

THE BATTLE OF EGO

Overview for teachers

An introduction to mind, life from the buddhist perspective, culminating with the view of transition into mahayana view. The specific topics include the three lords of materialism, six realms as styles of ego, karma, aloneness, the teacher, maitri, mindfulness/awareness practice, and the discovery of buddhanature.

Descriptive blurb for publicity/brochures for students

What is the nature of our minds and our relationship to the world? This course is an investigation of how we relate to the world and to ourselves. Perhaps there is a genuine, sane way to live. It is an exploration of a Buddhist approach to life.

CLASS 1

Revised: March 1996

Student reading

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 1-15

Instructor reading

- the above
- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 3-22

Synopsis of talk

1. Ground
 - a. General welcome and announcement of nature of the course.
 - b. Introduction of buddhist tradition and yourself
 - c. Announcement of how many classes, books, meditation receding class, and so on
2.
 - a. Our motivation for study
 - b. Attempts to improve ourselves
3.
 - a. Materialism: definition and motivation
 - b. Two aspects of materialism
 - our experience of ourselves
 - our experience of our world
 - the two veils
4. The three lords of materialism: three basic kinds of materialism
 - a. The lord of form: definition and examples
 - failure of materialism to achieve its goal of ultimate security.
 - b. The lord of speech: definition and examples
 - c. The lord of mind: definition and examples
5. Summary
 - a. Definition of materialism
 - b. Path begins when we tire of looking for a solution.
 - c. Why meditation is the method for working with materialism.
 - d. Why materialism does not work.

TALK ONE OUTLINE

Introduction to course as a whole

1. Welcome
2. Tonight we begin a series of five weekly lectures exploring the buddhist approach to life.
3. Our subject matter will be both extraordinarily general, and at the same time very particular: what is the nature of our minds and our relationship to the world. The course is an investigation of how we relate to the world and to ourselves. Perhaps there is a genuine, sane way to live.
4. Our approach to this problem will be buddhist.
 - a. Buddhism is a 2,500-year-old tradition.
 - b. The speaker is a practitioner of this tradition.
 - c. Whether people find the buddhist teaching useful or not, it is up to them. People should be critically intelligent and open, should accept nothing on blind faith but be open to new ways of understanding themselves and the world.
 - d. The teachings themselves. Buddhism does not claim to present truth with a capital T. It offers a useful way to understand things. If it is useful to you, use it; if not, do not.

Introduction to this talk

1. Why are we here, taking this class at all? What do we want to get out of the course? Some mention that perhaps what we think we are going to get out of it might not happen.
 - a. We would like to improve something: either ourselves or our world
 - b. Everyone's idea of "improvement" is different. One person wants to be happier, another richer, another more intelligent. Our projects and journeys are very personal.
2. The approach. We begin not by trying to solve the problem, but by examining it. We begin by examining our desire to "improve" ourselves or others.

Materialism

1. Improvement as materialism
 - a. Materialism is the feeling that we, our lives, and our world, need improvement. Materialism is the constant attempt to make ourselves more secure, comfortable, happy, and so on. It is, in itself, painful. It is suffering.
 - b. There is nothing wrong with making things better *per se*. Materialism is when our motivation is fear, insecurity, discomfort, paranoia, a desire to secure our ground, make ourselves invulnerable to pain, death, and so on.

2. Materialism has two aspects.
 - a. Our experience of ourselves, which is some subtle anxiety without peace. We are torn between hope and fear. We hope to see certain aspects of our lives improve. We fear that they might degenerate and become more unpleasant. This attitude is painful for us and aggressive toward others because we cannot simply let things be as they are.
 - b. Our experience of the world, which is a distorted version of the world. We see our lives through the veils of "bad" and "good," "hope" and "fear." The fundamental distortion is that we see everything—our thoughts, emotions, body, friends, environment, and so on—in terms of what they did, are doing, or will do for me. We do not simply see things as they are in their own right.
 - c. The two main themes of our experience are conflicting emotions and seeing the world through the filters of our self-interest.

