



The Buddha Project

IDMT Year 3-Term 2

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Meditating on absences: introduction to
Madhyamaka



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Content

About the meditation.....	3
Brahma Viharas.....	3
Self-cherishing and other-cherishing.....	4
Cūḷasuññatasutta	5
Suggestions to practice.....	9
Kamalashila.....	10
Emptiness.....	11
Closure	15
Prayers.....	16
Final words.....	16



About the meditation

As always, let's start with the meditation.

The first part of the meditation is generating the mind of enlightenment, the last topic of 2025. We used a rather complex practice called *exchanging self and others*. Not an easy practice at all!

The deeper our understanding of emptiness gets, the better this will work.

This year we start from scratch again.

Brahma Viharas

First we will spend some weeks with the four immeasurable thoughts; to give some more content to the mind of awakening, in order to understand what this mind of awakening means. As Buddhas to be, we aspire equanimity. We want to be able to look unconditionally and impartially at all living beings. And wishing all living beings may see the same one day. We can then look at each other in the same, more realistic way. In meditation I highlighted the disadvantages of holding some living beings close and others distant, something that might intuitively seem to make sense, but it doesn't. We all know when you fall in love, that the moment you start to cling to the other person the problems in your relationship have started. Attachment or desire are not the right response, not even to good things in life. Attachment immediately turns things into objects of fear, because you know you will lose them again – and this fear hinders you to enjoy them in the presence. Attachment quickly becomes a prison, we create a narrative the other person has to live up to – and that is not fair nor does it work that way. Fear steals the joy of the relation. We have fear the other person likes someone more and might leave us for example.

One cannot joy something and fear it at the same time, very important to understand.

Attachment seems logical, but it is not.

But of course this is a negative form of attachment. When people speak of secure attachment, that is something completely different; it is unconditional love. Attachment is never secure – when someone becomes attached to you, problems have started. On a larger scale, our attachment to identity and/or to groups lead to sectarianism, tribalism, nationalism and an endless list of pitfalls, and our world is ravaged by this. In contrast to attachment people hold others distant: aversion, another topic that leads to conflicts and misery.

On top of this, attachment and aversion deny how we really exist. Through analysis we came to see our existence depends on all living beings, our enemies included. It is difficult to exactly say what an individual has contributed to this moment, that is why aversion and desire (holding some closer than others) blind us from the richness of this

extraordinary life we have. It is important for us and others we come to see this. If we would be able to take this blindfold of aversion and desire of, all problems would instantaneously stop. Unfortunately we have not achieved that yet, but we don't have to wait to have attained Buddhahood to make a difference. The more we let go of aversion and desire, the more we are capable of helping others. It would take away hypocrisy for example; we then can say *I have let go and it made me happy*. The way we behave convinces better than words. It is easy to *talk the talk* and challenging to *walk the walk*. Our behaviour is nothing but a habit.

In the weeks to come we will be looking at joy, love and then to compassion.

Self-cherishing and other-cherishing

We will also look at the disadvantages of self-cherishing and the advantages of other-cherishing. We will take things step by step until this wholesome behaviour becomes natural and things start to really make sense; not intellectually, but from a felt perspective.

We will become comfortable with other-cherishing. Once we feel at ease with letting go of self-cherishing, we come to realize we do not lose anything. In fact we will gain by letting go this self-cherishing.

It takes time and that is just fine, we cannot immediately cross to the other side, it takes time to create new wholesome patterns.

It is both important and comforting to realize we are not alone in this pursuit: in the era of this precious human rebirth we are guided by Buddhas, we are not alone – we are connected to a living tradition. We can study with people who walked the path, not only have studied the path as an academic subject. By walking this path we learn to experience what we practice. We can also meet people who managed themselves – and it shows they do a lot better than others.

