


A 3-week *Buddhism for Beginner's* course with registered FPMT teacher Miffi Maxmillion

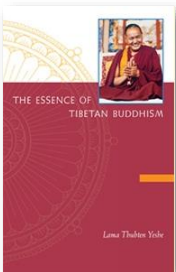


How Buddhism Helps
Week 1: Wisdom

1

Basis of this Course


- *Three Principal Aspects of the Path*, summarised by the great scholar and yogi, Lama Tsong Khapa
- For both Buddhists and the non-religious
- Meditations to integrate theory into experience
- Worksheets to personalise the philosophy



2

What is Buddhism?




A science?
A psychology?
A philosophy?
A religion?



- **The basis is a science**
- **From this arises an ethical system**
- **Then comes ritual expression**

3


How Does Buddhism Help?

		
Renunciation Wish to become free of the cycle of suffering and dissatisfaction	Bodhicitta Compassion that is unbiased, and takes responsibility for others	Correct View Wisdom understanding reality, inter-dependence

4

Today's Outcomes


- Focus on the **wisdom** understanding reality
- How things exist – three interdependent levels
- Meditation on our self-image
- Hypothetical – just how old are you?



5

Root Cause of All Suffering

- The source of all our problems is confusion about our identity
- Our mistake? We think there is a real, concrete findable me!
- BUT...no-one has ever discovered an independent self!
- If we want to stop suffering, we must stop this mistake!



- **Confusion about our nature causes the three major disturbances of our personal world: ...confusion ...hostility ...craving**

6

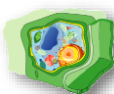
How Do Things Exist?

- All relative phenomena exist *inter-dependently*
- This means that ultimately, all things are *empty* of existing in an independent, unchanging manner
- **Appearances are not reality!**

Three levels of dependent arising:



Causes & conditions

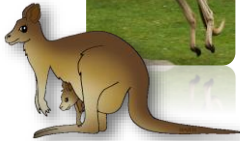


Parts which compose them



Imputation or name

Draw Me a Kangaroo!



Who am I, really?



Grasp at our identity as true: disappointed, frightened, rigid, fundamentalist, tunnel vision



Recognise dependent arising: adaptive, resilient, confident, realistic, energetic, happy, content

- Careful not to mix up ultimate and conventional!
- How we *feel* is not the way we *are*
- A conventional, dependently-arising self exists
- An ultimate 'me' does *not* exist



How Do You Interpret Yourself?

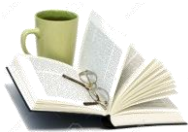
"If we truly wish to achieve the satisfaction of complete fulfilment, we must find a way to break free from the tyranny of ordinary appearances and conceptions. Although we all have a fundamentally pure nature, it is not easy to get in touch with it. We need to quiet all distractions and loosen the hold our ordinary appearances and conceptions have on us. We need to create space so our essentially pure nature can function uninterruptedly."

— Lama Thubten Yeshe



Contemplation

- How do I interpret myself right now?...
- Who am I?...
- What am I?...



"Things do not exist in the way they first appear"

How Old Are You?


- **WHEN** were you born?
- How do you **MEASURE** how old you are?
- **WHAT** are we measuring?
- So..... how old are you, *really*?

... there is no '*really*'!


age




Age is a Dependent Arising



Causes & Conditions
Birth time, genetics, mental and physical age



Parts
Ratio of time, organs age at differing rates, atoms billions of years old



Imputation
How we identify, state of mind, our associations

13

Why Does This Matter?

