CHÖGYAM TRUNGPA RINPOCHE

THE TIBETAN BUDDHIST PATH

STUDY GUIDE

KALAPA RECORDINGS

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About *The Tibetan Buddhist Path*

The Tibetan Buddhist Path was the first seminar taught by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche during the first summer session at Naropa Institute, 1974. While it would be useful for teachers to familiarize themselves with some history of the first summer at Naropa, the purpose of presenting this seminar is not to focus on the history of Naropa. Rather, the seminar is being presented for its up-to-date, or perhaps timeless, presentation of the Buddhist path.

The counter-culture milieu at Naropa in 1974 might in fact be an obstacle for some of those who view these lectures. Some current students may be put off by the appearance of the audience in 1974 and miss the point, not really hearing what's being said. For this reason, some discussion of the culture at Naropa in 1974 may be helpful at the beginning of the first class.

If you listen to these talks, by and large, the members of the audience sound intelligent, which in fact they were, and there's nothing peculiar about most of the questions and interchanges with the Vidyadhara. If these talks were edited and published as a book, they would provide a very insightful commentary on the Buddhist path, not unlike other early seminars by Chögyam Trungpa. However, when you see the DVDs, it would be hard not to be struck by the unconventional appearance of many members of the audience.

The best preparation for teaching this course will be to watch the DVDs in advance of presenting the material.

Many students who are shown in the audience shots of the Tibetan Buddhist Path course attended the first session at Naropa because they were interested in studying with Ram Dass or other American-Hindu teachers. Many of these students were encountering Chögyam Trungpa for the first time. He certainly welcomed them, and in fact, a number became close students eventually.

His Holiness the 16th Gyalwang Karmapa arrived in North America for his first visit just a few months after this session of Naropa. Rinpoche asked his students to wear suits or other conservative dress for this tour. His students had already cleaned up their acts, so to speak, well before the Karmapa's arrival. By this time, at least they had their shirts on!

The Tibetan Buddhist Path is being released on DVD in 2007, the 20th anniversary of the Parinirvana or death of Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche. The audio track for many of these talks has been processed or replaced to provide better sound. On the original tapes, some material was lost when a tape change took place. The audio for the missing material has been restored. The DVDs have chapter markers embedded in each talk, which allow the viewer to skip ahead, or back, in sections. During the talks there are basic markers according to the ground, path, and fruition outline. Also, each question is marked, to allow for ease of viewing.

This guide has been prepared for the use of teachers in connection with the DVD series The Tibetan Buddhist Path. It may also be used by individuals studying this material on their own. Teachers may wish to

share some of the written material in the guide with their students. Please send comments, criticisms, and suggestions for changes or additions to the study guide to cgimian@suchns.com, so that this and future guides can be updated and improved.

Suggestion: Play the body of the talk for the class. Then lead a discussion. Then play the questions and answers on the DVD.

About the Material in the Guide

For each talk, there are two pages in the guide. At the top, the title of the talk is given along with the original date of the lecture, the length of the main body of the talk, and the overall length, including questions and answers. The information on length is provided to help you plan the presentation of each topic.

TITLE	TALK LENGTH	INCLUDING Q & A
1. Spiritual Materialism	35 minutes	48 minutes
2. Origins of Tibetan and American Buddhism	37 minutes	67 minutes
3. The Three Marks of Existence	36 minutes	60 minutes
4. The Five Skandhas	47 minutes	84 minutes
5. Meditation and Surrender	47 minutes	77 minutes
6. Karma	30 minutes	66 minutes
7. The Narrow Path and the Open Path	53 minutes	82 minutes
8. Sutra	53 minutes	78 minutes
9. Bodhisattva and Paramita	55 minutes	79 minutes
10. Tradition and Sanity in Zen and Tibetan Buddhism	44 minutes	60 minutes
11. Meditation and the Fourth Moment	41 minutes	71 minutes
12. The Doha Tradition	40 minutes	52 minutes
13. Nirvana and Mysticism	39 minutes	55 minutes
14. Magic	27 minutes	49 minutes

At the beginning of the syllabus for each talk, a sentence or paragraph summarizing the talk is given. Then there is a ground, path, and fruition for each lecture. After the general summary statement of the ground, path or fruition logic, points summarizing the content and the logic follow. A number of questions are then suggested to encourage discussion.

Following the discussion questions, suggested readings are given. Generally, these readings can either be assigned before the class or given as follow-up reading. In specific cases, it is suggested that the reading's be done before the class or used as part of the class discussion. In most cases, the readings selected are by Chögyam Trungpa. There are, of course, many other options. However, the guide was written to be used in connection with his writings. You may decide to use other readings.

Course Design Options

Since there are so many talks in this seminar, fourteen in total, some centers may decide to show a subset of the whole seminar. This guide tries to provide information that will give you options for presenting the material. Here are some options. You may discover others:

1. Course Based on all fourteen talks.
You might consider offering the course in two parts. Talks 1-6 or 1-7 work well as an introduction to meditation, mind and the Narrow or Hinayana path. Talks Eight through Fourteen present Mahayana and the view of Vajrayana, including some unusual material on poetry.

If you choose to present the entire seminar, you may want to plan a one–day or weekend intensive as part of the course. Or, you may want to have two one-day intensives during the course.

2. Courses using six to eight talks that give a good overview or focus on an area of interest. Here are two possibilities:

Meditation, Mind and Karma (6 classes**)**

- Talk One: Spiritual Materialism
- Talk Three: The Three Marks of Existence
- Talk Four: The Five Skandhas
- Talk Five: Meditation and Surrender
- Talk Six: Karma
- Talk Eleven: Meditation and the Fourth Moment

Mini Path Class (8 classes)

- Talk One: Spiritual Materialism
- Talk Three: The Three Marks of Existence
- Talk Four: The Five Skandhas
- Talk Five: Meditation and Surrender
- Talk Seven: The Narrow Path and the Open Path
- Talk Nine: Bodhisattva and Paramita
- Talk Eleven: Meditation and the Fourth Moment
- Either Talk Thirteen: Nirvana and Mysticism or Talk Fourteen: Magic

3. Show a single talk. Good stand alone talks are Talk One on Spiritual Materialism and Talk Eleven on Meditation and the Fourth Moment.

1 Spiritual Materialism

Date of Talk: June 12, 1974
Body of talk: 35 min. Overall: 48 min.

This is the first talk of the first seminar given by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche at Naropa Institute. It is an excellent introductory talk on developing critical intelligence and avoiding the pitfalls of spiritual materialism on the Buddhist path.

The first few minutes of the talk are an introduction to the course as a whole. The Vidyadhara invites students to approach the subject matter in a relaxed, open, wholehearted fashion and describes the course as presenting the geography of the Buddhist path.

Ground: Enlightenment or spiritual wisdom is the highest goal of humanity.

- Spiritual achievement is beyond worldly achievements, such as becoming a statesman, a president, a millionaire, a poet, or a writer.
- We know that even if we attain success in ordinary life, we are still speedy, with no peace of mind, victims of ourselves.
- Students begin a spiritual search because they want to experience that ultimate enlightenment or wisdom.

Path: Recognizing spiritual materialism.

Having understood the genuine importance of spiritual practice, we have a big problem or challenge when we try to find the means to pursue our spiritual goal.

