong</b> (Tib; Skt: <i>bbikshu</i> )	A fully ordained Buddhist monk.
<b>Gelongma</b> (Tib; Skt: <i>bbikshuni</i> )	A fully ordained Buddhist nun.
<b>Gelug (Tib)</b>	The Virtuous Order. The order of Tibetan Buddhism founded by Lama Tsongkhapa and his disciples in the early fifteenth century and the most recent of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Developed from the Kadam School founded by Atisha and Dromtönpa. The others are Nyingma, Kagyu and Sakya.
<b>Gelugpa (Tib)</b>	A follower of the Gelug tradition.
<b>Geshe (Tib)</b>	Literally, spiritual friend. The title conferred on those who have completed extensive studies and examinations at Gelugpa monastic universities.
<b>God</b>	See <i>Deva</i> .
<b>Gompa (Tib)</b>	Usually refers to the main meditation hall, or temple, within a monastery.
<b>Guru</b> (Skt; Tib: <i>lama</i> )	A spiritual guide or teacher. One who shows a disciple the path to liberation and enlightenment. Literally, heavy—heavy with knowledge of Dharma. In tantra, one's teacher is seen as inseparable from the meditational deity and the Three Jewels of refuge. See also root guru.
<b>Guru devotion</b>	The sutra or tantra practice of seeing the guru as a buddha then devoting to them with thought and with action.
<b>Guru Puja</b> (Skt; Tib: <i>Lama Chöpa</i> )	A special Highest Yoga Tantra guru yoga practice, performed roughly every 2 weeks at Tushita.
<b>Heart Sutra</b>	See <i>Prajñāparamita</i> .
<b>Hinayana (Skt)</b>	The so-called "Lesser Vehicle," now known as the Theravada, or "Tradition of the Elders"; the path of the arhats, the ultimate goal of which is nirvana.
<b>Hungry ghost</b>	See <i>Preta</i> .
<b>Ignorance</b>	The root cause of cyclic existence; not knowing the way things actually are and misconstruing them to be inherently existent. The delusion that gives rise to all other delusions and karma they motivate.
<b>Imprint</b>	The seed or potential, left on the mind by positive or negative actions of body, speech, and mind.
<b>Inherent (or intrinsic) existence</b>	What phenomena are empty of; the object of negation, or refutation. To ignorance, phenomena appear to exist independently, in and of themselves, to exist inherently. See also <i>Emptiness</i> .
<b>Initiation</b>	Transmission received from a tantric master allowing a disciple to engage in the practices of a particular meditational deity. It is also referred to as an <i>empowerment</i> . See also <i>Je-nang</i> or <i>Wang</i> .
<b>Intermediate state</b> (Tib: <i>bar-do</i> )	The state between death and rebirth.