This is the reason we visualize the Buddha during meditation. We need not walk the path alone, it is okay to ask for support, to ask for blessings. Later we will go into what the results are of dissolving the Buddha during meditation, it has to do with our true nature (or Buddha nature), however this will take time as well. Buddhas and we are partly alike, however for the moment let's experience that an omniscient, all-loving being blesses us, telling us *I was like you, I managed, I will walk with you until you have achieved what you set out for*.

For now, every time we experience the mind of awakening, experiencing the wish to become a Buddha for the welfare of all living beings, we highlight an aspect of Buddhahood until this aspiration becomes apparent and a driving force in our lives. We then deeply understand this is beneficial to all living beings, including ourselves – then the mind knows: *this is what I need and I will pursue it*. This deep realization, conviction will lead us and the mind becomes so enthusiastic it meditates for you instead of having to drag us to the cushion.

Real meditation is selfless, this is where wisdom does the job rather than willpower.

Cūḷasuññatasutta

We also practiced from the Cūḷasuññatasutta, the small sutra on emptiness.

Before the winter break I asked you to read the three Theravada Sutras on emptiness. If you have not done that, please do the upcoming week.

We pay extra attention to the Cūḷasuññatasutta because it is one of my favourite sutras. Another reason is the ecumenical approach is important to me.

I am the product of two different traditions: Theravada and Tibetan. It is worth mentioning my first Theravada teacher had studied Nagarjuna in Varanasi, where my Tibetan root guru spent eight years studying the Vinaya, the monastic vows in Thailand. Both my initial teachers studied the other tradition as well and I pursue that same goal. They allude to the same thing but in different ways, and this inspired me a lot. This gives confidence that all Buddhist traditions, all these sons and daughters of the Buddha, aim for the same thing. Slightly different descriptions, slightly different means, but comparable.

We will look at the Tibetan tradition, which is much more specific and detailed, but in the Pali sutras the same topics occur.

We have a close look at emptiness, one of the two central themes of IDMT.

When you did read the sutra, you might have noticed I added something and I took something out.

- I **added** the letting go of future and past.

This is not in the original text. However modern life is much more focussed, obsessed even, with the past and the future than contemporaries of the Buddha. The Buddha rarely discusses past and future, where we are often lost in past and future.

That is why we show the mind over and over the past has simply ceased to exist. we can learn from memory, but there is no part of the past that inhibits you; the past is no burden we have to carry. We can simply put down this imagined burden. It is a freedom you have now – and it is not difficult. The past simply does not exist, but we need to show the mind it doesn't exist. It is a great relief and brings great peace not to have to drag the past around all the time..

The same is valid regarding the future. The future is unknowable as it doesn't exist either. The only interesting thing about the future is what we do in the present, the seed of the future is here. The rest of our is conceptual proliferation. To get lost in reflections of a conflict I might have tomorrow, the fantastic dinner tonight, etc. all this is a waste of time because I am not mindful about this very exquisite moment. The mind is then distracted and I don't want to be distracted. It is like having a five-star meal in front of you while thinking about the french fries you will eat tomorrow (something you planned to do but might not even be realized). This is not skillful behaviour of the mind.

Moreover, this thinking about tomorrow often leads to worry. I will not go into

worry too much, but it's important to understand worrying is not helpful, in fact it is counterproductive. Worry is being distracted about something that doesn't exist, taking away your freedom to have agency in the present. E.g. when I have a difficult conversation tomorrow, I can either worry about the conversation (that I am not even sure of will occur the way I think it will), or I can calmly sit down and prepare tomorrow's conversation. The latter is useful, the former is not. Getting lost in the future is never useful. Only the present is real, the only thing we have.

Being able to cope with worry is a spiritual practice that is undervalued and very useful to practice. Every time the mind worries, just let go, the future does not exist, worry has no purpose to me – and immediately peace sets in.

We all have endlessly walked around regretting about the past and worrying about the future, making our lives miserable, worried and restless. A conventional insight on worry suffices, as past and future do not exist. Let worry go and peace returns. When you consistently practice to let go of worry, self-confidence will also return as you prepare the future in the right way.

It is just like our social circumstances. When you are in the middle of them, engage with them. But when you are in a new situation, let go.