- We want to achieve enlightenment for ourselves, without sacrificing our ego. Ego-oriented practice is spiritual materialism.
- We ask ourselves: How are we going to proceed? From the point of view of spiritual materialism, we say to ourselves: I am going to get it. I will do whatever I have to do to become enlightened, as long as my teacher promises me that at the end of the quest, I will get it.
- We have to realize that the pursuit of spiritual practice involves discipline and exertion. Thinking that we will achieve something by just sitting for a few minutes a day or chanting a mantra is unreasonable and undermines human dignity.

Fruition: Critical intelligence, which is described here as a cynical attitude, cuts through spiritual materialism.

- It is necessary to question everything that is presented to us. Critical thinking is the way that we can fight back against spiritual materialism.
- Questioning things in our experience is not purely an intellectual endeavor. There is also an intuitive style of examining everything.
- In the questions and answers, the Vidyadhara suggests "Let us mock the ego but let us build our spirit." He equates spirit here with inquisitiveness.

Conclusion: This talk is showing us how to handle ourselves as practitioners and how to relate with the whole situation we encounter on the spiritual path.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What do you think spiritual materialism is? Is it still a problem today?
2. What is the relationship of spiritual materialism and ego?
3. Is it possible to avoid spiritual materialism? If so, how? If not, how do we work with it?
4. The Vidyadhara describes spiritual materialism as "snobbishness." What does he mean and do you agree?
5. What is meant by "cynicism" in this talk? Do you agree that it's valuable? What are the potential problems with a cynical approach?
6. Do you feel that this topic is a good foundation for studying the Tibetan Buddhist path? Why or why not?

Suggested Readings:

"Spiritual Materialism" in *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*.

"Dome Darshan," pages 537 to 547 in Volume Three of *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa*.

Note on the readings: These can be offered as preparation for the talk or as further reading for students interested in more material on the subject matter.

2 Origins of Tibetan and American Buddhism

Date of Talk: June 14, 1974
Body of talk: 37 min. Overall: 67 min.

An unusual talk on Tibetan Buddhism, its relationship to Bön, and how that relates to Buddhism coming to America. The Vidyadhara talks about popular interest in Hinduism in the 1960s as a pre-Buddhist climate into which Buddhism came. He also discusses North American First Nations' spirituality. The talk is also about the difference between a nature-based theistic, family tradition versus the nontheistic spirituality of Buddhism.

Ground: Pre-Buddhist Tibet (7th century) and Pre-Buddhist America (1960s)

- Similar climates for the introduction of the Buddhist teachings and practice. Both cultures were characterized, the Vidyadhara says, by a kind of savageness and ruggedness.
- Hinduism in the 1960s in America was a spiritual materialistic approach embraced by many counter-culture seekers. Many people embraced Hinduism because they wanted to get high. However, there was also a genuine desire to develop oneself, which was a springboard for jumping into Buddhist meditation later.
- Similarities between Bön, Shinto, and Native American approach: all are naturalistic.

Path: Introduction of Buddhism in Tibet and its relevance to America

- Bön practitioners accepted Buddhism. King Songtsen Gampo emphasized the humanitarian side of Buddhism, the aspect of loving kindness and compassion, which was not threatening.
- Later, his grandson King Trisong Detsen invited 108 pandits (wise scholars) to Tibet and encouraged Tibetans to learn Sanskrit and study in India.
- The Indian pandits were not just scholars. They were great practitioners of meditation. In Tibetan, the term is Kepa Druk—meaning a wise, enlightened person. In America, we have learned people but few who are wise, let alone enlightened. The Vidyadhara suggested that the goal of Naropa Institute should be to manufacture learned, wise, and enlightened people.
- In Tibet in the early days at Samye, there were both monastics and yogis. These were two kinds of sanghas. The monastics lived in the buildings in the valley; the yogis in the mountains above.

Fruition: In America, we can go beyond theism and transcend spiritual materialism.

- We need to go beyond the indoctrination of thinking that we will be punished by a divine being if we do something bad.
- The alternative is to understand the suffering that we cause ourselves.
- The concept of God is often an extension of our ego. We create a cosmic daddy because we miss our granddad, or something like that.
- Buddhism is sometimes criticized as a selfish religion, but actually it is not self-oriented at all. It is based on not being a nuisance to the rest of the world, which is an ecological approach.
- Mind is the creator of garbage. When we pay attention to situations, we create less psychological as well as actual, physical garbage.
- If we want to tidy up the world, the approach of no mind, or egolessness, is preferable.

Questions for discussion:

1. Why do you think the Vidyadhara talks about Hinduism and Native American spirituality as the precursors to Buddhism, rather than Christianity?
2. Do you see similarities between how Buddhism developed in Tibet and how it is developing in North America?
3. Do you feel that North America is more suited for a monastic sangha or a yogi-style sangha? What other alternatives are there?
4. Do you think we now have more of an approach in American Buddhism that combines the naturalistic and society-based approach of Bön with the nontheistic approach of Buddhism? Is this a good thing? Inevitable?

Suggested Readings:

"The Bön Way of Life" in *The Heart of the Buddha*.

"Overcoming Physical Materialism" in *Great Eastern Sun: The Wisdom of Shambhala*, contains some material on enlightened rulers and mentions Songtsen Gampo.

Note on the readings: These can be offered as preparation for the talk or as further reading for students interested in more material on the subject matter.

3 The Three Marks of Existence

Date of Talk: June 15, 1974
Body of talk: 36 min. Overall: 60 min.

The Vidyadhara opens this talk by saying that the subject of the talk is examining the meaning of life, according to the hinayana view of Buddhism. The three marks of existence—impermanence, suffering, and egolessness—are the meaning of life from this point of view. Contemplating these is an important step on the path. An excellent talk on this subject. Questions and answers are very interesting.

Ground: Transcending attitudes and concepts about life allows us to see life as it is. We see that the marks of life are in fact impermanence, egolessness, and suffering.

- We have a choice between our attitudes towards our life and experiencing life as a state of being.
- The Buddhist approach is to look at the qualities of being and the situation of being in the world, transcending attitudes and concepts.
- This makes it possible to have a journey, a genuine process, rather than trying to impose our attitude about life onto our experience. In that case, we create further conflict and self-deception because we are not willing to see life as it is.
- The state of being as it is has three characteristics, which are mudras, or marks, of existence. The idea of a mudra or mark here is not that there is some abstract symbol but that life has its own characteristic. We could say that the mudra of fire is burning or the mudra of red is redness.

Path: The Three Marks of Existence

- Impermanence:
- Because life came into being by conditions, it is the result of karmic cause and effect.
- We have parents, a body, mind, emotions, etc., and we are not independent of any of these.
- There is no eternal reality independent of reference points. Our lives are full of reference points and dichotomy.
- Even boredom is a process, a journey.
- We may name something, like a river, to try to give it permanence, but it continually changes, nevertheless.
- Our mind and body are also fickle and impermanent.
- The continuity of discontinuity provides our working basis.