The three lords of materialism

1. There are three basic modes of materialism: physical, conceptual, and spiritual.
 - a. The Lord of Form is the manipulation of the material world in order to achieve material comfort, pleasure, security.
 - b. The Lord of Speech is the manipulation of conceptual worlds, ideologies, to the same end.
 - c. The Lord of Mind manipulates spirituality to create "god" or states of mental absorption which attempt to establish security and solidity.
2. The Lord of Form
 - a. *Definition:* the manipulation of the material world in order to achieve comfort, security, well-being, to calm our basic anxiety.
 - b. *Examples:*
 - the pursuit of material wealth
 - the pursuit of an aesthetic ideal: decorating oneself, one's house, etc.
 - asceticism of various sorts: food trips, monastic simplicity, return to nature ethic, distaste for cities, etc.
 - c. There is nothing wrong with wealth, beauty, asceticism, *per se*. They are all fine. However, the pursuit of those things does not achieve the desired result of security or ultimate comfort.
3. The Lord of Speech
 - a. *Definition:* the manipulation of conceptual systems in order to achieve security.
 - b. We either want to be on the side of "right" or we want to be one of those who "understands." So the Lord of Speech is either an ideology of some sort or philosophy which explains the world in an orderly way, which makes us able to think we have a handle on everything that happens.
 - c. *Examples:*

- Career value systems: military, professorial, artistic, business, etc. The thought that the values of my profession are "truer," therefore I am better than others.
 - Religions: when their adherents feel that they are on the side of "right" and that all others are to varying degrees damned.
 - Political ideologies: when their adherents claim them to be the panacea for the ills of the world, they become the instruments of oppression.
 - Philosophies: in attempting to explain or describe how the world works, give the illusion that, if one could only describe the world one would know how to live in it.
- d. We seek security in our beliefs. We are "good" because we know and attempt to conform to what "should" be.
- e. Corollary: those who do not believe and act as we do are either "evil" or ignorant. They should be either converted or destroyed, or "enlightened." This is the aggression of fanaticism.

4. The Lord of Mind

- a. The most subtle of the three. Usually come to the fore when we have lost faith in the first two methods of securing comfort.
- b. *Definition:* The manipulation of our own minds in order to secure peace, wisdom, happiness, bliss, sanity.
- c. *Examples:*
- Certain forms of meditation. When meditation is used to achieve a particular mental state (usually pleasurable), it is the Lord of Mind. This is not really meditation, but a form of concentration, mental gymnastics, a sort of self-hypnosis. True meditation is based upon a realistic approach to oneself and the world.
 - All kinds of psychotherapies, when they are used to produce a predetermined result.
 - Yogic techniques used in the same way.
- d. There is nothing wrong with these techniques per se., If they are used as a way of relating to ourselves and the world as they are, they are realistic. These techniques are perverted when they become the tools of our subjective self-interest.
- e. Vignettes
- the space-out meditator
 - the person obsessed with analysing their own problems psychologically
 - the person who feels compelled to tell you how he feels about you, the situation, the world, for the sake of honesty.

Summary

1. We have described ways in which we seek to avoid our situation and the attempt to manipulate the world.
2. We step foot on the buddhist path when we begin to tire of looking for another solution, answer, or improvement—when we become suspicious of attempting to seek satisfaction altogether.
3. Then we begin to examine the pattern of our dissatisfaction, our neurosis. We might get the feeling that this is just another method to improve ourselves. However, the method is sitting practice.

Quotation from *Meditation in Action*: "The whole idea of meditation is to develop an entirely different way of dealing with things, where you have no purpose at all. In fact, meditation is dealing with the question of whether or not there is such a thing as purpose. One is not on the way somewhere. Or rather, one is on the way and is also at the destination, at the same time."

4. the main problem with materialism is that, although it may give temporary relief or comfort, because it does not deal with the fundamental problem, it needs constant patching up and further materialism.
5. The fundamental problem in this case is the separation between oneself (ego) and background (space). One is not willing to acknowledge the constant presence of space as anything but a threat.