Or when there are difficult things to do at work tomorrow; the best way to prepare is to rest today. If I'm exhausted in this moment, thinking and worrying about all the tasks I still have to do does not improve these tasks. In fact, worrying sucks away my resources. We function in the world, none of us live in a cave or a forest, but as his holiness often emphasizes, *the isolation of body and mind is not only attained by going to a cave or a forest, it is by letting go of what is not present.*

When challenges arise, you work with them. And when there are no challenges, you allow them to be absent – you can then enjoy the peacefulness of their absence.

This does not necessarily say something negative about either politics or work; the Buddha engaged with the community his entire life, it was his family. The Buddha could only do that by not letting his mind go to what is absent in the present. The Buddha faced many challenges in his life, but he only dealt with the challenges in the present.

- I **omitted** something during meditation that is in the sutra. When you read the sutra it goes from the earth element to [the formless absorptions](#): infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness and the hardest of them all: neither perception nor non-perception. The four formless absorptions are beyond this meditation.

In meditation I tried to show you different things.

- I tried to show you something you practice on a regular basis: to focus both on something that is present and on something that is absent. I can look , e.g., around in this room and can be aware of a certain person is absent and focus on the absence of this person. This will become increasingly more important talking about insight meditation. In this meditation we talked about the absence of something.



There is something in our perception that does not exist. Something is implied, but when we question it we come to understand it is not there. And the thing we imply to be there is a burden on the mind. When the mind believes it sees it, it grasps. And by way of grasping anger, jealousy, identity views, pride, arrogance, and so on and so forth unfold. This is called *elaboration on the mind*, the mind goes into a cascade of unpleasant things.

In meditation we want to know what it is not there, we will try to concentrate on something that is absent, an absence of something that makes us believe is in the world.

It is good to play with this practice for a while because it is relatively easy. Just don't worry about it going well or not. It doesn't really matter. It is like playing with the notion I remain aware of something being absent; or not paying attention to something.

This simple movement is very useful in daily life. The mind is so obsessive, most of the time it thinks about things that you would rather not think about if you had a choice. It is very important to cultivate the capacity not to *elaborate in the mind*. We often try to do so, e.g. when you are in bed, thinking about your favourite enemy. The first hour or so, that might be quite nice, fantasising how to hit or fry this enemy, or even kill him and throw him off a ridge. But at one point you realize you would like to sleep as it is two P.M. but your mind is still obsessed.

Then we try to not to think about this enemy '*I shall not think about my enemy – I shall not think about my enemy – I shall not think about my enemy*'. It is clear this doesn't work. Trying not to think about something is thinking about the enemy you do not want to think about. And all you need to do is: let go.

The Buddha usually uses three reasonings.

1. Thoughts are an illusion

All there is, is a **thought**, and we get lost in the content of this thought. So what we first do is to let go of the illusion that this thought represents reality; it is just a thought. That's the first step of letting go. It's not real.

Thoughts are selfless; we need to deeply understand there is no self in this thought. There is no I in this thoughts, nobody deciding to produce this thought. Thoughts just happen, but there is **no thinker**. The thoughts are not mine, purposely created, they are not personal.

Understanding thoughts are selfless takes away half their power. Their power is based on the assumption *I am thinking*. A thought arises and based on that another and another, and yet another, etc.

Do not push these thoughts away, but use reasoning.

2. Thoughts are impermanent

Investigating thoughts will show thoughts are impermanent. One moment the thought is there, the next it is gone, 'poof', nothing left. A thought only exists for an instant and then it is gone.



3. Thoughts create suffering

Thoughts are unsatisfactory, it makes no sense to hold on to thoughts; just let them go.

This three types of reasoning are helpful to be able to let thoughts go.

In the beginning they will keep coming back. By letting go, moments without unwholesome thoughts arise. We tend to forget – and this is very important – to feel what it is like not to have thoughts; recognizing the absence of thoughts is bliss.