<i>Jataka Tales</i>	The volumes of stories, mostly in the Pali canon, but also within the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts, that relate to the lives of Shakyamuni Buddha before he became enlightened. The tales generally hold a strong moral lesson.
<i>Je-nang (Tib)</i>	A ceremony that allows the disciple to recite a mantra and practice a sadhana, but is not counted as a full initiation ( <i>wang</i> ). See also <i>Initiation</i> .
<i>Kagyü (Tib)</i>	The order of Tibetan Buddhism founded in the eleventh century by Marpa, Milarepa, Gampopa, and their followers. One of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The others are Nyingma, Sakya and Gelug.
<i>Karma (Skt)</i>	Literally, action. The law of cause and effect: the process whereby virtuous actions of body, speech, and mind lead to happiness and non-virtuous ones to suffering.
<i>Klesha (Skt)</i>	See <i>Delusion</i> .
<i>Kyabje (Tib)</i>	Literally, lord of refuge. A title of respect.
<i>Lama (Tib; Skt: guru)</i>	A spiritual guide or teacher. One who shows a disciple the path to liberation and enlightenment. Literally, heavy—heavy with knowledge of Dharma.
<i>Lamrim (Tib)</i>	"Stages of the Path." This is a genre of teachings began by <i>Lama Atisha</i> (see above) in Tibet, a way of organizing the Buddha's teachings into a simple, straightforward system which is easy to follow and practice.
<i>Liberation</i>	The state of complete freedom from samsara; nirvana, the state beyond sorrow; the goal of the Hinayana practitioner.
<i>Lo-jong</i>	See <i>Thought Transformation</i> .
<i>Lung (Tib)</i>	Literally, <i>wind</i> . The state in which the winds within the body are unbalanced or blocked, thus causing various illnesses. Can also refer to an oral transmission.
<i>Lung (Tib)</i>	Oral transmission of a text. Although spelt the same in transliteration, the pronunciation of the two "lungs" - wind and oral transmission - are slightly different.
<i>Mahamudra (Skt; Tib: chag-chen)</i>	The great seal. A profound system of meditation upon the mind and the ultimate nature of reality.
<i>Mahayana (Skt)</i>	The "Great Vehicle," refers to the school of Buddhism practiced in Tibet, China, Japan, Korea, and some parts of Vietnam, as well as the West; the path of the bodhisattvas, the ultimate goal of which is Buddhahood. It includes both Paramitayana and Vajrayana.
<i>Mala (Skt; Tib: threng-wa)</i>	A rosary of beads for counting mantras.
<i>Mandala (Skt; Tib: khyil-khor)</i>	A circular diagram symbolic of the entire universe. The abode of a meditational deity.
<i>Mantra (Skt)</i>	Literally, mind protection. Mantras are Sanskrit syllables—usually recited in conjunction with the practice of a particular meditational deity—and embody the qualities of the deity with which they are associated.
<i>Meditation (Tib: gom)</i>	Familiarization of the mind with a virtuous object. There are two types, placement and analytical.
<i>Merely-Labeled</i>	The subtlest meaning of dependent arising; every phenomenon exists relatively, or conventionally, as merely imputed by the mind. (See also <i>Emptiness</i> )
<i>Merit</i>	The positive energy accumulated in the mind as a result of virtuous actions of body, speech, and mind.
<i>Migratory Beings</i>	Another term for sentient beings, who migrate from rebirth to rebirth within the six realms of samsara.
<i>Mind (Skt: citta; Tib: sem)</i>	Synonymous with consciousness (Skt: vijñana; Tib: nam-she) and sentience (Skt: manas; Tib: yi). Defined as that which is "clear and knowing"; a formless entity that has the ability to perceive objects. Mind is divided into six primary consciousnesses and fifty-one mental factors.