- Suffering or duhkha in Sanskrit
- We feel dissatisfaction and a sense of being unfulfilled, even in the midst of fulfillment.
- This kind of suffering is a bigger version of pain, which includes both our pain and our pleasure. It's like a constant shadow.
- In the traditional Buddhist view, suffering consists of three categories:
- The pain of change, from pleasure to pain.
- The suffering of suffering, one problem on top of another.
- Continual, all-pervasive suffering.
- It's worthwhile to acknowledge the reality of suffering; then we don't feel cheated when we experience difficulties in life.
- Egolessness or Anatta, non-substantiality
- We recognize egolessness as a further extension of impermanence. We ourselves do not exist.
- We might find this fundamental state of nonexistence to be somewhat horrifying or terrifying, but it simply is what is.
- It is beyond emptiness. Rather, it is total groundlessness.

Fruition: The three marks of existence are a very important subject. This view represents the heart of Buddhist doctrine. It is fundamentally positive to look at things as they are, with direct vision.

- Viewing the three marks of existence in our lives is good contemplative practice.
- Not based on a religious or even practice approach but simply viewing our existence.
- We should ask ourselves which of the three marks of existence we experience and how one relates with the others.

Questions for discussion:

1. What would you say is the meaning of life?
2. What does it mean to you to view the three marks as the meaning of life?
3. How does this view cut through self-deception or spiritual materialism?
4. How would you describe impermanence, suffering, and egolessness in your own experience?

Suggested Readings:

Talk Eleven in the *1973 Hinayana-Mahayana Seminary Transcripts*, pages 136-153.
Note on the readings: These can be offered as preparation for the talk or as further reading for students interested in more material on the subject matter.

4 The Five Skandhas

Date of Talk: June 19, 1974
Body of Talk: 47min. Overall: 84 min.

This talk examines the dualistic process of the five skandhas, seeing this as our psychological make-up. The Vidyadhara suggests that we see this approach as a direct, simple way to understand the process, without metaphysical or philosophical overlays. The questions and answers add a lot to the talk.

Ground: Understanding the basic meaning of skandha and how this relates to the subtleties of our own experience.

- Skandha is a Sanskrit word that means "heap," or "collection."
- We could say that the skandhas are amalgamations of all kinds of things that are brought together in us. We approach the study of ego this way, because there seems to be no solid entity.
- Each grain of sand exists in relationship to other grains of sand. Because "that" is the case, there is "this." We are constantly involved on a subconscious level with that kind of relativity.
- Ego is not imposed by education or cultural habits. We pick this up or inherit it, so to speak, at the moment we are conceived.
- Throughout every moment of life—when we're born, as we grow up, during the maturity of our life, as we get old, when we die—every fragment of that experience is a collection of a lot of things that we call "life."

Path: The Five Skandhas

The First Skandha of Form:

- We are completely bewildered. Everybody experiences that bewilderment, which we might call emptiness or openness.
- We make a home out of bewilderment. We grope all around the space, creating the sense of "me" and "other".
- According to the Buddhist teaching, this first experience of bewilderment is basic to everything we experience. It is called avidya.
- Vidya is insight, or the functioning of cognitive mind. We turn that into avidya, basic duality, in which we may feel a powerful sense of being.
- Celebrating avidya makes us completely stupid and more solid.

The Second Skandha: Feeling

- We become almost cast iron statues with a big head and swollen face. But still we try to look around and examine the world.
- We are looking for feedback, whether pleasurable, painful, or neutral.
- Traditionally this is described as a pig in its piggery trying to distinguish rocks from food.
- We try to hide our fundamental clumsiness and appear smooth and genteel.

The Third Skandha: Impulse

- Having made a rough relationship with the phenomenal world, we expand our exploration and become much more active.
- Traditionally, this is described as a businessman who has made his deal and is about to hand over the money. He already feels he possesses whatever he is buying.
- Impulse is extremely frivolous; you are willing to pay any price to get what you want.

The Fourth Skandha: Concept

- Concept is what we get from the frivolous experience of buying our world.
- This is animal level concept rather than the product of wisdom.
- It's essentially naming and labeling in quite a stupid way. We have a child and we name it the first thing we see: Let's call our child "rock." We are proud of ourselves.
- However, this sort of concept is devoid of vision and unwilling to dance with phenomena.

The Fifth Skandha: Consciousness

- Through the previous stages, we develop very solid, quick, automatic reactions to things.
- This is a further attempt to defend, protect, and conceal the nonexistence of ego.
- Consciousness works through the six sense perceptions, with mind being the sixth.
- This sorting house of consciousness is based on a level of fascination with sense objects/organs.
- You are strategizing gimmicks of all kinds, ways to please the world so that the world will be pleased with you. Consciousness is a defense mechanism.

Fruition: The whole process of the five skandhas takes place continuously in ordinary, everyday live. It's not a myth about the past but something constantly here, in the moment. Understanding the five skandhas is basic preparation to understanding ourselves experientially, not intellectually.

Questions for discussion:

1. Can you talk about your personal experience of the five skandhas?
2. In the questions and answers, the Vidyadhara talks about spiritual materialism taking place at the level of the first skandha and why therefore it is so important to cut through spiritual materialism. Please explain and discuss.
3. What is the relationship between the basic bewilderment described here and enlightenment?
4. Is the point of practice to get rid of the five skandhas?

Suggested Readings:

"The Development of Ego" in *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*.

Note on the readings: For this class, it would be very helpful if the students and the teacher read the chapter before viewing the tape.

5 Meditation and Surrender

Date of Talk: June 21, 1974
Body of Talk: 47 min. Overall: 77 min.

The topic is working with ego in connection with the practice of meditation. Why is meditation practice necessary? How does a genuine approach to practice begin to undo ego? The talk examines the ego-oriented approach to practice and the alternative, which involves surrender of oneself and accepting groundlessness. A discussion of spiritual ecology and becoming a refugee is also included.

Ground: Understanding the ego-oriented approach to practice and the need for a genuine alternative.

- The five skandhas are a continual way we try to maintain ourselves in the style of ego.
- The Buddhist view of ego is entirely different from the Western psychological approach, in which building one's ego may refer to developing responsibility and energy. Here we are speaking of egomania, a state of mind that tries to maintain a solid sense of self at any cost.
- An ego-orientation to surrender may involve a willingness to give up material things in life, as long as we don't have to surrender our ground fundamentally. It involves deceiving ourselves, our teachers, our world.

Path: Becoming a Refugee

- Rather than giving up something material, we need to give up the mentality of ego fundamentally.
- Taking the refuge vow and becoming a refugee, a stateless person, is surrendering this, myself, me, which is very groundless.
- Some teachers might tell you that this surrender is not such a big deal and that everything will be ok. This is deceptive. It's akin to not being able to tell your parents that they are about to die. It is idiot compassion.
- The attainment of enlightenment should be given up as a goal. At the same time, the real attainment of enlightenment is related with giving up ego's territory. "You" as "you" cannot attain enlightenment.

Fruition: Meditation is the only way.