CLASS 2

FIELD OF BATTLE

Student reading

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 19-40

Instructor reading

- the above
- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 138-148
- *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, pp. 14-21, 55-69
- *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Trungpa and Freemantle, pp. 5-10

Synopsis of talk

1. Introduction
 - a. Six realms are styles of ego.
 - b. Three poisons: passion, aggression, ignorance
 - c. Purposes of our realm activity
2. The three lower realms:
 - a. hell realm
 - b. hungry ghost realm
 - c. animal realm
3. The three higher realms:
 - a. human realm
 - b. jealous-god realm
 - c. god realm
4. Summary of realm activity

TALK TWO

OUTLINE

General

1. The six realms are different styles of ego. They are all samsaric.
2. The realms are motivated by the three poisons. All three of the poisons are motivated by ego's desire to maintain its existence, avoid death, seek comfort, avoid irritation, seek security, avoid insecurity, and so on. The three poisons:
 - a. *Passion*. In order to avoid experiencing our own loneliness or feelings of non-existence, we need to draw people or things toward us. We wish to make them part of us, consume them, or in some way make them augment our existence.
 - b. *Aggression*. When something seems to threaten us, we wish to push it away, to destroy it completely, or close ourselves off from it.
 - c. *Ignorance, or stupor*. This is usually called "ignorance," but not to be confused with *avidya*, the primal ignorance. "Stupor" in Sanskrit is *moha*. When something does not seem to be likely to augment or threaten our existence, we ignore it or blank it out of our awareness.
3. The two purposes of our realm activity:
 - a. To make ourselves more comfortable, secure, happy, and so on; to solidify our existence and to give ourselves an occupation.
 - b. The more subtle purpose of our attempts at self/world improvement is to give ourselves something to do. Without a "project" (past- and future-oriented), there is no ego. Ego needs to have a problem, to occupy itself. We occupy ourselves with the project of attempting to solidify our own existence and avoid space, gap, non-existence.

The Six Realms

1. Introduction to the three lower realms
 - a. The hell, hungry ghost, and animal realms are called the three lower realms.
 - b. Birth in these realms is undesirable because suffering is most intense there.
 - c. Suffering is so intense and omnipresent, that it is very difficult for beings in these realms to hear the dharma. There are too few gaps, too little inquisitiveness and openness in their preoccupation with aggression, poverty, and ignoring.

2. The hell realm

- a. Type of distortion: You are completely full of aggression and see the world as being full of enemies.
- b. You wish to destroy your enemies. They threaten your well-being and/or survival.
- c. Characteristic emotion: hatred. This is an atmosphere of self-generated claustrophobia. It is like being trapped in a painfully hot room. So you struggle to get out, to break down the walls. The harder you struggle, the hotter you feel; the hotter you feel, the harder you struggle. It is a vista of infinitely expanding panic. This is hell. In the hell realm, we might drop our aggression briefly, but we are still being fed the results of our aggression from the environment, which sparks further aggression.

3. The hungry ghost, or *preta*, realm

- a. The bridge: In hell you might eventually become exhausted with your struggle, collapse from exhaustion. When you stop fighting, your body heat diminishes, the atmosphere cools a bit, there is a hint of relief.
- b. A kind of relief in the midst of extreme pain makes you feel hungry for *more* relief. This is the realm of the hungry ghost.
- c. Type of distortion: The world has a lot of wealth but you are poor.
- d. Characteristic emotion: hunger for relief from your pain.
- e. *Image*: In the Wheel of Life, the *preta* is depicted as having a huge belly and a tiny mouth, the size of a pin hole. He can never take in enough food to fill his belly.
- f. No matter how much a *preta* eats, he is never satisfied, even for a moment, because hunger is his *occupation*. He does not really want to be filled, he just wants to be hungry and eat because this has become his occupation. There is a compulsion which builds up speed and becomes habitual.
- g. *Example*: When, feeling very anxious about something, you stand in front of the refrigerator and eat to distract yourself from your anxiety.

4. The animal realm

- a. The link: Once you begin to get a little relief, you do not want to fall back into pain. So you cling to your relief, plunge into it, without looking right or left. You focus only on the one thing, or a few things, that give you pleasure. This narrowness of view is the animal realm.