- Age determines when we can drive, drink, vote, get married, work or retire
- We identify with our appearance as *us*. We ascribe meaning, respect, worth to age
- But... our physical body is not *us*!
- Mind has no age, form, or gender
- Our body may deteriorate, but our mind can continue to develop



.... Settle on a convention in tune with reality

14



- So....when are you celebrating your birthday?
- **Without the wisdom understanding reality there is no way to cut the root of suffering, we are just constantly trimming the leaves.**
- By recognising inter-dependence:
 - We develop confidence
 - Become resilient
 - Naturally care for others
 - Can completely eliminate suffering
 - Open up to your vast potential

"Things do not exist in the way they first appear"

15

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How Buddhism Helps
Week 2: Renunciation

16

Today's Outcomes

- Focus on **renunciation**
- How to not be distracted from our core values
- Meditation on letting go of worldly concerns
- How to keep a level head



17

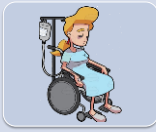
What is Renunciation?

- Wishing to be free of the cycle of craving and dissatisfaction
- **A determination to definitely emerge**
- **What are we renouncing?**
 - **Suffering?** (yes, we all do this)
 - **Happiness?** (no, nothing wrong with enjoying things)
 - **The causes of suffering!** (we haven't done this before)
- We are ignorant of the nature of reality, so we look outside ourselves for happiness.
- This causes us to go up and down continuously




18

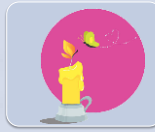
Three Types of Suffering



Obvious suffering of pain



The suffering we are seeking



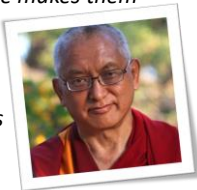
Being dominated by ignorance

19

Like a Moth to the Flame...

"When moths see a candle flame, they think it's a good place to go. They don't think that it will burn their body. They have no fear. They are expecting only peace and happiness. They have no desire to suffer, they don't plan on getting burnt, but the mental obscuration of ignorance makes them perceive the situation differently from the fact of it. Their ignorance prevents them from discovering the actual nature of the situation. It forces them to experience suffering."

– Lama Zopa Rinpoche



20

Renunciation Makes Life *Better!*

- It does not mean giving up all your friends and possessions!
- Renunciation means **giving up your distorted relationship** to them
- **Immediately:** more relaxed, optimistic, enjoy what we have, less stress and worry
- **Lifespan:** stability, achieve our goals, die without regret. Bring meaning to our life
- **Ultimately:** complete and permanent cessation of all suffering (nirvana)



21

Eight Worldly Concerns

Seeking	Avoiding
PLEASURE Comfort, nice things 	PAIN Discomfort, unpleasant 
GAIN Profit, acquiring things 	LOSS Loss, deterioration 
PRAISE Admiration, approval 	BLAME Criticism, abuse 
SUCCESS Fame, status, reputation 	FAILURE Insignificance, notoriety 

22

Contemplation

- Letting go of the eight worldly concerns
 - gain & loss
 - success & failure
 - praise & criticism
 - pleasure & pain



"Don't give up what you want *most* for what you want *now*"

23

How Attachment Ruins Everything

- Attachment = if it feels good, it is good!**
- Over-valued, biased, expectation, projection
 - **Instant gratification** brings short-term satisfaction, but creates long-term craving
 - Following craving deprives us of peace and lasting happiness
 - Our dissatisfaction reveals something profound, that our consumerism masks the hollowness of an exterior life
 - **Shut up and give me the cookie!**



24

How to Keep a Level Head

- **Cultivate a natural, realistic optimism.** Be flexible, discover the opportunity in any situation
- **Recognise how attachment ruins everything.** Happiness does not come from outside, it must be cultivated from within!
- **Don't sweat the small stuff!** Our life is fleeting, so focus on what really matters to you

Dependent arising means things *can* change!



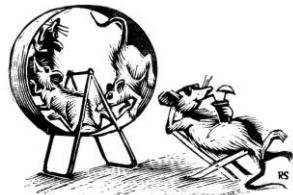
25

So What's Something I *Can* Rely On?