- The only working basis we have is our basic state of existence: our body, mind, and consciousness.
- We have to actually meditate. We can't simply paint pictures, go hiking or skydiving. Those things don't fundamentally undermine ego enough and can become a con game, in which we reinforce ego.
- You have to sit down with yourself on the cushion. It's like having a talk with your child: "John, I would like to have a talk with you in my study." Meditation is having a serious word with ourselves.
- We need to realize that our basic approach to life has been very self-oriented, territory-oriented, and that we can't maintain our territory. We have to give it up.
- In the practice of meditation, we start at the level of the skandha of consciousness and work back through that. From the fifth, we work back through the fourth skandha, the third, and so on, back and back.
- In meditation, we work with ourselves very humbly. This is the practice of refugees who have lost their citizenship, land, dignity—all surrendered. Your body, breath and mind are the only things that you have to work with.
- Shamatha practice helps to simplify our life without ego tripping.
- Simply sitting on the cushion is the method that Lord Buddha recommended. Following that recommendation, millions of people have attained enlightenment, unconsciously of course, through the back door.
- We should have less gadgets and take a much more ecological approach, generating less stuff, which just becomes garbage, chaos.
- The point of practice is to unlearn, be a simpleton. Let the breath be your thought. Don't throw more fuel on the fire of conceptual mind.
- Let ego have an energy crisis.

Questions for discussion:

1. How would you contrast the Western psychological definition of ego with the Buddhist definition here? Do you think this is a valid distinction?
2. In the last talk, the Vidyadhara talks about spiritual materialism taking place at the level of the first skandha and the need to cut through that basic stupidity of ego. Here he talks about starting with the fifth skandha of consciousness and working back. How do these two processes work together?
3. What is the relationship between an ecological approach to spirituality and ecology all together?
4. Do you agree that formal meditation practice is necessary? Why or why not?

Suggested Readings:

The section "Fantasy and Reality" and the chapter "Cosmic Joke" both in *The Myth of Freedom and the Way of Meditation.*

"Me-Ness and the Emotions" in *The Path Is the Goal: A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation.*

Note on the readings: These can be studied as preparation for the talk or offered as further reading for students interested in more material on the subject matter.

6 Karma

Date of Talk: June 22, 1974
Body of Talk: 30 min. Overall: 66 min.

Karma is presented here within the framework of understanding the nature of ego and ego's struggle to maintain itself. The Vidyadhara talks about transcending karma or cutting through karma all together, rather than trying to create good karma or avoid bad karma. Meditation practice is the discipline we use to stop creating further karma. Very powerful question and answer period.

Ground: Understanding the nature of samsaric karma and how it supports a nontheistic view.

- Karma is the law of cause and effect, which is governed by action. Action is governed by our psychological state. So karma is the term used to describe samsaric action.
- The activities of the enlightened ones are also described as karma, which simply means "action," but this quality of karma relates to action that is unconditional, free from interdependency, cause and effect.
- Samsaric karma is the sense of the perpetual creation of entrapment, neurosis, and confusion.
- Karma is clear evidence that our activities are the product of our own actions and state of being. There is no divine planner who punishes or rewards us.

Path: It is possible to challenge the flow of karmic cause and effect.

- We can influence or channel karma rather than being at its mercy.
- We can create good karma or bad karma, channeling karma in different directions, if we know how.
- It is also possible to prevent the karmic flow all together.
- This is the source of hope and freedom. We don't have to pay lip service to anyone else, but we can work on ourselves by ourselves.
- In order to affect karma, we have to understand how it arises. According to Buddhist understanding, the karmic situation evolves at the level of the first skandha. When basic bewilderment develops, along with the sense of separateness, "me" and "other," at that very moment, the volitional action of karma is created. The analogy is creating a pot on a potter's wheel. The wheel is the constant samsaric struggle of maintaining oneself. The clay is the sense of separateness. Together, they create the pot, which is like creating our own coffin.
- The memory of an action in the past creates habitual patterns. We reshape the present on the basis of our memory of pleasure and pain in the past. This becomes habitual action/reaction.

- Understanding karma and how it functions is quite predictable and boring. The exciting news is that we can cut the root of karma. We have that power and capability.

Fruition: Meditation is the method for cutting the root of karmic cause and effect.

- The fifth skandha of consciousness and the first skandha of form meet together on points such as cutting through karma or cutting spiritual materialism.
- In meditation practice we work on the fifth skandha, but we are still touching the root, the verge of egolessness, in the first skandha, at the same time.
- The sitting practice of meditation is the way to cut the volitional action of karma because you are not formulating further schemes or habits, but simply being what you are. You are not giving into habitual patterns.
- Sitting practice boycotts karmic consequences. It uses up your "stuff" and doesn't create new stuff. You run out of material, so you might be bored.
- In this way, meditation cuts the notion of rebirth. Actual physical rebirth is the same process as birth and death in everyday life. Your first breath is dead. Your second breath is born.
- Rebirth is governed by desire, the search for ground or a body, which is connected with the first skandha.
- Both good karma and bad karma are conditional and reinforce samsara. In the end, it is better to cut through all karmic situations, even good ones.
- The attainment of enlightenment is transcending habitual patterns by cutting the root of ego, where karma arises.

Questions for discussion:

- Personally speaking, what does it mean to you that action arises from your psychological state?
- Why is it important, at least eventually, to cut through all karma, including good karma?
- What is the relationship between karma and the skandhas? Between karma and confusion?
- How does memory shape habit, in your experience?

Suggested Readings:

"Auspicious Coincidence" in *Glimpses of Abhidharma*. Also available in the *Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoch*, Volume 2.

"Karma and Its Result" from *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* is a good source on the traditional treatment of karma—for the teacher or a committed student. Teacher could read this ahead of the class.

Note on the readings: For this talk, the reading is offered as follow-up material.

7 The Narrow Path and the Open Path

Date of Talk: June 26, 1974
Body of Talk: 53 min. Overall: 82 min.

The hinayana is regarded as the narrow path; the mahayana as the open path. The Vidyadhara explains the qualities of each and the need for both, as the practitioner proceeds along the path.

The Narrow Path

Ground: We need the discipline and deliberate practice on the narrow path, in order to face ourselves honestly.

- We are used to getting what we want. The nature of the narrow path is that we don't get what we want. It forces us to expose our hidden neurosis or look at our exaggerated neurosis.
- We have very little experience, but a lot of opinions. We want to free ourselves, but we don't think about the container in which we will put our experience. The narrow path forces us to think about and work on creating a worthy container.
- We have to give up the possibility of saving ourselves from pain and suffering. We are willing to go through a slimming process, so that we will fit on the narrow path.

Path: We become anagarikas, pilgrims on the path, homeless ones, which enables us to see life as it is.

- We have to come to a spiritual teacher without waving any credentials or relying on titles or past histories. This may sound like something done only in medieval times, but it applies to our psychological attitude towards stepping on the path in the present, as well.
- Such acceptance of nonexistence is the only way to begin. We begin very humbly, with simplicity.
- Deception is cut through by learning the simple facts of life, the three marks we discussed earlier: impermanence, suffering, and nonexistence of ego.
- At first we don't accept those, but then we begin to be haunted by the hollowness and we begin to seek techniques to practice.
- Following the basic instructions for meditation practice we are given, we begin to feel enormous complications. Thousands of thoughts, aches and pains, chaos of all kinds arises. Our teacher offers no help; just, "go back and sit."
- The teacher suggests we need patience and exertion. This seems like relief; at least there's something to do.

Fruition: We experience one-pointedness and the beauty of simplicity. This experience of the narrow path should cut through any absorption. There should be an experience of clarity, combining awareness and intelligence. When we finally begin to feel at home in the discipline of the narrow path, it's time to discover the open path.

The Open Path

Ground: The narrow path is like relating to the water that collects in a cow's footprint. The mahayana, or the open path, is like relating to the ocean. At some point, there is an organic evolution or need to expand.

