

ANSWER SHEET FOR COURSE TEST [10 QUESTIONS / 2008]

SHAMATA MAHAMUDRA [Instructor: Chuck Damov]

1. What is a Mahayana Buddhist definition of Mahamudra?

The great [= Maha] realization [= mudra] of emptiness by meditating on the nature of one's own mind [i.e. both conventional and ultimate natures]

2. What forms of Buddhism teach the practice of Mahamudra?

Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhism, specifically Tibetan [and Mongolian, Siberian, and generally Buddhism which derives from the Tibetan form, e.g. in Ladakh, Sikkim, and along the Himalayas]

3. Are there different traditions of Mahamudra teachings, according to the 1st Panchen Lama?

Yes. The 1st Panchen Lama lists 9 different traditions in his Mahamudra root text. Included are 5 traditions from the Kagyu lineage, as well as Zhi.je, Chod, Dzog.chen, and Madhyamika. He emphasizes that all these different traditions lead to same result: a true realization of emptiness.

4. Are the Buddhist teachings and practices of Mahamudra, Dzog.chen, Vipasana, Zen and Chan the same or not?

There are similarities between all these practices, primarily that they work with formless kinds of meditation on the mind, but they are not exactly the same practices.

5. Can and does the practice of Mahamudra lead to the direct realization of emptiness?

Yes.

6. What is the Mahayana Buddhist definition of "shamata"?

One-pointed concentration of the mind on a single virtuous object. One has attained complete shamata when the mind rests on the object effortlessly and with complete equanimity, and when one experiences mental and physical pliancy [= suppleness, tib. = shin.jang]

7. Is the attainment of complete shamata necessary to realize emptiness directly?

Generally yes.

8. How many levels / stages of shamata are taught, and what are they?

According to Buddha Maitreya, and Pandit Kamalashila there are nine levels of shamata training before resultant shamata is achieved:

1. Placing the mind. 2. Continual placement of the mind. 3. Repeated placement of the mind 4. Close placement of the mind 5. Taming the mind 6. Pacifying the mind 7. Thoroughly pacifying the mind 8. One-pointedness of mind. 9. Equanimity of mind

9. How many obstacles to developing shamata are there, and what are they?

There are 5 obstacles to developing shamata:

1. Laziness [lack of energy to meditate on shamata] 2. Forgetfulness [of the meditation object] 3. Not recognizing mental excitement and laxity. 4. Not applying the antidotes to mental excitement and laxity. 5. Over-applying the antidotes to mental excitement and laxity.

10. How many antidotes to the obstacles to shamata are there, and what are they?

There are 8 antidotes to the above-mentioned 5 obstacles to shamata:

There are 4 antidotes to laziness, the 1st obstacle to shamata:

1. Faith [in the benefits of practising and achieving shamata, specifically suppleness]. 2. Aspiration [to achieve shamata]. 3. Joyful effort [to practise and achieve shamata] 4. Suppleness [it's gradual development by practising shamata].

5. Mindfulness is the antidote to forgetfulness, the 2nd obstacle to shamata.

6. Alertness [vigilance] is the antidote to not recognizing mental excitement and laxity, the 3rd obstacle to shamata.

7. Applying the antidotes [to mental excitement and laxity] is the antidote to not applying the antidotes, the 4th obstacle to shamata.

8. Equanimity, i.e. no longer applying the antidotes to mental excitement and laxity, is the antidote to continuing to apply the antidotes when no longer necessary, the 5th and final obstacle to the achievement of shamata.

END OF SHAMATA MAHAMUDRA TEST