

WBMG Module IV Foundation of Buddhist Study mod4-2handout
Second class in this series “The Path is the Goal” (Class 1 in pdf) Oct. 2, 2014

Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche. Nalandabodhi, Seattle WA. Study curriculum. Introduction to Buddhism series. “Traveling from Confusion to Original Sanity,” 2008

Tonight will look at the first chapter of the text. (called Class 1)
The title of the text provides a view of our journey from confusion to original sanity.

“The path is the goal”
What does the title mean?

Paradox: We want to get somewhere. Isn't enlightenment the goal? That wanting is in the way of getting there. Have to drop everything. Just be in the moment.

Outline of material: ground, path, fruition.
Commonly used way of organizing Buddhist teachings.

Ground is our starting place. The foundation.
Path is the way we travel. The means, the road and the destination.
Fruition is the result of action taken.

Example

Building a house: ground is securing a site, literal ground, getting the permits, design.
Assembling what we need to build.
Path: the order of construction, dig, pour foundation, walls, etc.
Fruition: completed house, moving in, landscaping.

Ground is buddha nature
Do you think the nature of our mind has the same nature as the wisdom of a Buddha?

What is the fundamental nature of our mind like according to buddhist teachings?
Does this make sense to you?
What is your experience of your own mind?

Why don't we experience our buddha nature all the time?
Covered over with garbage.
Ego clinging, emotions, rigid belief systems, emotional and conceptual garbage.

Cocoon of “me” at center. Then “others”. Like and dislike. Happiness and suffering.

Why would you believe the nature of our mind is fully awakened and pure?
No one can actually show you that.
Example of the sun.

“Therefore, in order to get in touch with our true heart, we first need to recognize what covers it.” “What is called the ‘path’ is to discriminate between the clouds and the sun.”

Path is uncovering that buddha nature by looking at our own mind. Journey inward.

What is the path?

Getting to know our own mind, how mind functions, what emotions are arising, how we deal with them.

Exploring without fear. Having an inquisitive mind.

Story of Buddha’s experience of awakening. Felt he could not teach this to others. What couldn’t he teach? Ultimate reality. Had to start with relative reality. Saw people’s suffering. Taught the four noble truths.

“In other words, properly understanding and then seeing through the confusion in our relative reality is the means to see ultimate reality.”

“Thus the starting point of the Buddhist path consists of becoming familiar with these two levels of reality: what seems to be the case in the world as we know it, and how things actually are.”

Starting point is looking at what we think is real, solid and true. Becoming familiar with the two levels of reality. Apply analysis to investigate the inner world of our minds and the outer world of appearance.

We come to this understanding gradually. The Buddha meditated for many years and tried many different techniques.

Fundamental view of buddhism

The basic view is groundlessness. Everything changes from moment to moment. Nothing is what it seems to be. Ultimate reality.

Taking this analysis and integrating it into our experience, then change our habitual patterns and gain wider outlook.

Gradual progression to deeper understanding.

Recognizing, identifying causes, applying proper remedies= the buddhist path (4 noble truths)

Distinction between relative (or seeming reality) and ultimate reality

Groundlessness, emptiness is from point of view of ultimate reality

Relative experiences and appearances are understood from the view of interdependent origination, the web of interacting causes and conditions.

Relative and absolute are often misunderstood and mixed together incorrectly. “Nothing matters because nothing really exists” or “Things must exist because there is cause and effect”

We will examine these teachings in depth later. It is not easy to understand on first pass.

The path is investigating how our confusion arises. We analyze our understanding of self and ego and find that ego clinging is the source of our suffering.

Study/analysis and Experience are two essential processes

How do we discover the true nature of our mind? 1st Study and analysis. Contemplate the meaning of the teachings. Intellectual aspect is strongly emphasized. Buddhism is known as the path of wisdom or path of transcendent knowledge.

2nd is meditative experience. Experience the nature of mind without words or concepts, labels. Beyond words like describing a Snickers bar. Direct experience.

Fruition

Enlightenment is already in us, in our mind's nature. Nothing new to attain. But we don't know this, it is not recognized, so we have to travel the path. We think we have something to attain.

Various perspectives on transforming neurosis into wisdom

Three methods which all lead to the same goal:

Hinayana: work on oneself

Mahayana: vast (compassion) and profound (emptiness) approach, greatly altruistic.

Vajrayana: indestructible approach, numerous swift and skillful means; sudden enlightenment or "wild awakening"

Devotion and the Teacher

Trusting in our own enlightened heart is devotion. The teacher is a mirror for this basic trust.

We see impurities and also the pure nature of our mind.

We need to turn on the light of devotion to see the reflection of our own mind.

Hinayana approach: very concrete and specific, but can take a long time.

Mahayana approach: more straightforward.

Vajrayana: take the quick exit. Jump out this window right here. There are many direct exits we can take.

Lineage instructions are important but we must act on those instructions.