Path: Taking the Bodhisattva Vow

- You take a vow to work with all sentient beings and to surrender your desire for enlightenment.
- This is taking a warrior-like attitude.
- The open path depends on the understanding of shunyata, emptiness. From this point of view, in terms of working with sentient beings, there is nobody to work with and no "you" to work with them.
- Nevertheless, the emptiness of the bodhisattva's good deeds is not woolly minded or metaphysical. The activity is quite definite and clear.

Fruition: Taking the bodhisattva vow is encouragement, but then this has to be followed by actual application. When bodhisattva activity becomes habitual pattern, then non-action becomes enormous action.

- Your existence rather than your activity has meaning. This is analogous to the water, wind, fire, or any of the elements. The bodhisattva's life serves a purpose, rather than the bodhisattva having a program or duty.
- The bodhisattva's help can't be refused. It's like trying to shake the existence of space. It's self-existing.
- The open path can't develop without an understanding of shunyata. Shunyata is what brings hinayana and mahayana together as an integral part of each other.

Questions:

1. Why is the narrow path necessary? Why is the open path necessary?
2. Why is shunyata such an important part of the open path?
3. The Vidyadhara talks about the bodhisattva's activity as self-existing. What does that refer to?

Suggested Readings:

"The Hard Way" and "The Open Way" in *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*.

Note on the readings: The readings can be given as preparation or offered as follow-up material.

8 Sutra

Date of Talk: June 28, 1974
Body of Talk: 53 min. Overall: 79 min.

An overview of the sutra teachings of the Buddha. The Vidyadhara emphasizes the vastness of these teachings, more than 108 volumes, of which only a fraction have been translated into English.

Ground: Understanding the nature of sutra teachings.

- In sutras, intellect is brought together with a sense of commitment, faith, and devotion.
- We can understand the sutras as up-to-date communication rather than just historical documents. They speak to our experience now.
- We may have an attitude of pride, or ignorance, towards the teachings; or our style is passionate, grasping; or we have an aggressive attitude towards spirituality in which we want to punish unbelievers. Taking advantage of or encouraging those tendencies are improper ways of propagating dharma. In the sutras Buddha does not indulge our passion, aggression, and ignorance. Sutra is immaculate proclamation of the doctrine, which is intelligent, dispassionate, and nonaggressive.
- Sutra, [Tib: mdo], literally means confluence or juncture. Sutra brings together openness, or an aerial view, with practicality. Or we could say, this is joining prajna (wisdom) and upaya (skillful means).

Path: Although the sutra teachings are vast and we have limited access to them, they are extremely potent. What is available in translation applies to our own experience and has had a big impact in the West.

- The sutras were compiled after the death of the Buddha. They are named after a place, situation, or person. Examples of different types of sutras.
- The basic point of the sutras is communicating to us how to relate to the teaching and the teacher.
- There are 108 volumes of sutras. A small percentage have been translated (as of 1974). We only have access to a fragment of the Buddha's teaching.
- However, from just this microcosm of teachings, we can experience that the teachings of Buddha make sense. We can understand what Buddha taught. That's the working basis.
- Buddhism has been presented in America for about a century. We can judge how much it is taking root, not by the quantity of teachings or converts, but by how much chaos Buddhism has introduced into the Western theistic system of thinking.
- We wouldn't accept the teachings of the three marks from just anyone, but the Buddha is able to teach those and to show us the four noble truths and the need for becoming a refugee.

Fruition: An examination of the sutras that make up the three turnings of the wheel will help us to see how enormous Buddha's realization was. It humbles us and makes us less likely to pervert spiritual teachings for our own gain.

- The First Turning: approximately 452 sutras that present the principles of the four noble truths and monastic discipline.
- The Second Turning: Many volumes of mahayana teachings on bodhisattva action and principles. Based on Prajnaparmita teachings on egolessness and shunyata.
- The Third Turning: In the last ten years of Buddha's life, he presented discourses based on the luminosity of experience. The last turning tells us how great and magnificent the path is, the extent of its openness and the principles of enlightenment. Buddha speaks here of the "lion's roar," the bravery of the bodhisattva. Not based on fighting somebody else but self-existing bravery.

Questions for discussion:

1. The Vidyadhara speaks here about sutra as dignified and deliberate communication. What do you think about this in the age of e-mail and internet chats?
2. The Dharma Ocean series expects to include 108 volumes of the Vidyadhara's own teachings. What do you think about the vastness and depth of his work, vis a vis the discussion here of how overwhelming Buddha's teaching was, yet how accessible it is to us, even in small amounts?
3. What are the three turnings and how would you characterize the sutra teachings for each?
4. What is the literal meaning of sutra? Why is this word appropriate, or is it?

Suggested Readings:

The Sattipathana Sutra in *Garuda IV* or another sutra.

If students are not at all familiar with the life of the Buddha, a reading on this.

Note on the readings: The readings can be given as preparation or offered as follow-up material. It might be good to read a sutra or chant one, like the Heart Sutra, at the beginning of this class. It would be good for the instructor to have examples of different kinds of sutras available.

9 Bodhisattva and Paramita

Date of Talk: June 29, 1974
Body of Talk: 55 min. Overall: 79 min.

Having seen the vastness of the sutra teachings presented by Buddha and the vastness of his vision, the bodhisattva path becomes an important way of finding the workability of the path in one's life. Discovering the open view of the mahayana leads to taking the bodhisattva vow to liberate all beings. This is transplanting the heart of bodhichitta into oneself. The wide vision of the mahayana path is translated into the workability of the six paramitas: generosity, discipline, patience, exertion, meditation, and prajna.

Ground: Taking the bodhisattva vow

- The vastness of the sutra teachings is like swimming in a vast ocean of dharma. The bodhisattva path is capturing all the principles that Buddha has taught and bringing them into a workable living situation, one that inspires us.
- From the narrow discipline of the hinayana, we begin to lift our gaze or extend ourselves, and we discover the openness of the mahayana.
- We are transplanting the heart of wakefulness into ourselves, which is transplanting the inspiration or the heart of all the buddhas of the ten realms. This is the discovery of faith and further trust in the teachings.
- Feeling this openness and faith, we are inspired to take the bodhisattva's vow to liberate all beings and not to attain enlightenment until all others are freed from the misery of samsara.

Path: Practicing the Paramitas

The wish to help others, the inspiration, comes first. Then, we actually embark on the path of working with others through practicing the paramitas. Because we realize that we don't exist, our commitment to working with others is not centralized but a very wide and open commitment that is therefore extremely powerful.

- Becoming a bodhisattva means that we commit ourselves to being both a teacher and a student. It is assuming the fearless attitude of a warrior.

- First Paramita: generosity (or dana)

  Based on threefold purity: you are empty; the action is empty; the other is also empty.

  This is the basis of generosity without expectation.

  Having taken the bodhisattva vow, the demand comes to you. Sometimes you feel overwhelmed, but you can't chicken out. It's not a rehearsal.

- Second Paramita: discipline (or shila)

You get all kinds of messages from the phenomenal world, once you begin to practice. These come to you from situations in life, not from gods or demons.

  Paying attention to these messages is the nature of discipline, or shila.

- Third Paramita: patience (or kshanti)

  Patience here has to do with truth and reality.