Once you acknowledge the richness of these moments to the mind, the mind wants to go back there, there is something to negotiate with the mind when you have some sense of why meditation on emptiness is so important; insight on emptiness takes a powerful illusion away. Once the mind deeply understands its own unwholesome misunderstanding, it ends!

This ending of this illusion is happiness, a happiness that has always been right in front of you. Of course this takes time as the mind is a creature of habit. The mind has behaved like this, according to the Buddha, since beginningless time, lots of habit.

So there is a strong illusory power built on habit and when the mind is lost in this endless thinking, the illusions starts to look real.

This illusory power and proliferation (Pali: *papañca*; Sanskrit: *prapañca*) can only be overcome by doing this practice again and again and again.

You can practice almost everywhere every time; in bed, while being introduced to somebody, etc. As soon as you start to practice this, life gets immeasurably better. Through the capacity of letting go you come to understand selflessness, impermanence, and the unsatisfactory aspects.

Letting thoughts go shows the mind what the absent feels like and this makes a major difference in your life.

In Pali this is called Satipatthana, the four closed placements of mindfulness.

An example is meditating on the breath: a meditator is not just staring at the breath, there is no point in that. As one of my teachers says: *if you only meditate on the breath at one point you deeply know you breathe*. That is not a major insight.

The meditator investigates 2 things about the breath:

- 1) Which wholesome qualities are present?
- 2) Which **unwholesome** aspects of the mind are absent.

During meditation try to focus on the absence of unwholesome qualities and the happiness this brings.

The absence of unwholesome aspects induces calm abiding.

At those moments you deeply know it is good when the unwholesome aspects are not there. And when they come back, you see them for what they are.

You were happily abiding with the breath and then (e.g.) desire pops up. When you leave, let it go again as not-self. When you then scan through body and mind, you know what this practice has done to you: desire leaves nothing but unpleasantness in its wake. Even when it's gone, the mind is still upset, the body feels unpleasant.

Then you know, the hindrance was there and unhappiness arose. But, it is important never to judge – just simply analyse.

Something unfortunate was there, but it is not self, it's not my fault. As a practitioner we show the mind what this leads to. When desire arises, mind and body become unpleasant. When aversion arises, mind and body become unpleasant, not something I want.

Every time hindrances arise, the mind notices they arise and the mind also knows it feels unpleasant. And then, one day, it will stop. The hindrances no longer arise and the mind deeply notices their absence: *there's no desire in the mind, I am free.*

This is happiness. Showing the mind the presence and absence of the hindrances will incline the mind to move towards this freedom.

At the same time it is important to know this practice is not a form of escaping the world, no escapism.

Trying to escape is not helping all our fellow living – we don't try to go to some vague place no one has ever seen and reported back. Nagarjuna says nirvana and samsara are the same thing, but seen from different perspectives. What we see experience is samsara to the ignorant mind, while it is nirvana to the awakened mind.

We don't have to die and go to heaven for our well-being. It is something that we can do here and now. That is another reason why it is so important to focus on these moments like, e.g., when you are in bed worrying. Then, when unwholesome thoughts are absent is like a taste of nirvana. Be fully aware of these five seconds and make the absence grow permanent, eternal and you know what nirvana is. All problems are gone and never return; that is freedom.

Then we can do whatever we want in the present moment, we become free to enact our purpose.

Suggestions to practice

- Please repeat this practice this week a number of times to become familiar with focussing on something that is not here. I hope I made clear this practice is of great benefit to you. We need to convince the mind to go there. You can't force the mind, but you can tempt the mind by showing what is good for it and what is not good, the mind doesn't know – it is deeply shaped by habitual patterns. It is not a fault of the mind.
- It would also be good by the way to start reading the stages of meditation by Kamalashila that is in your reader, some 20 pages. Become familiar with the text. For the next four months it will be the backdrop where I explain other things. It is good to have an idea of what [Kamalashila](#) argues – in the Tibetan tradition he is very important.
- Another topic to practice is of course the Cūḷasuññātasutta
Practice the sutra in a simple; in meditation try to focus on the absence of

something. Take it as far as you can without being judgemental. If it is the absence of tomorrow and yesterday (*past and future*), good on you. If more insights arise, good on you as well.

