

Class Notes

December 8, 2016

Some useful quotes

The question is not whether or not the person, personality, or ego is a changing, composite train of events conditioned by many complex factors. Any rational analysis shows us this is the case. The question is why then do we behave emotionally as if it were lasting, single, and independent. Thus when we are looking for the self it is very important to remember it is an emotional response that one is examining.

Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche

To know the self is to forget the self, and to forget the self is to be enlightened by all things.

Dogen

In terms of our clinging to what we think is “me,” on the basis of our innate vague sense of “me,” we generate several wrong ideas. These can be summarized as three incorrect ways of perceiving our assumed self: clinging to it as being permanent, singular, and independent. Each of these three types of clinging is associated with a corresponding type of ignorance. Clinging to the self as being permanent arises due to ignorance about time. Clinging to the self as being singular comes from ignorance about the objects that are mistakenly regarded as the self. Clinging to the self as being independent arises from ignorance about causes and conditions.

Dzochen Ponlop Rinpoche

A lot of our journey in exploring selflessness is exploring that particular feeling where the ego clinging, the emotion reaction of the self - is felt in your body as something that you can't bear to feel. Then, in terms of attachment, it's more subtle in that we want things to last longer.

Pema Chodron

In-class Meditations

Meditation 1

The purpose is to get in touch with this gut level ugh, I want; ugh, I don't want, and the ego clinging that leads to the identity we've been talking about, the permanent solid, and separate.

After a period of shamatha,

Think of a part of your body that you like. What happens to your sense of self? Pause.

And now, think of a part of your body that you don't like. What happens to your sense of self?

In-class Meditation 2

After a period of shamatha,

Think about being criticized or blamed. What happens to your sense of self? Pause.

And, think about being praised. What happens to your sense of self?

Meditations related to the self: permanent, solid, and independent.

Consider using these after a period of shamatha when the mind has settled somewhat.
What am I holding in mind? (Reflect on the instinctive sense that you are permanent.)

Bring to mind during meditation a moment when you experienced your emotional reactivity. Without judging it or trying to fix anything about it, ask yourself, what am I holding in mind? Am I protecting myself from the moment's experience? Am I rejecting this moment's experience?

What you notice is likely familiar: an "identity" built on patterns of reactivity. This is how we come to know the self. Sitting with the reactivity of that identity may be uncomfortable, even very uncomfortable.

Consider that though you are reacting in a way that feels familiar, instead of reinforcing that reaction, you could lighten up a bit by just sitting with the discomfort. See if you notice a shift in your experience, a sense that the reaction is also not you. Rest in that momentary shift. Then return to the meditation.

What else am I? (Reflect on the instinctive sense that you are singular.)

At any point, in meditation or throughout the day, identify your solid self. "I'm hungry. I'm sad. I'm not respected." Then ask, what else am I?

Continue to answer and ask the question. See if you are ever just one thing, or if you are many things at once.

Sit with the your experience, whether comfortable or uncomfortable, and when you notice a shift in your experience, rest in that shift for a time. Then return to the meditation.

Everything changes, nothing stays the same (Abbreviated, from Ken McLeod)

Consider change in the world.

Start by envisioning the largest and most stable objects in the universe and work down to the smallest and most unstable, observing how every one of them forms, endures, and eventually disintegrates.

Consider how the body changes.

Consider how personality and beliefs change.

Alternatively, during meditation, ask Is there anything that does not change?

Sit with that question like a weight. Sit with the experience, whether comfortable or uncomfortable, and when you notice a shift in your experience, rest in that shift for a time. Then return to the meditation.