<b>Mudra</b> (Skt; Tib: <i>chag-gya</i> )	Literally, seal, token. A symbolic hand gesture, endowed with power not unlike a mantra.
<b>Ngön-dro (Tib)</b>	Preliminary practice(s) found in all schools of Tibetan Buddhism, usually done 100,000 times each; the four main ones are recitation of the refuge formula with prostrations, Vajrasattva mantra recitation, mandala offerings and guru yoga. The Gelug tradition adds some more: water bowl offerings, Damtsig Dorje purifying meditation, making tsa-tsas (small sacred images, usually made of clay), and the Dorje Khadro burnt offering ( <i>jin-sek</i> ).
<b>Nihilism</b>	The doctrine that nothing exists; as opposed to eternalism.
<b>Nirvana</b> (Skt; Tib: <i>nyang-dä</i> )	See <i>Liberation</i> .
<b>Nyingma (Tib)</b>	The old translation school of Tibetan Buddhism, which traces its teachings back to the time of Padmasambhava, the eighth century Indian tantric master invited to Tibet by King Trisong Detsen to clear away hindrances to the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet. The first of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The others are Kagyu, Sakya and Gelug.
<b>Obscurations, obstructions</b> (Skt: <i>avarana</i> )	Afflictive obscurations (Skt: <i>kleshavarana</i> , Tib: <i>nyön-drib</i> ), which prevent liberation from samsara, and cognitive obscurations (Skt: <i>jneyavarana</i> , Tib: <i>she-drib</i> ), which prevent enlightenment. See also <i>Delusion</i> and <i>The Two Obscurations</i> .
<b>OM MANI PADME HUM</b> (Skt)	The mani; the <i>mantra</i> of Chenrezig, Buddha of Compassion.
<b>Paramita (Skt)</b>	See <i>Six Perfections</i> .
<b>Parinirvana (Skt)</b>	The final nirvana the Buddha attained when he passed away in Kushinagar.
<b>Prajñāparamita</b> (Skt)	The perfection of wisdom. The <i>prajñāparamita</i> sutras are the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha in which the wisdom of emptiness and the path of the bodhisattva are set forth.
<b>Precious Human Rebirth</b>	The rare human state, qualified by the eight freedoms and ten richnesses, that is the ideal condition for practicing Dharma and achieving enlightenment.
<b>Preta (Skt; Tib: <i>yi-dag</i>)</b>	Hungry ghost, or spirit. The <i>preta</i> realm is one of the three lower realms of cyclic existence.
<b>Prostrations</b>	Paying respect to the guru-deity with body, speech and mind; one of the tantric preliminaries.
<b>Puja (Skt)</b>	Literally, offering; a religious ceremony, usually used to describe an offering ceremony such as the Offering to the Spiritual Master (Guru Puja).
<b>Purification</b>	The removal, or cleanzing, of negative karma and its imprints from the mind.
<b>Refuge</b>	The heartfelt reliance upon Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha for guidance on the path to enlightenment.
<b>Renunciation</b> (Tib: <i>nge-jung</i> )	A heartfelt feeling of complete disgust with cyclic existence such that day and night one yearns for liberation and engages in the practices that secure it. The first of the three principal aspects of the path to enlightenment. See also <i>Bodhicitta</i> and <i>Emptiness</i> .
<b>Rinpoche (Tib)</b>	Literally "precious one." An honorific term usually given to recognised reincarnate lamas; a respectful title used for one's own lama.
<b>Root delusions</b>	The six root delusions are anger, attachment, pride, ignorance, doubt and deluded views.
<b>Root guru</b> (Tib: <i>tsa-wäi lama</i> )	The teacher who has had the greatest influence upon a particular disciple's entering or following the spiritual path.
<b>Sadhana (Skt)</b>	Method of accomplishment; the step-by-step instructions for practicing the meditations related to a particular meditational deity.

