



- What are the three steps of dharma practice?
- What is the problem with meditating without having a dharmic view?
- What is the limitation of study without meditation?
- Why is the foundation of hinayana essential before engaging in mahayana or tantra?

## 2. Renunciation, Impermanence and Suffering (Sept.19)

Reading assignments: Dzogchen Pönlop: *The Heart of Renunciation*: pp. 1-9  
 Dzongsar Khyentse: *What Makes You Not A Buddhist*,  
 pp.15-19, pp. 26-28  
 Seung Sahn: *The Compass of Zen*, pp. 43-45  
 Pema Chödrön: *The Places that Scare You*, pp. 17-19

Questions:

- What does renunciation mean in relation to the Hinayana path?
- What were the first teachings given by the Buddha in the Deer Park at Sarnath?
- What are the Four Seals? (Just know the list. We will go into the explanation of each seal as the course progresses.)
- What does “composite” or “compounded” mean in relation to the first seal?
- If signs of impermanence are all around us, why don’t we believe this truth? Why do we act as if we had all the time in the world?
- Do you really believe that all things are impermanent (changing)? Can you find any thing that is permanent?

## 3. The Cause of Suffering (Oct. 3)

Reading assignments: Chögyam Trungpa, *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 7-12 and pp. 63-72  
 Chögyam Trungpa, *The Path is the Goal*, pp. 55-65

Questions:

- What are the three types of suffering? Does this seem like a useful way to categorize suffering? How have you experienced suffering of each type in your life?
- Trungpa describes (*Myth of Freedom*, p. 64) emotions as composed of energy plus a dualistic thought process. Is this analysis helpful for working with emotions?
- How does the “Lions Roar” encourage one’s shamatha meditation?
- What does Trungpa mean by “me-ness?”
- In this same chapter of *The Path Is The Goal*, Trungpa compares the “self” to a tree, and says that we need to start by cutting down the branches and leaves before we can get to the trunk. Dzogchen Pönlop (*The Science of Mind*, p. 24) writes “[The Buddha] showed that the cause of samsara is the false imputation of a truly existent self and the resultant three poisons or the three root mental afflictions.” Which part of the tree is “the false imputation of a truly existent self,” and which part is “the resultant three poisons.” Why do we need to start working with the leaves and branches of the tree?

### **Day Retreat: Turning The Mind Into An Ally (Saturday, October 13)**

This full day of practice with guided meditation and talks is an integral part of the course, but it is also open to the Nashua group and others who are interested. It will be based on the teachings of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche.

Required reading: Sakyong Mipham, *Being Human*, pp. 34-44

Recommended: Read as much of the first 60 pages as you have time.

It is also recommended that you continue reading *Being Human* throughout the fall course and apply these teachings to your own meditation practice.

Note: If you have a copy of *Being Human* printed one sided at Staples, please note that it has been repaginated. The required reading is pp. 40-50, and the recommended reading is pp. 1-69.

### **4. Third Seal - Non-self (Egolessness) (Oct. 17)**

Reading assignments: Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso, *Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness*, pp. 19-34 (Chapter One)  
Chögyam Trungpa, *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 12-15

- The class time will be used to discuss the first chapter of Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso's book *Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness*. It is important to study this Chapter. The topic of the class is the veil of false beliefs. The root false belief is taking the five skandas to be a self. The chapter is a complete and very readable explanation of what this means. There are basically two parts.
- First there is a definition of what is meant by a "self." This is very important to understand. If there is such a thing as a self, it must have three characteristics or attributes. Understand what these are, and then ask yourself if you agree with this definition. You may not, in which case you need an alternative definition if you want to argue that there is such a thing as a self.
- Second, read and try to understand what the five skandas are. Khenpo does an excellent job of explaining this. The skandas are a way of classifying all that we are experiencing. Having understood what the skandas are, can you find any evidence of a self within them? Khenpo elaborates this investigation, and we will discuss it in class.
- Please continue to practice, because there is no other way to integrate this powerful teaching with one's life experience.
- Please refer to the class discussion document for an outline of what we have to cover in class.

### **5. The Twelve Nidanas - How Suffering is Perpetuated (Nov. 14)**

Reading assignment: Reginald Ray, *Indestructible Truth*, Chapter 14, pp. 367-391

- What is the relationship between klesha and karma in the wheel of the 12 nidanas? How does klesha result in karmic activity?
- In this version of the chart of the 12 nidanas three lifetimes are presented (past, present and future). Do you see how one lifetime can influence another? The 12 nidanas can also be presented as a moment by moment production and ripening of karma. Do you see how that might work as well?
- According to the Buddha's teachings, the wheel of samsara turns round and round due to our past karma and ongoing production of karma. Do we have any choice to break the cycle? If so, where is there a possibility of interrupting or changing our habitual patterns?

### **6. Fourth Seal - Peace Beyond Concepts (Nov. 28)**

Read or chant the Supplication to the Takpo Kagyü several times and contemplate the meaning.

- Contemplate verse four that begins "Awareness is the body of meditation ..." How do you understand this as meditation instruction?
- Contemplate verse five that begins "The essence of thoughts is Dharmakaya ..." How does this illuminate the fourth seal, Nirvana is peace beyond concepts?"

### **7. Awareness and Wisdom (Dec. 5)**

Reading assignment: Chogyam Trungpa, *The Path is the Goal*, Chapters 3 and 4 (pages 88 to 115)

- What is vipashyana?
- What is the difference between mindfulness and awareness as described in *The Path is the Goal*?
- What does it mean to say "radiation without a radiator"?
- "And because you develop an understanding of the nonexistence of yourself, therefore you are freer to relate with the phenomenal world—the climate, atmosphere, or environment we have been talking about." (p. 105) The less "self" you have, the freer you are to relate to "other". Does this make sense to you? Why or why not?

### **8. Exam and Celebration (Dec. 19)**