- b. Type of distortion: You are concerned only with your survival, your hunger, obtaining some sort of crude satisfaction over and over again.
- c. Characteristic emotion: stupidity. You have blinders on and can look only straight in front of you. The animal mentality is characterised by an extremely limited range of response to the enormous subtlety and complexity of the world. It is a semi-deliberate stupidity. For instance, a dog view an enormous variety of things but responds to them in a very limited way. He barks at them, licks them, bites them, pisses on them, asks to be patted by them, and that is about all.
- d. It is a kind of deliberate stupidity, born out of fear. One wants to ignore as much as possible any dark corners of insecurity. There are dark corners everywhere, precisely because one will not look into them. It is a very paranoid kind of ignoring.
- e. *Example:* Trying to stay asleep in the morning when everyone around you is getting up.
- f. Animal realm is humourless because there is no sense of irony, of seeing contrast. It is necessary just to plow ahead.

5. The human realm

- a. The link: At some point, one might begin to realise that some things taste better than others. Some discrimination and investigation of the world begins to take place. The human mentality is one of maximising pleasure and minimising pain.
- b. Type of distortion: The world is seen as a series of choices and continual attempts to make the right, most pleasurable decisions.
- c. Characteristic emotion: Passion, incompleteness. Wanting to be in love, but being so nit-picky that there is a feeling of dissatisfaction. One feels there is definitely something out there which could give ultimate pleasure, which leads to a general feeling of restlessness.
- d. The human realm is concerned with the biggest and the best. For example, Guinness Book of World Records, biggest hamburger, best pizza, etc.
- e. Or it might become more particular: the gourmet, the wine connoisseur, the art collector, whose pleasure depend on a very sensitive ability to make fine judgements.
- f. This realm is the most likely to wake up and to practice the dharma because pain and obsession are less intense, but there is still enough pain to motivate one to practise. It is potentially the most intelligent of the realms, because the constant

process of trying to choose the most pleasurable object has the capacity for real discrimination and insight.

6. Jealous god, or asura, realm

- a. The link: At some point, one might begin to tire of simply *maximising* pleasure and minimising pain. One might begin to conceive of the possibility of having *nothing but* pleasure, security, comfort in one's life. One might begin to conceive of the possibility of reaching "heaven" as realistic in one's life. This is the jealous god realm.
- b. Type of distortion: The asura sees the possibility of heaven as real. Other people have achieved it and are dwelling there now. If your game is money, it might be the president of your corporation who has achieved heaven. If your game is art, there are great artists who have reached the pinnacle of fame and glory. If your idea of heaven is power, you might aspire to be president of the United States, and so on.
- c. Characteristic emotion: Jealousy and its companion, ambition. You are going to have to map out your strategy for getting to heaven. It will be a battle since there are only a limited number of places at the top. You will have to defeat one of the "gods" in the race for heaven.
- d. The asura realm is very speedy and paranoid. Here we must keep constant track of who has what and where that puts us. We must keep score constantly and be careful not to let anything slip by without being noticed.
- e. For asuras, the remainder of the population are fools. They are totally uninteresting to you, unless they are willing to admire and support you. Basically you are a loner. The asura is very aggressively arrogant—and has the talent to back it up.
- d. The asura is a professional killer, a battler. He wields the sharp sword of his carefully developed talents within the arena he has chosen, whether politics or business. He is simultaneously impressive and dangerous when challenged.
- e. He is spurred on by the sweet dream of success, of "heaven."
- f. Asura mentality also develops when the absorption of the god realm gets shaky. There is suddenly tremendous aggression and trying to regain lost "peace."

7. The god realm

- a. The link: If at some point in your battle to achieve heaven, you decide that you have finally reached heaven, then you are in heaven.

- b. The feeling that you have really made it, that everything is terrifically okay, is heaven.
- c. Type of distortion: You are in heaven and everything you see is testimony to that fact. It is said that everything the gods hear is music, everything they smell is perfume, and so on. The gods know that they are the privileged few, the elite, the superior ones. As for the rest of humanity, they are the poor wretches, the inferior masses, somewhat to be pitied. The gods simply cannot relate with or understand the suffering of the beings in the lower realms. It is something of the Marie Antoinette mentality: "Let them eat cake." The gods are absorbed in the own solipsistic bliss. If you cannot relate with their pleasure, they cannot even understand you.
- d. Characteristic emotion: Pride. Here pride is not overtly arrogant or aggressive. The key-note of the pride of the gods is self-absorption. It is extreme narcissism. This makes them very stupid. In the mahayana sutras, Indra, the king of gods, is depicted as beautiful, powerful, sweet and nice—but very dumb.