<b>Sakya (Tib)</b>	One of the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism. It was founded in the eleventh century in the south of the province of Tsang by Konchog Gyälpo. The others are Nyingma, Kagyu and Gelug.
<b>Samadhi (Skt)</b>	See <i>Single-Pointed Concentration</i> .
<b>Samsara (Skt)</b>	Cyclic existence, the cycle of uncontrolled rebirth; the six realms: the lower realms of the hell beings, hungry ghosts, and animals, and the upper realms of the humans, demi-gods, and gods; the recurring cycle of death and rebirth within one or other of the six realms under the control of karma and delusions; also refers to the contaminated aggregates of a sentient being.
<b>Sangha (Skt)</b>	The third object of refuge; absolute Sangha are those who have directly realised emptiness; relative Sangha are ordained monks and nuns.
<b>Self-cherishing</b>	The self-centered attitude of considering one's own happiness to be more important than that of others; the main obstacle to the realization of bodhicitta.
<b>Self-grasping</b>	The ignorant grasping to one's self, or I, as independent of all other phenomena.
<b>Sentient being (Tib: sem-chen)</b>	Any unenlightened being; any being whose mind is not completely free from gross and subtle ignorance.
<b>Shakyamuni Buddha (563-483 BC)</b>	Born a prince of the Shakya clan in North India, he taught the sutra and tantra paths to liberation and enlightenment; founder of what came to be known as Buddhism. (From the Skt: buddha—"fully awake.")
<b>Shamatha (Skt; Tib: shi-nä)</b>	Calm abiding; a state of concentration in which the mind is able to abide steadily, without effort and for as long as desired, on an object of meditation.
<b>Shunyata (Skt)</b>	See <i>Emptiness</i> .
<b>Siddhis (Skt)</b>	Realizations, usually used in reference to psychic powers (both mundane and supramundane) acquired as a by-product in the spiritual path.
<b>Single-pointed concentration (Skt: samadhi)</b>	A state of deep meditative absorption.
<b>Six perfections: (Skt: paramitas)</b>	The practices of a bodhisattva. On the basis of bodhicitta, a bodhisattva practises the six paramitas: generosity, ethics, patience, enthusiastic perseverance, concentration, and wisdom.
<b>Six realms</b>	The general way that Buddhism divides the whole of cyclic existence, there being three suffering realms (hell, hungry ghost and animal) and three fortunate realms (human, demi-god and god).
<b>Tantra (Skt; Tib: gyü)</b>	Literally, thread, or continuity. The secret teachings of the Buddha; a scriptural text and the teachings and practices it contains. See also <i>Vajrayana</i> .
<b>Tathagata (Skt; Tib: de-zhin shak-pa)</b>	Literally, "one who has realized suchness"; a buddha.
<b>Ten grounds or stages (Skt: bhumi)</b>	The ten stages that are achieved on the path to enlightenment. See also <i>Bhumi</i> .
<b>Ten nonvirtuous actions</b>	Three of body (killing, stealing, sexual misconduct); four of speech (lying, speaking harshly, slandering and gossiping); and three of mind (covetousness, ill will and wrong views). General actions to be avoided so as not to create negative karma.
<b>Thangka (Tib.)</b>	Painted or appliquéd depictions of deities, usually set in a framework of colorful brocade.
<b>Theravada (Skt)</b>	One of the eighteen schools into which the Hinayana split not long after Shakyamuni Buddha's death; the dominant Hinayana school today, prevalent in Thailand, Sri Lanka and Burma, and well represented in the West.
<b>Thought transformation (Tib: lo-jong)</b>	Also known as "mind training" or "mind transformation". A powerful approach to the development of bodhicitta, in which the mind is trained to use all situations, both pleasant and unpleasant, as a means to destroy self-cherishing and self-grasping.
<b>Three doors</b>	Body, speech and mind.