  Nonaggression is patience on the bodhisattva path. Not big deal aggression (fights, freakouts) but overcoming the constant aggression of wanting life to be a certain way. Patience is "being" with out expectation.

- Fourth Paramita: exertion or virya

  Celebration and joy make it possible to develop exertion, or hard work.

- Fifth paramita: meditation or dhyana

  Constant awareness and openness that only develop out of the practice of shamatha vipashyana. Sense of stable mind.

- Sixth Paramita: knowledge or prajna

  The best knowledge, as in the English phrase: "To the best of my knowledge."

  Difference between theistic view that wisdom comes first and then knowledge arises from that, versus nontheistic view of Buddhism that knowledge comes first.

  It's like learning to drive a car. First, you have to have knowledge and experience in order to drive. Then you could become a wise driver, who really feels the car and the road, etc.

Fruition: Prajna allows us to know the world and the functions of things as they are. We aren't intimidated by the gadgets of the universe anymore, and we don't renounce them because we are afraid of them. Instead, we are willing to get into the complications of the world and to explore the world. We recognize that we have to deal with the complications ourselves. We can't chicken out or find someone else to solve things for us. We have to find our own strength and pride, in the positive sense. This is how the bodhisattva handles the universe and how he or she works with sentient beings.

Questions for discussion:

1. Why is hinayana the necessary preparation for the bodhisattva path?
2. Why is emptiness the basis for true generosity?
3. What is the difference between the paramita of generosity and ordinary generosity? What about for the other paramitas?
4. Do you agree that the bodhisattva has to solve problems for him or herself? Is there a role for others to help us?
5. At what point in a person's path do you feel it makes sense to take the bodhisattva vow?
6. Why does basic meditation practice continue to be so important on the bodhisattva path?
7. Why can't we chicken out?

Suggested Readings:

The section "The Open Way" in *The Myth of Freedom*.

Meditation in Action

Some of the readings can be given as preparation for the class, or the readings can be given as additional source material for students to pursue after the class.

10 Tradition and Sanity in Zen and Tibetan Buddhism

Date of Talk: July 3, 1974
Body of Talk: 44 min. Overall: 60 min.

This talk explores the limits of culture and tradition in approaching the Buddhist teachings, the need for basic sanity, and how charlatanism can be seen and overcome. While the Vidyadhara focuses on certain problems that he saw arising in the Zen tradition, it's important to see this talk as a broad exploration of how ego orientation and spiritual materialism prevent students from connecting with the teachings and lead to charlatanism among teachers. This is also a discussion of the limitations of a purely cultural or artistic view of Zen. In some sense, the Vidyadhara was anticipating the current era, where "Zen" has become a catch phrase in design, marketing, and the media.

Ground: Sanity, rather than culture, is the basis for Buddhist practice.

- Zen refers to cultural associations related to the Japanese style of Buddhism, as well as to the meditative disciplines of shamatha vipashyana. When the training emphasizes behavior related to the culture, this is sometimes confusing to students. [This can apply to any spiritual tradition, although Zen is emphasized here.]
- There is no real dichotomy between Zen and the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, which presents meditative discipline from the three-yana viewpoint, with less emphasis on practice as a work of art, less ceremony, and more commitment. Both traditions work towards expressing the basic sense of sanity.
- There is no crash course in how to behave in order to be a Buddhist, other than relating to your own neurosis and confusion, which is a vivid introduction.

Path: Recognizing ego orientation and spiritual materialism are the real obstacles to connecting with the teachings .

- There are traditionally three ways to connect with the teachings:

  You don't understand anything at all and are completely bewildered.

  You think you understand, but in fact you twist everything to fit what you want to hear, based on ego.

  You have a partial understanding; you hear some of the teachings but not everything, which is a pretty good way to begin.

- The thickness of one's own spiritual materialism is the basis for all these obstacles to understanding the dharma. The antidote is to develop a kind of smart, cunning and humorous attitude.
- In the Zen tradition, people are trained in the appreciation of things as they are, which is exemplified by the discipline of oryoki, eating properly in the zendo or meditation hall.
- A problem arises when the Zen aesthetic is divorced from the actual sitting practice of meditation.
- There is also a problem of pseudo-Zen, which is seen in poetry which emphasizes nothingness without any real understanding.

Fruition: The antidote to self-deception and charlatanism is to cultivate our intelligence and raise our dignity, taking pride in our human existence.

- Simplicity is the ground of practice. It doesn't matter what the environment is like where you practice, or what kind of a cushion you use. The point is to actually sit and work with your neurosis.
- Zen and Tibetan Buddhism have a common goal, which is to cut through self-deception. Their view of mind and neurosis is identical.
- We should have enough intelligence and dignity to cut through charlatanism in others or in ourselves.

Concluding remarks: This is a penetrating, powerful and disturbing talk, one that can give students insight into the uncompromising quality of the Vidyadhara. It's important not to get side-tracked into seeing this as an attack on Zen, which it's not!

Questions for discussion:

1. The Vidyadhara contrasts Zen and Tibetan Buddhism here in terms of Zen teaching a lot of cultural reference points. What are some of the cultural reference points in Tibetan and Shambhala Buddhism?
2. Do you agree that basic sanity is separate from culture and tradition and more important in our practice than imitating a foreign culture?
3. Does the Vidyadhara's discussion of the Zen aesthetic anticipate how we popularly use the word "Zen" in marketing and the media today? Do you see a problem? How would it be if the media starting referring to things as "so Shambhala?" It might make us more popular. Would this be good?
4. What do you think charlatanism is? Do you think it's a problem now? How do you identify a charlatan?
5. What is the problem, according to the Vidyadhara, with the Zen-like poems he recites?
6. What do you think genuine poetry is?

Suggested Readings:

Readings from *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* or other books on Zen. "Control" in *Zen Mind* is interesting for this class.

"Art in Everyday Life" in *Dharma Art*.

The Teacup and the Skullcup: Chögyam Trungpa on Zen and Tantra. This newly edited book of talks by Chögyam Trungpa would be excellent follow-up reading for students. Teachers may want to read the introduction before the class, which describes Trungpa Rinpoche's relationship with Zen and Zen teachers in America.

The readings can be given as preparation for class or as additional source material to pursue after the class.

11 Meditation and the Fourth Moment

Date of Talk: July 5, 1974
Body of Talk: 41 min. Overall: 71 min.

This extraordinary talk on meditation can be used as a stand-alone talk, a talk for fairly new practitioners, as part of the TBP course, or as a talk for vajrayana students. The power and depth of the material contrasts with the very "hippie" appearance of the audience, and it might be good to point out that listeners have to distinguish between the context and the content, so that they don't miss the profundity. Reading the published version of the talk before the class (see readings) might help people to get this point.

Ground: Understanding meditation and the Buddhist path as an evolutionary process, rather than a series of set stages or an experience of sudden enlightenment.

- The problem with viewing the path as a series of pre-determined stages is that we then tend to expect automatic results.
- There is no sudden enlightenment without preparation. As Chögyam Trungpa says, you can't have a sudden car accident if you aren't in the car. We need to understand the continuity of the spiritual path and the necessity for ongoing discipline and commitment, rather than expecting magical results.
- Vajrayana might be an exception to this logic, but it's not possible to begin with vajrayana without the grounding in hinayana and mahayana.