Summary of the realms

1. The realms spring from ego's fear of not having control and of the desire to achieve eternal life.
2. The fear of not having control is a fear of change, since change is the death of the way things are.
3. So ego is constantly attempting to freeze the world, to keep the world and ego from changing or dying. Change is discomforting. It is like plastic flowers; they never change. The beauty of a real flower lies in its fragility. It is so transient, it is dying as you look at it. Ego would like to turn the world and itself into a plastic garden, where everything is ideal forever and ever, and never changes. This is precisely why people use plastic flowers and why they are aesthetically repugnant.
4. Once ego has been created, there is the pain of trying to maintain control through the three poisons. If attempts of "improvement" are motivated by desire to alienate pain by achieving an "ideal," this is materialism. It is bound to fail, because it is not dealing with the fundamental problem.
5. Main point is that ego does not work. It does not manage to create a solid world of pleasure and to eliminate pain, but rather creates further pain. There is constant insecurity and the process needs to be continually patched up. The battle to create solidity and security is ego itself, rather than ego as something actually existing being a participant in the battle.

CLASS 3

MAKING PEACE

Student reading

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 43-59

Instructor reading

- the above
- Dathün Letter (in *Vajradhatu Practice Manual*, Section 9)
- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 77-89
- *Meditation in Action*, pp. 35-74

Overview of talk

1. Introduction and recapitulation
 - a. Realms are created by our own minds
 - we believe in them
 - this leads to a heavy-handed approach to life
 - b. Ego and realms involved us in
 - wanting things to be different
 - not being able to know what is actually going on; constant struggle prevents clarity
2. How to relate to the battle of the ego
 - a. awareness of it
 - B. cynicism about attempts to win the battle
 - c. giving up the battle goes against the grain
 - d. necessity of effort
 - e. feeling of inspiration
3. Breaking the vicious circle
 - a. sitting practice
 - b. mindfulness
 - c. meditation: definition and function
 - d. meditation and discipline
 - e. post-meditation: carry-over into daily experience
4. Summary
 - a. precision
 - b. peace
 - c. absence of goal
 - d. study is useless without practice

TALK THREE

OUTLINE

Introduction and Recapitulation

1. The realms are created by us.
 - a. We have lost sight of the fact that the distortions of our world are created by our own minds.
 - b. We believe in varying degrees that we need to win our realm games. For example, a hell being feels intensely that he must destroy the threats around him.
 - c. Ego requires that we be involved in and take seriously the threats to its existence. There is a constant feeling of "big deal" about our existence, that it needs a lot of effort to maintain ourselves. This creates a heavy-handed approach to our lines.
2. Ego and the realms involve us in:
 - a. Wanting the world and ourselves to be different than they already are. Wanting to get rid of pain, irritation, aggression, and paranoia.
 - b. Not seeing the world and ourselves as they are in their own right, but through the filter of our evaluation. This evaluation is always "me-oriented," egocentric: what is good for me or bad for me.
 - c. Being stuck in these storylines and trapped by our imagined need to solve the problem is called "being bound by the chain of karma." Karma literally means "action." Here it specifically means samsaric action.

How to relate to the battle of the ego

1. We could begin by developing some awareness of how deep and complex our involvement is in realm activity.
2. We become somewhat cynical about achieving some instant relief, which would be further materialism.
3. We must be willing to expend some effort. Realising that whatever we do in terms of letting go of the vicious wheel is goes against the grain of our habitual patterns. It will not feel "natural," since what seems natural at this point are the three poisons.
4. Therefore, we will inevitably meet with irritation and resistance.
5. However, we might discover through our own experience that our confusion is workable: we can unravel it by giving it the space to unravel itself. *Example:* Like a snake uncoiling itself in the midst of space.
6. Having discovered that we can begin to work with ourselves, we feel inspiration and confidence.

