

Introduction to Mahayana, Module XIII, Class 6, by Emily Weidman, May 26, 2016
The Complete Teachings of Mahayana, Talk #3, The Spiritual Friend

Ground: Buddha nature
Path: Awakening that potential
Fruition: Compassion

Ground (overview):

We start with view of buddha nature. “It is a **state of intelligence** which questions our life and the meaning of life.”

Why are questioning and doubt so important in the buddhist path?

“We are still searching for the **questions**. This questioning is buddha nature, a state of potential.”

Why aren't we looking for answers instead of questions?

Importance of questioning, examining our life. Dissatisfaction, questioning, doubt, irritation. The spark of intelligence activates buddha nature. Feel some relaxation, pleasure but it is temporary. We are being awakened by unrest.

Path: How to awaken buddha nature?

Aspiration comes from experiencing misery and pain (suffering) of self and other. What do we need? Allegiance toward spiritual friend and dedication.

“The point here seems to be that we have to begin with the development of maitri.”

Maitri=love, a kind, friendly attitude. Accept our (and others) neurosis and sanity. Unconditional acceptance. Starts with self-acceptance.

“We don't try to be like anyone else because we don't hate ourselves....Friendship in this case means complete acceptance of our being.” Just being with your situation.

“The agitation of buddha nature coming through, questioning and feeling dissatisfaction, produces all kinds of insightful discoveries.” **Prajna**=insight

First step in awakening potential is trust in the heart. No judgment. 100% acceptance.

Why does this trust develop?

We are constant and predictable. Constantly wanting something. Constant unrest. Have ups and downs. It is not a problem.

“The game that goes on is not regarded as something bad particularly. Rather, it is the expression of our **agitated enlightened mind** trying to have a **revolution**, trying to throw off the seeming expressions of ego.”

“This expanding of maitri cuts the neurosis of wishful thinking, thinking that you **should** just be a **good** person. Maitri is intelligent friendliness which allows acceptance of our being...”

Can relate to our father and our mother, brother, sister, friends, enemies.

Something **real** is happening. "...real because we don't have any hypothesis about how the **good** person **should** be or how we **should** improve ourselves..."

"...we are inspired to spirituality." Not religion. Can go beyond the limitations of the familiar. There are further areas to explore, expansion. Begin to relate to spiritual friend.

Kalyanamitra = spiritual friend or guru; someone outside of home ground.

Radiation of **maitri**; expanding out, mahayana, great vehicle, sense of exploration.

What or who is the kalyanamitra?

"...spokesman of the **world outside of your home ground**." A person who can relate directly to you, meet you where you are. Guide on the path of awakening.

"She is 'seemingly' friendly to you at the beginning because you are still suspicious of her friendliness."

A trustworthy person, a good person, a mirror. No escape.

Fruition: Compassion

"Relating with a spiritual friend brings us out of our home ground of seemingly domesticated maitri to the level of compassion, karuna. That seems to be the turning point of commitment to the teaching." Direct connection to the teachings. Our intelligence of buddha nature begins to function.

Q and A

- First is need for maitri to self, then can open more and relate with spiritual friend.
- Shamatha practice creates space then can drop the technique and open further.
- Spiritual friend is mirror, helps you relate to your own wisdom.
- "In describing buddha nature I'm using the analogy of a revolutionary who is trying to throw off the expressions of ego. ...the function of buddha nature is breaking out of the shell."

Contemplations:

1. Reflect on your inner critic. Write out a list of the shortcomings you constantly enumerate in your head.
2. Can you apply maitri to each of these supposed shortcomings?
3. One by one, can you embrace and accept each one?
4. Can you write a new script? What would this sound like?
5. In the Q and A section review the part about the revolutionary who is trying to throw off the expressions of ego. What is the relationship between buddha nature and cognitive mind?

How to use contemplation in your practice: Sit in meditation for a few minutes then begin to contemplate one of the questions. When your mind wanders from the question, gently bring it back. At the end of the session sit in meditation for a few minutes.