<b>Three Higher Trainings</b>	Trainings relating to ethical discipline, concentration and wisdom.
<b>Three Jewels</b>	The objects of Buddhist refuge: Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Also called the Triple Gem.
<b>Three kinds of suffering</b>	The suffering of suffering, the suffering of change and all-pervasive suffering.
<b>Three Principles of the Path</b>	The essential teachings of the lam.rim: renunciation, bodhicitta, and emptiness.
<b>Tong-len (Tib)</b>	Literally, "taking and giving"; the meditation practice of taking the suffering of others and giving away the merit.
<b>True Existence</b>	The type of existence that everything appears to possess; in fact, everything is empty of true existence. (See <i>Emptiness</i> )
<b>Tsa-tsa (Tib)</b>	A print of a buddha's image made in clay or plaster from a carved mold.
<b>Tsog (Tib)</b>	Literally, <i>gathering</i> —a gathering of offering substances and a gathering of disciples to make the offering.
<b>Tsong Khapa, Lama (1357-1419)</b>	The revered teacher and accomplished practitioner who founded the Gelug order of Tibetan Buddhism.
<b>Tulku</b>	A reincarnated lama, one who through the mind of bodhicitta can choose where to be reborn in order to best serve all sentient beings. The title given to such a lama in most Tibetan traditions. (In the Gelug tradition the term used is Rinpoche.)
<b>Tushita (Skt)</b>	The Joyous Land. The pure land of the thousand buddhas of this eon, where the future buddha, Maitreya, and Lama Tsongkhapa reside.
<b>Twelve Links of Dependent Origination:</b>	Ignorance, karmic formation, consciousness, name and form, six sources, contact, feeling, craving, grasping, becoming, rebirth and aging and death.
<b>Two Truths</b>	The dual aspects of all phenomena: the level of their appearance called conventional truth, and their ultimate reality known as ultimate truth.
<b>Ultimate truth</b>	One of the two truths, the other being conventional truth. It is the understanding of the ultimate nature of things and events, emptiness.
<b>Ushnisha (Skt)</b>	The crown protrusion of a buddha.
<b>Vajra (Skt; Tib: dorje)</b>	Literally, "adamantine", often translated as "thunderbolt" but usually left untranslated, the vajra is the four- or five-spoke implement used in tantric practice.
<b>Vajra and bell</b>	Implements used during tantric rituals: the vajra, held in the right hand, symbolizes bliss and the bell, held in the left, emptiness.
<b>Vajrasattva (Skt; Tib: Dorje Sem-pa)</b>	Male meditational deity symbolizing the inherent purity of all buddhas. A major tantric purification practice for removing obstacles created by negative karma and the breaking of vows.
<b>Vajrayana, or Tantrayana</b>	Special Mahayana practices commonly found in Tibet.
<b>Vinaya (Skt; Tib: dül-wa)</b>	The Buddha's teachings on ethical discipline, monastic conduct and so forth
<b>Vipashyana (Skt) Vipassana (Pali)</b>	Penetrative (special) insight; a wisdom of thorough discrimination of phenomenon conjoined with special pliancy induced by the power of analysis.
<b>Virtue</b>	Positive karma; that which results in happiness.
<b>Virtuous friend (Tib: ge-wai she-nyen)</b>	See <i>Guru</i> .
<b>Vows</b>	Precepts taken on the basis of refuge at all levels of Buddhist practice. Pratimoksha precepts (vows of individual liberation) are the main vows in the Hinayana tradition and are taken by monks, nuns, and lay people; they are the basis of all other vows. Bodhisattva and tantric precepts are the main vows in the Mahayana tradition. See also <i>Vinaya</i> - vows of individual liberation.

<b>Wang (Tib)</b>	Initiation, where a disciple is given permission to practice a particular tantric deity. See also <i>Initiation</i> .
<b>Wheel of Life</b>	The depiction of cyclic existence, showing the six realms cycling around the hub of ignorance, attachment and anger symbolized by a pig, a rooster and a snake, with the twelve links of dependent origination as the outer rim, all in the jaws and claws of Yama, the Lord of Death.
<b>Wisdom</b>	Different levels of insight into the nature of reality. There are, for example, the three wisdoms of hearing, contemplation and meditation. Ultimately, there is the wisdom realizing emptiness, which frees beings from cyclic existence and eventually brings them to enlightenment. The complete and perfect accumulation of wisdom results in dharmakaya. See also <i>Merit</i> .
<b>Yi-dam (Tib)</b>	Literally, "mind-bound." One's own personal, main—or, as Lama Yeshe used to say, favorite—deity for tantric practice. The deity with which you have the strongest connection.
<b>Yoga (Skt)</b>	Literally, to yoke. The spiritual discipline to which one yokes oneself in order to achieve enlightenment.
<b>Yogi (Skt)</b>	A highly realized meditator.