Dropping our occupation with the realms: breaking the karmic chain

1. We do this through sitting meditation
 - a. Sitting practice is in itself a statement of simplicity and non-aggression. It is called "shamatha," which means "peaceful abiding."
 - b. When you sit on your cushion, you are aware that you are there, that you exist simply. This does not need to be complicated or sustained.
 - c. Working with posture
 - the back is straight and hands rest on the knees
 - the eyes are open and relaxed
 - d. Working with the breath
 - We work with the breath simply because it is a natural, continually changing process that everyone can experience simply.
 - As you exhale, follow the breath outward, identifying with it rather than watching it. The in-breath happens naturally. Just let it happen without paying particular attention to it.
 - The breath is not visualised or exaggerated, or altered in any way.
 - d. Working with thoughts
 - Whatever thoughts or emotions arise, label them as thinking and return to the out-breath.
 - Praising or condemning oneself for being a good or bad meditator is completely missing the point. There should be a relaxed returning to the breath without any sense of "big deal."
 - One should not try to suppress or reject thoughts. Let them arise and pass away naturally.
 - There should be no deliberate attempt to suppress thought or to be peaceful.
 - e. In shamatha, the effort involved is a light touch: neither excessively tight nor loose.
2. Mindfulness
 - a. Mindfulness develops from sitting practice.
 - b. It is simply a sense of being in contact with the present moment without adding commentary.
 - c. The attitude which makes it possible is not being judgmental or ambitious.
 - d. It is not a solemn ritual. It does not involve any theory or analysis.
3. Meditation in general
 - a. Meditation is not a therapy or cover-up for embarrassing problems.
 - b. It is not manipulating one's mind or one's breath to avoid depression or to get high.
 - c. It does not confront the ego in direct battle, which would only feed it.
 - d. It boycotts the speed and ambition of ego. Ego always wants to do something which has a promise or result for itself. Meditation creates space or gap from that continual struggle.

4. Meditation requires discipline, which is a sense of delight.
 - a. Discipline is not a heavy-handed attempt to force yourself to meditate. There is a joy in the sanity of sitting practice.
 - b. It is the light touch of returning to the breath again and again during sitting practice.
 - c. It involves creating space in your day for practice, as something as normal and regular as eating, sleeping, and brushing your teeth.
 - d. A feeling of delight comes from recognising the great good fortune in having heard the teachings and being able to practice them.
 - e. Consistent daily practice has an undermining effect on patterns of ego. It is a constant reminder.
 - f. Like any other kind of training, it is more effective when it is done regularly, rather than sporadically.
 - g. Meditation practice is nothing in itself. It is the preparation for working with ourselves in daily life.

5. Carry-over into daily life
 - a. Sitting practice is a statement of being willing to cut through our neurotic speed.
 - b. The same principles can be applied to our daily activities: for example, mindfulness, simplicity, and not solidifying experiences.
 - c. However, it is impossible to have the "post-meditation" experience without the "meditation" experience.
 - d. Because there is very little going on physically when we sit, it is a simple thing to work with. Meditation in action—for example, while cooking—is much more complex.

Summary

1. Shamatha means "peace," in the sense of no longer occupying oneself with the constant struggle of ego.
2. It involves precision: seeing the thoughts and breath as they are.
3. It does not have enlightenment as its goal. It is about leading a good, wholehearted life.
4. Without meditation, studying the teachings is useless, since they could become another ornament of ego.