- Where do we currently seek guidance and protection?
- Investigate using your reasoning and logic, and check with your own experience

Criteria of a valid refuge:

1. Freed themselves from bondage
2. Has a method to free others
3. Great compassion for all, unbiased
4. Helps all, without favouritism



26



- Renounce suffering, and the *causes of suffering*
- **With renunciation we will enjoy our life *more*!**
- Eight worldly concerns distract us from long-term goals and what really matters to us
- The best way to keep a level head is to find a valid spiritual path that suits you

"Don't give up what you want *most* for what you want *now*"

27

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How Buddhism Helps

Week 3: Bodhicitta

28

Today's Outcomes

- Focus on **bodhicitta**.
- How does *intelligent selfishness* work?
- Empathy vs. Compassion (avoiding burn-out)
- Equanimity towards friend, enemy, stranger
- Meditation on the world of support



29

Two Opposing Attitudes



Self-cherishing is neglectful of others

- Nothing stops us retaliating
- We suffer, we cause others to suffer
- It is the door to all problems

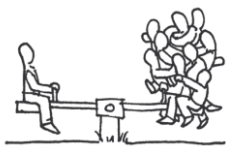


Cherishing others puts them first

- Automatically take others into consideration
- We naturally refrain from harm
- It is the door to all happiness

30

The Key to Happiness



- If we want to be as happy as possible, we should devote ourselves to the welfare of others
- Yes, it's counterintuitive!

Self-cherishing vs. cherishing others

- Why does 'looking after number one' bring us more problems, alienation, and suffering?
- How come caring for others brings us such happiness, even if we are having a hard time personally?

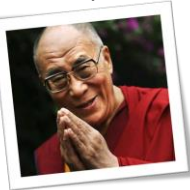


31

Intelligent Selfishness

"Whether or not our kindness brings benefit to others will depend on a great many factors, some of which will be outside our control. But whether we succeed in bringing benefit to others or not, the first beneficiary of compassion is always oneself. When compassion, or warm-heartedness, arises in us and shifts our focus away from our own narrow self-interest, it is as if we open an inner door."

– HH the Dalai Lama



32

What is Bodhicitta?

- **Bodhicitta is the altruistic intention to become a buddha for the benefit of all sentient beings**
- (1) The wish to develop limitless compassion, wisdom and skill, (2) to alleviate the suffering of all beings and bring them to lasting happiness.

Common misconceptions:

- Not some highly emotional state
- Not an overwhelming burden
- Not that we can't do anything *until* then
- Does not mean being passive



33

Empathy is Not Compassion!

Affective Empathy

- Feel for them



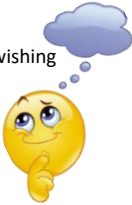
1. Use existing feelings
2. Expand them using reasoning and logic
3. Include everyone!

Cognitive Empathy

- Think it through



- Compassion is wishing them to be free of suffering
- **Compassion is an activity**, not just a feeling!



34

Contemplation

- Equanimity meditation - the world of support
- Friends, enemies, strangers...



"Just like me, everyone wants to be happy"

35

Equanimity – Feeling Equal Care Towards All



Feeling affection towards friends
Expand your love to everyone





Feeling warmly towards strangers
Raise the bar



Feeling concern for enemies
Judge the behaviour, not person

36






- **Intelligent selfishness: If you want to be as happy as possible, devote yourself to others!**
- Without equanimity, our good-heartedness can lead to violence or hatred
- Use both affective and cognitive empathy to develop unbiased, impartial, compassion
- With bodhicitta your *own* life becomes good!


"Just like me, everyone just wants to be happy"

37

How Does Buddhism Help?

		
Renunciation Less stressed, authentic life true to your values, natural courage, joy	Bodhicitta Minimise harm, help according to your capacity, avoid burnout	Correct View Connected not alienated, save the planet, always find the opportunities

38



- **Feedback sheets!**

During the week:

- Worksheets (keep them to compare later...)
- Continue with the meditations...

What's next?

- Other beginner's courses
- Balancing emotions courses
- Discovering Buddhism in-depth study

39