Where we finished today, the absence of science, will become very important as in our practice the insight that we are the *makers* of the world will arise and we can also *unmake* the world.

Kamalashila

There is an interesting legend about the start of Tibetan Buddhism.

The ruling king in those days invited several monks to Tibet to decide what school was best to follow in his kingdom. So he organized a debate in the Samye Monastery (it is said the debate lasted for two years) between two great masters:

- Hasha Mahayana (a Chinese master).

By the way, what Tibetans now adays say about Hasha Mahayana is not necessarily true about all Chinese Buddhism.

Hasha Mahayana argues the problem lies in our thoughts, in concepts and names and continues that if this really is the case, one should stop thinking; that would be the solution. He also argues there will be sudden enlightenment.

- Kamalashila, student of one of the founders of Tibetan Buddhism [Shantarakshita](#)
Kamalashila argues that to stop thinking cannot take our problem away, he also argues there is no sudden enlightenment, it is not what the Buddha said. We practice and develop gradually. It is a very human perspective: to development takes time. It takes the time we need, we cannot force enlightenment to arise quicker than our karma and disposition make possible.

Kamalashila won the debate, and I will later explain why he won.

Kamalashila is also the founder of sutra-meditation, and during the IDMT we will also look a little at Tantra as well and Kamalashila's text is the groundwork of sutra-meditation, one could say. His text is the foundation that every tradition builds their structure on, all great Tibetan schools take this text as normative to what we study. That is why Tantra is so important to the Tibetan tradition.

We started with bodhicitta, the development of compassion. Then we will head into calm abiding and meditating on emptiness.



Emptiness

I like to give a short introduction as the levels in this group are highly varied.

In the upcoming months I will try to talk about emptiness as accessible and profound as I can. At the same time we must realize emptiness is a difficult topic, something I cannot change.

To refresh our memories, let's see what we remember.

In year 1 of IDMT we came to understand the mind adds something to the world as we perceive it.

We looked at two schools and the question: *who am I?* And they did so by noticing that what we seem to perceive is that the object of all these emotions (pride, anger, desire, etc.) cannot be found the way we perceive it. These are foundationalist schools, as they are called. These schools argue that the self is illusory, in reality the self is made up, built of elementary physical particles and elementary mental moments; these are all we experience. Investigation learns you can find elementary particles of the body, the four great elements as they are called. When you investigate the mind you find moments of main mind and mental factors. That is all.

Then, we impute this experience and *stick a self on it*. Using the term *self* is not a problem, because what we experience functions like it – but what we add is the 'I'; the 'I' controlling body and mind.

The easy perspective of this 'I' is something that is separate, a *self* that is unchanging through time, existing independent of causes and conditions: whatever the circumstances are, 'I' have free will; 'I' can do whatever 'I' want. Further investigation of this notice (through meditation) learns this point of view makes no sense. This 'I' or 'self' is not to be found.

The more complex, underlying perspective, is the sense that 'I' should have control over my body and mind, a burden on our existence. This 'I should have control' leads to all forms of unsatisfactoriness like guilt.

Then we analysed this perception through the aggregates:

Is the body the self? No.

Are feelings the self? No.

Is discernment self? No.

Is volition maybe self? No.

Is main-mind self? No.

Does a self apart from the aggregates make sense? No.

Is there any absolute control over these things? No.

We practiced to get an overall image, trying to find out what we see when we look at *self* and then analyse that leads to an absence. What we added to the perception (this *self*) is not there.

This Madhyamaka perspective is called have foundationalism, we will get back to what that really means. Vaibhashika and Sautantrika say: 'OK, this *self* is unreal, but the four great elements in these moments of mind are real.