CLASS 4

EXTENDING PEACE

Student reading

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 63-99

Instructor reading

- the above
- Dathün Letter (in *Vajradhatu Practice Manual*, Section 9)
- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 92-119
- *The Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, pp. 18-26

Synopsis of talk

1. Introduction and review
 - a. Our situation
 - definition of battle of ego
 - our true nature is egoless, so ego fails to achieve desired result
 - ego is not something you can just drop; it is deeply ingrained
 - b. Sitting meditation
 - why we sit
 - what sitting practice indicates
 - what happens when we sit a lot
2. Loneliness
 - a. trying to avoid loneliness
 - b. why we avoid it
 - c. what we mean by loneliness
 - d. maitri toward oneself
 - e. compassion toward others
3. Role of teacher
 - a. function of teacher as guide
 - b. teacher as someone outside your fantasies
4. Summary
 - a. function and sanity of loneliness
 - b. development of maitri

TALK FOUR

OUTLINE

Introduction and review

1. Our basic situation
 - a. The battle of ego is the struggle to get pleasure and avoid pain.
 - b. It needs constant maintenance because our true nature is egoless.
 - c. It has become a deeply ingrained habitual pattern, which creates the six realms and karma. Our suffering has become a full-time occupation.
2. We begin to practise sitting meditation.
 - a. Because we see the futility of the battle of ego.
 - b. Sitting practice is a statement of our own basic sanity and desire to work with ourselves in a sane way.
 - c. Thoughts and emotions begin to develop transparency, our world becomes less solid.
 - d. We develop mindfulness and precision.

The path is loneliness.

1. We are not usually "alone" in our lives.
 - a. We will do anything in order not to experience our aloneness. We create incredible speed and attempts to create pleasure and avoid or indulge depression.
 - b. We try to make demands or blame others for our problems.
2. Why we want to avoid being alone.
 - a. We depend on others to distract us from our pain and to support the feeling of our solid existence.
 - b. We need others, so that we do not need to accept responsibility for ourselves. The subtle basis of theism is shifting responsibility to another: god, science, society, our parents, our teachers, etc.
 - c. Meditation cannot protect us from the full experience of our pain or help us to solidify our existence. Instead, it can give us a realistic approach to life—especially toward ourselves.
3. Loneliness is not cutting oneself off from others.
 - a. not a stoic or "lone wolf" attitude
 - b. learning to become comfortable with ourselves and acknowledging our neurosis without being heavy-handed
 - c. an expression of our dignity
 - d. an expression of generosity, since we do not pollute the world with our trips
4. Maitri toward oneself
 - a. Loneliness is the basis for warmth and real communication.

- b. We begin by practising sitting meditation.
 - c. Through sitting, we have begun to see the futility of our constant round of realm activity.
 - d. We have had some glimpse of our sanity and the possibility of becoming an awake human being.
 - e. Although we see our neurotic tendencies, we do not develop self-hatred.
 - f. Through labelling thoughts and emotions as thinking, we do not take ourselves so seriously and we develop a sense of humour.
 - g. Because we are no longer trying to improve ourselves so compulsively, we begin to feel some delight in being who we are.
 - h. We do not become love-and-lighty, but our lives seem more workable. Our confusion and insecurity are seen as the ground of the path, rather than as an obstacle.
 - i. This is the meaning of maitri, or friendship towards ourselves.
5. Compassion toward others
- a. Through sitting practice, we begin to realise we are not a solid unchanging thing. We can see the impermanence of everything that arises and the suffering that results from trying to maintain territory and to deny impermanence.
 - b. Because we are not longer so concerned with maintaining our territory, we can begin to open up to others.
 - c. This can only develop through acceptance of ourselves and extending that to others.
 - d. Trying to be compassionate toward others without making friends with ourselves is impossible. *Example:* It is like trying to loan money when you are broke.
 - e. This can also be destructive. You are not seeing the world as it is, but deceiving yourself into thinking you want to help others when you only want to make yourself feel better. *Example:* Someone feels very guilty about hurting others in the past and becomes an aggressive altruist.
6. Role of the teacher
- a. The teacher is a guide, not a saviour.
 - b. The teacher is not a model to imitate.
 - c. He is someone who has actually crossed the desert himself, and so could tell you how to do it.
 - d. It might be possible to do it by yourself, but you could easily get lost, causing harm to yourself and others.
 - e. Because he is outside your fantasies, he can see through your trips.
 - f. He is perhaps the first person that you could open to without hiding your neurosis. *Image:* He is like a doctor. If you are open to him, he can help you. If not, there is nothing he can do.