## SUGGESTED READING LIST

### General

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*The Four Noble Truths*, Geshe Tashi Tsering (Wisdom Publications)

*Open Heart, Clear Mind*, Thubten Chodron (Snow Lion Publications)

*What Makes You Not a Buddhist*, Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche (Shambala Publications)

*Tibetan Buddhism from the Ground Up*, Alan Wallace (Snow Lion Publications)

*The Way to Freedom: The Core Teachings of Buddhism*, His Holiness the Dalai Lama (Harper Collins, Snow Lion Publications)

*How to Practice: The Way to a Meaningful Life*, His Holiness the Dalai Lama (Atria Books)

*Becoming Enlightened*, His Holiness the Dalai Lama (Atria Books)

### Meditation

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*Genuine Happiness: Meditation as the Path to Fulfillment*, Alan Wallace (John Wiley & Sons)

*How to Meditate*, Kathleen McDonald <also known as Sangye Khadro> (Wisdom Publications)

*Guided Meditations on the Stages of the Path*, Thubten Chodron (Snow Lion Publications)

### Mindfulness

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*The Attention Revolution: Unlocking the Power of the Focused Mind*, Alan Wallace (Wisdom Publications)

*Mind Closely: The Four Applications of Mindfulness*, Alan Wallace (Snow Lion Publications)

### Bodhicitta

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*The Four Immeasurables: Practices to Open the Heart*, Alan Wallace (Snow Lion Publications)

*Buddhism with an Attitude: The Tibetan Seven-Point Mind Training*, Alan Wallace (Snow Lion Publications)

### Emptiness

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*How to See Yourself as You Really Are*, His Holiness the Dalai Lama (Atria Books)

*How to Realize Emptiness*, Gen. Lamrimpa (Snow Lion Publications)

### Tantra

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*The Psychology of Buddhist Tantra*, Rob Preece (Snow Lion Publications)

*Introduction to Tantra*, Lama Yeshe (Wisdom Publications)

## DISCOVERING BUDDHISM PROGRAM

### About the Discovering Buddhism Program:

Discovering Buddhism is a beginner-level program in Buddhist philosophy and practice, with the aim to give you a solid footing in the practice of Mahayana Buddhism. By engaging in this program, you will gain an *experiential* taste of the Buddha's teachings, meditation retreat experience, and the skills you need to make your life most meaningful. *Discovering Buddhism is designed not only as an academic study of Buddhism, but is intended to change your life.* The DB Program is currently being offered in many FPMT centers around the world, including Tushita Meditation Centre. It can also be completed in your own home as a correspondence course.

Assembled under the guidance and advice of FPMT's Spiritual Director Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Discovering Buddhism consists of 14 courses ("subject areas") covering all the major topics of Buddhism. Within each subject area, you will attend lectures, engage in meditations relevant to those lectures, read texts and teaching transcripts, and do short (1-3 day) retreats. The final subject area, "Special Integration Experiences," includes longer retreats and other experiences required for graduation. Upon successful completion of all 14 subject areas you will receive a Discovering Buddhism Completion Certificate.

For more information please visit:

**[www.fpmt.org/education/programs/discovering-buddhism.html](http://www.fpmt.org/education/programs/discovering-buddhism.html)**

### Discovering Buddhism at Tushita Meditation Centre

Each year Tushita Meditation Centre will offer several of the 14 subject areas. You are welcome to join one or more of these... in fact, the course you are attending right now is one of the 14 subject areas! In the future you can complete the other subject areas at Tushita Meditation Centre or in other FPMT centers, or through the "Discovering Buddhism At Home" correspondence course. Note: The subject areas do have a suggested order, but they are not required to be completed in this particular order.

All students attending Tushita Meditation Centre courses are expected to attend all lectures, meditations and discussion groups of the course. Students *not* wishing to earn Discovering Buddhism Completion Cards are not required to do anything more. Those students who *do* wish to earn Discovering Buddhism Completion Cards will have the extra opportunities of required reading, participation in an oral exam with your teacher at the end of the course, and possibly an additional 1-3 days of required meditation retreat, depending on the particular course. Tushita Meditation Centre can provide you with support in these extra opportunities and can issue you a Discovering Buddhism Completion Card for all subject area requirements which you successfully complete here.

**If you would like to earn a Discovering Buddhism Completion Card  
for your Tushita Meditation Centre course,  
please contact Tushita Meditation Centre's Spiritual Programme Coordinator  
to register and learn more about the requirements.**