Path: Shamatha meditation and the slow process of mindfulness are the basis for making a genuine journey on the path.

- Shamatha is making ourselves available to ourselves.
- We can't help others, whether in the conventional world as social workers and missionaries, or as bodhisattvas or yogis, unless we stop making a nuisance of ourselves.
- It's counter-productive to view our shortcomings as an insult or to view the universe as an insult. Thus, the motto of shamatha experience is that we are "making friends with ourselves."
- In shamatha, you acknowledge your sub-conscious gossip, fantasies and dreams, and come back to the technique of mindfulness of the breathing as taught by the Buddha.
- This brings a sense of relief, but there is more to come. We shouldn't get carried away with a sense of accomplishment.

Fruition: The next stage is vipashyana or working with awareness. This gives rise to the experience of egoless insight and nowness, or the fourth moment.

- There is a simple sense of being aware of something, such as your breath, or the rug in front of you. Beyond that, there is a sense of awareness of the fundamental totality of a situation. You are aware of the room; you are constantly in a state of awareness of things.
- Then there is a non-verbal or non-conceptual awareness, which is a sense of being, or a sense of experience without words.
- This is a very powerful sense of energy, an electric quality of being pulled back into the present: here-here-here. This is beginning to see inside your mind on the level of non-verbal awareness. It is described in the Tibetan Buddhist literature as "nowness," or the experience of the fourth moment.
- The Fourth Moment

  > You have past, present, and future, and then you have the fourth moment.
  >
  > It doesn't even belong to "now." It belongs to a non-category which provides another kind of category.
  >
  > It is the state of vipashyana or the state of non-ego, which in Tibetan is called lhakthong dagme tokpe sherap, "the knowledge of egoless insight."
  >
  > The experience is very real and precise, and it transcends reference points of whether you are practicing Buddhism, Hinduism or some other spiritual path. It is practicing life; ironically, you find that life is practicing you.
  >
  > You experience a sense of camping on the razor's edge and feeling haunted, which is your ego haunting you.
  >
  > In order to have experience, you have to have sweet and sour: the contrast of black and white. So a tinge of ego is necessary in order to have this experience of egolessness so powerfully.

Concluding remarks: An unusual, fairly tantric, approach to vipashyana. This talk is both extremely advanced and quite simple and direct. It demonstrates the Vidyadhara's amazing ability to speak to people on many levels at one time.

Questions for discussion:

1. What is the difference between the present and the fourth moment?
2. How does the fourth moment differ, or does it, from popular conceptions of "being in the now"?
3. The Vidyadhara talks about experiencing the fourth moment in the midst of obstacles. He says that they don't dissolve into bliss but rather that the mocking, insulting quality acts as a reminder of the fourth moment, perhaps trying to wake us up. Discuss.
4. Is sudden enlightenment a myth?

Suggested Readings:

"The Fourth Moment" in *The Shambhala Sun*, March 2006, pages 42-49 and 92-95.

"Continuing Your Confusion" pp.14-34 in *The Path Is the Goal: A Basic Handbook of Buddhist Meditation.* An excellent resource on shamatha and vipashyana, as presented by Chögyam Trungpa.

The readings can be given as preparation for class or as additional source material to pursue after the class. The first reading is an edited version of this talk.

12 The Doha Tradition

Date of Talk: July 6, 1974
Body of Talk: 40 min. Overall: 52 min.

This talk deals with poetry or songs of realization (dohas) within the vajrayana tradition, as well as presenting some material on poetry as a Western artistic discipline, mainly in the question and answers. There is a lot of material on the state of mind that gives rise to genuine dohas.

Ground: The frame of mind and state of being of the artist/practitioner are key in the creation of genuine songs of realization.

- Both formal meditation and meditation in action provide guidance in how to conduct or create a poem or work of art.
- One needs a kind of solidity, or whole-hearted commitment to the discipline of egolessness. A sense of stillness, austerity and solidness—which comes from the basic hinayana discipline—is necessary.
- One has to transcend the view of poetry as entertainment or demonstrating how clever we are. Songs of realization are not performance pieces.

Path: Poetry or songs in the Buddhist tradition create an environment to communicate the teachings. They express one's experience or understanding in a raw and direct way. They are not created for an audience.

- Poetry which creates a state of mind is similar to mantra. The meaning is not as important as the sense of commitment and reality that are communicated.
- Milarepa's songs are written in a style that is almost illiterate, but nevertheless they are very powerful and true. Other great teachers, such as Jigme Lingpa, Longchen Rabjam and Rangjung Dorje, also composed dohas in this style.
- There are several main types of dohas:

  Proclaiming your power, insight, and dignity with a sense of bliss or satisfaction.

  Expressing cynicism about how contemporary practitioners of dharma have abused dharma and gone astray, while remaining proud and haughty, unaware of their delusion.

  Songs that convey a sense of aloneness or loneliness. You feel proud to be part of the lineage but your ego boundary has been taken away.

- Dohas are almost a form of verbal doodling. You don't write them for an audience or think about who will publish them. A doha is something you say to yourself, which may inspire others because of its frankness, its truthfulness.
- A carefree, somewhat casual approach, and the experience of egolessness have produced beautiful literature of this nature.
- We should be aware of possibilities of charlatan poetry, created by

people who are inspired by the tradition but limited in their understanding so that they don't realize they are abusing it; or of poetry created by actual con men who want to convince us they are genuine.

Fruition: We can appreciate and benefit from genuine dohas without needing extensive background or scholarship. When you read these songs, you don't have to try to understand them word by word, but you should feel them and be with them.

- Some people, it is said, can comprehend a doha purely by reading the title. This is because they feel it, as though they were holding a diamond that belonged to them. We shouldn't be superstitious about this. However, this provides a sense of how to value the teachings and appreciate them.
- A genuine doha is more like a birth than a piece of work. It's so frank, immediate, and personal.
- Intuition and expansiveness are the ground to relate to such a creation.
- That kind of greater vision is the basis for relating to art altogether, as well as relating to many other aspects of one's life, from business to relationships.

Questions for discussion:

1. In your experience, what is the relationship between your state of mind and the creation of art or poetry—or something else you create, like a great meal?
2. What is mantra? How does it relate to poetry or to dohas?
3. Do you think intuition is more important than education or scholarship in understanding a doha?
4. What do you think the Vidyadhara means by verbal doodling here?
5. If you write for an audience, like Shakespeare did, are you a charlatan? The Vidyadhara says no. Do you agree?
6. Do you think that the doha tradition will change in the West? If so, how and why?

Suggested Readings and Activities:

It might be good to share one of Milarepa's dohas. Perhaps suggest that people read it in the style recommended by the Vidyadhara and then discuss together.

Some of the Vidyadhara's poems could be read, as well as those of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, or others. Some groups may want to include other "non-Buddhist" poets.

You may want to try writing/speaking poems as well.

"Meditation" in *Dharma Art*, pages 19-24, or *Collected Works*, Vol. 7.

For discussion of Western poetics, the "Poets' Colloquium" in *Collected Works*, Vol 7 is very interesting. Also "Tibetan Poetics," in Volume 7. For follow-up, probably, rather than assigned ahead of time.

13 Nirvana and Mysticism

Date of Talk: July 10, 1974
Body of Talk: 39 min. Overall: 55 min.