Summary

1. Loneliness
 - a. accepting yourself and not polluting the world
 - b. creating a spacious atmosphere, instead of trying to get something out of every situation.
2. Maitri
 - a. accepting aloneness and the way we are creates some relaxation and warmth
 - b. this leads to warmth and openness toward others, and the beginning of a saner life.

CLASS 5

THE OPEN WAY

Student reading

- *The Myth of Freedom*, pp. 103-124

Instructor reading

- the above
- *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, pp. 151-164
- *The Complete Teachings of Mahayana*, pp. 1-17, 27-55

Synopsis of talk

1. Hinayana
 - a. the struggle for improvement
 - b. way of working with ourselves: hearing, contemplating, and practising
 - c. qualities of hinayana: simplicity, directness, loneliness, and mindfulness
2. Transition to mahayana
 - a. maitri: definition and development
 - b. how buddha nature is discovered and cultivated
 - c. qualities of mahayana: heroism, warmth, and clarity
3. Summary of the path
 - a. necessary to immerse ourselves in the hinayana path
 - b. hinayana develops maitri, when can be extended to the world
 - c. the path is always fresh
4. Encouragement to continue practice and study

TALK FIVE

OUTLINE

Hinayana

1. In the struggle for improvement, we are constantly driven by hopes and fears creates the three lords of materialism.
 - a. Attempts to attain happiness and avoid suffering through materialism do not work.
 - b. Attempts to solidify ourselves and our world take on the different styles of the six realms.
2. Realisation of the painful wheel of samsara inspires the possibility of being awake and the necessity of working with our lives in a new way.
 - a. Hearing, contemplating, and meditating as an approach to teachings
 - hearing: sparks understanding of our neurosis and our sanity
 - contemplating: thinking about what you have heard, checking it out with your own experience
 - meditating: beginning to identify with the teachings through practising meditation
 - b. Qualities of hinayana
 - simplicity: by slowing down neurotic speed, our lives become simpler and confusion becomes clear. Some pattern can be experienced.
 - direct: by not adding anything, we experience ourselves directly; we come down to earth rather than getting high.
 - loneliness: not learning on others psychologically for support for our trips, not polluting the environment.
 - mindfulness: becoming aware of our minds, staying on the spot, not becoming engrossed in fantasies, storylines, etc.

Transition to mahayana

1. Maitri
 - a. Aloneness leads to maitri. We stop taking our thoughts and emotions so seriously. We see their transparency and develop a sense of humour.
 - b. Because we have realised our egolessness to some extent, we have less investment in our territory, so we can begin to open.
 - c. At this point we discover buddha nature, or awakened mind.
 - d. The mahayana path, or "greater vehicle," is a more expansive and visionary approach to reality.
2. Buddha nature
 - a. When we first begin to practise, we discover our minds are cluttered and

- confused. There is a constant struggle with our environment.
- b. Through sitting practice, we stop stirring constantly and begin to let things settle.
 - c. Mahayana starts with the insight of hinayana, which is egolessness, then expands to the environment with openness and compassion.
 - d. The qualities of mahayana are:
 - heroism: a feeling of being able to accommodate anything, not being petty, no complaint, since you are not protecting your territory.
 - warmth: a feeling of expansiveness and joy begins to develop. Since you have nothing to lose, real communication and compassion evolve.
 - clarity: because your mind is no longer so cluttered, you can develop a clear and direct way of perceiving what is going on, which is not dependent on concepts.

Summary of the path

1. Before we can enter the mahayana, we must immerse ourselves fully in the hinayana through hearing, contemplating, and practising.
2. Hinayana develops maitri, a realistic and friendly attitude toward ourselves, which then extends into our environment.
3. The path is inspiring because there is a feeling of something powerful and direct emerging.
4. Although many people have walked this path, there is a feeling of continual freshness and creativity, as though each new practitioner were walking on it for the first time.

Conclusion

1. Encourage students to continue the practice and study that they have begun.
2. Refer detailed questions on mahayana to an up-coming course, such as "Awakened Heart" or "The Complete Teachings of Mahayana."
3. Emphasise the importance of sitting meditation for understanding the teachings. Remind people of the practice schedule at your centre. Offer follow-up meditation instruction.