An exploration of freedom at different stages of the Buddhist path.

Ground: The simpleminded view of nirvana is that, having heard the truth of suffering, we would like to be saved from pain. We see nirvana as freedom from suffering.

- It's almost an ape instinct to want freedom from suffering, as though someone tells us there's a fire, and we instinctively try to escape.
- That impulse may be somewhat spiritual materialistic, wanting to preserve yourself, but without it, we wouldn't begin our journey on the path at all.
- The problem is that we often spend our life going from one promise of relief to another, without ever embarking on a journey to do something about our pain or our imprisonment.

Path: Eventually, we realize that there is more to freedom than trying to get away from something. We have to free ourselves from the notion of freedom itself. We begin to see the dualism that has also given rise to the notion of imprisonment.

- The pursuit of freedom leads to more desire or longing. We become suspicious of our desire to be free.
- We feel that maybe we should give up our hope, but then we begin to see that freedom is not dependent on either hope or hopelessness.
- We are still inspired to search for freedom, but we have a more sophisticated or developed understanding.
- The Buddhist understanding of nirvana has been misinterpreted a great deal, especially historically. The common misunderstanding is that when you attain nirvana, you become a jellyfish with no emotions, like a cast iron statue of Buddha.
- The real experience of freedom is the opposite of that wooden state. It is the state of wakefulness, in which you expand into rather than withdraw from the world.
- Meditation is the key to experiencing real freedom. It brings out hidden neurosis and dissolves and recycles both obvious and hidden neurosis.

Fruition: The vajrayana or tantric approach to freedom involves immense trust in oneself and in the universe. This leads to the experience of vajra-like or indestructible freedom, which is synonymous with enlightenment.

- At the tantric level, the experience of freedom comes out of communicating with one's discovery of both hope and hopelessness through the practice of meditation.
- We begin to feel trust in ourselves and the universe, which allows us to expand. We feel we can afford to dance in the meadow and jump as high as we can, with a sense of joy, openness, and complete freedom. There is a quality of exuberance and eternal youthfulness.
- From the tantric point of view, this is still a primitive approach, one based on the mahayana mentality of heroism, because we feel it is our duty to cheer up the world. We are imposing freedom on the world.
- We get into real mysticism when we realize that we don't have to be the activator of freedom, nor do we have to preserve the sense of freedom. We find that the meadow is dancing on us; the freedom is coming to us.
- This is the notion of vajra-like or indestructible freedom, which is symbolized by the vajra scepter.
- You might wonder, "Where is the freedom coming from?" or, " Who's doing this?" Nobody's doing it. Because you have developed enough understanding of the openness of existence, or the state of totality, therefore, the energies that exist in the universe are dancing with you.
- Mysticism, from this point of view is seeing or having insight into reality. You see that nobody is being freed or imprisoned. Since there is no problem, the universe is at your disposal.
- When we talk about the world coming at us, we might think that implies a threat. But here, it is connected with vajra nature, becoming the king of the universe. Obviously, this is very advanced. So this discussion is just a teaser.

Questions for discussion:

1. The Vidyadhara makes a distinction between instinct (connected with nirvana) and attitude (connected with mysticism). What is the difference?
2. How do you relate to the issue of freedom, in terms of your practice and your life?
3. What are the limitations of heroism, as described here? How does this relate to helping others, in your own experience?
4. Can you relate to the idea of the universe dancing on you?
5. How can one have vajra nature, if ego doesn't exist?

Suggested Readings:

"Vajra Nature" and "Non-Theistic Energy" in *Journey without Goal: The Tantric Wisdom of the Buddha.*

The readings can be given as preparation for class or suggested as additional source material to pursue after the class. For discussion of Western poetics, the "Poets' Colloquium" in *Collected Works*, Vol 7 is very interesting. Also "Tibetan Poetics," in Volume 7. For follow-up, probably, rather than assigned ahead of time.

14 Magic

Date of Talk: July 14, 1974
Body of Talk: 27 min. Overall: 49 min.

The last talk of the seminar focuses on magic (or siddhi) and intellect. There are also general closing remarks and an expression of appreciation for Naropa Institute and the students.

Ground: Combating spiritual materialism allows us to experience the reality of the teachings. We can only experience magic when we transcend spiritual materialism.

- In order to come to the study and practice of Buddhism, there has to be some spiritual materialism that motivates us.
- However, that can be transmuted and transformed through the practice of meditation and the study of the path.
- Egolessness and the reality of pain and suffering undermine a militant or doctrinal approach to defeating spiritual materialism. We are interested in experience rather than doctrine.
- Magic belongs to non-spiritual-materialistic territory.
- The world is filled with magical energy but we are filled with non-magical properties because we do not understand whøwhat we are.
- We think in a narrow way about karmic debts, and we think we're lined up to receive the teachings, and if we're at the back of the line, we might miss out.
- If we approach our experience non-materialistically, we find an abundance of energy constantly at our disposal.

Path: Once we discover the potential for magic, we have to figure out what to do with it. We have to transcend naïve views of magic and realize that the real magic has to do with vajra pride, a sense of being, or self-existence.

- We usually think of magic on a primitive level. Everyone has heard stories about this crude sense of magic, such as stories about a spiritual master who can fly or drink water upside down.
- Genuine magic is real, extremely real, rather than supernormal or miraculous.
- Being-ness is magical. The students sitting on the floor listening to a talk about magic and the teacher giving that talk: that is real magic.
- This seminar has been cutting through karmic debts. When we—student and teacher working together—realize that we are what we are, that is cutting through karmic debts.

- We need pride and conviction that this is taking place. Vajra, or indestructible, immovable pride destroys the foundation of ego.
- The meeting of teacher and student is not casual or coincidental but voluntary, based on commitment and our desire to cut through uncertainty and confusion.
- When you say, "It's so good to be here," and you feel a sense of something profoundly good and real taking place in your life, that is magic.

Fruition: Bringing together magic and intellect, we develop depth and sharpness, practice and study, simultaneously.

- At Naropa Institute, the goal is to work on untapped states of consciousness and use all our potential.
- Analyzing our experience and investigating both what we know and what we don't know is very important. Using our intellect is getting into the technological, metaphysical, and philosophical aspects of the teachings.
- Sitting practice and experiencing magic is like eating food; Developing intellectual sharpness is like doing exercises. You need both. You can't eat constantly.
- In our tradition, intellect and intuition are related so that we connect intellect to real, personal experience. When the two work together, we develop sharpness and depth at the same time.

Questions for discussion:

1. What is the difference between the conventional sense of magic and the idea of magic as described here?
2. In the questions and answers, the Vidyadhara reveals that, by magic, he is talking about siddhi. Traditionally, there are ordinary siddhis, or powers, and extraordinary siddhi, which is enlightenment. Discuss in relationship to the presentation of magic here.
3. Having gone through this whole course, is your view of spiritual materialism different than at the beginning? What do you think it is now?
4. Discuss vajra pride. How is it different than ego?
5. Discuss the role of both practice and study on the Buddhist path and in your own experience.
6. What are the most valuable things you learned in this course?

Suggested Readings:

"Intellect and Intuition" in *The Heart of the Buddha*. Also available in *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa*, Volume Three.

The reading can be given as preparation for class or suggested as additional source material to pursue after the class.