We will also meditate on the perspective of the [Prasangika Madhyamaka](#) the perspective of Tsongkhapa, and this comes at a price: you now have something that is less real and something that is more real.

Self or person

On all paths to freedom, we need great volition, strength and a lot of confidence to become Buddhas. Therefore, undermining this *self* too much leaves us with too little. The Madhyamaka say that is too high a price to pay. We don't say the *self* doesn't exist at all, we say the *self* does not exist in the way you believe it exists, so we keep the person intact.

There is person for sure, there is agency, but in an impermanent way. This *self* is compounded, is composed of phenomena; it is dependent on causes and conditions and it depends on the aggregates.

Foundationalism has, as we will come to see, has its price.

Yogacharas

In the second year of IDMT the Yogacharas presented us with a beginning counter-argument to external phenomena.

Yogacharas say: when these four great elements exist and fill out (some) space, they must have dimensions and therefore they are compounded themselves. Everything that is a collection is made up; collections only exist in the mind: the mind groups a number of things together and defines the collection is a whole.

According to the Yogachara, this reasoning should be applied all the way down. And to some extent that makes sense, but it is still not enough, a problem remains. There are different schools within Yogacara, but the one we discussed comes to the conclusion that the only real thing is mind.

Madhyamika – Nagarjuna

But this reasoning makes the world too unreal; we are then left with too little to care for. Making the mind a bit too real might lead to metaphysical vagaries – and the mind then becomes something to hold on to and we still cling to.

For the Madhyamikas this is a step in the right direction, but it is not enough. As long as something seems more real than another things, we will deprecate the things that we interpret as unreal. When objects of my mind, such as other living beings, are unreal, how do I develop compassion, what is my basis to care? Yogacharas find ways around this challenge, something we will come back to later.

Nagarjuna does something of great importance. The clue is in these Pali sutras we read. Nagarjuna says you should look in these foundational sutras, because the Buddha points out the clue, the Buddha teaches *I reject the notions of existence and non-existence*. The way lay people interpret the world is something the Buddha does not accept.

When we speak of the existence of *something*, we mean this *something* exists independently and that does not make any sense, this is unacceptable.



When we speak of the non-existence of *something*, well, we cannot defend the world does not exist, can we. The computer in front of me exists, just not the way we believe it exists.

Madhyamikas find a way between *existence* and *non-existence*, it also explains the name Madhyamika: *the middle way* between grasping at things to be self-existing and arguing things do not exist at all.

This is a very deep argument, and difficult to understand.

Madhyamikas globalize all the arguments.

Nagarjuna argues all functioning phenomena have parts. Cars have parts, atoms have parts, nice tasting quark has parts, everything has parts.

The laptop in front of me exists, but it does not self-exist. The laptop does not exist . it depends on parts and all these different parts are not laptop either. So when I say *laptop*, and we investigate what the laptop is, there is no laptop to be found. A deep point we will get back to.

There is a hard-drive and a processor etc.. The laptop is a functioning collection of things, but there is no self-existing laptop to be found. This laptop depends on causes and conditions, such as electricity, software, the company that assembles it, designers, metal, and so on and so forth.

We get to the point the laptop dependently exists in many ways and I will add one more, the confusing step: the laptop depends on projection. We need to call the laptop a laptop for it to be a laptop.

As a community we understand it to be a laptop and that is why it is a one. For the fly in this room, it is not a laptop.

We also came to understand the laptop is not self-existing. Laptops only make sense for those using them and know it's functions.

Does the laptop exist? Yes, however it does not exist from its own side.

When I look for the laptop, I find nothing. I find things that are not laptop, I find parts, I find causes and conditions, I also find a community naming it a laptop because it has laptop-functions, but it cannot perform these functions from its own side. Without a user, the laptop cannot perform the function of a laptop, impossible; without electricity, it can't do perform either. The laptop is a nexus between things that are not laptop, it has no inherent existence.

But what I *think to see*, what *my perception shows me*, is the laptop shows *itself* to me, where investigation tells me I can't find laptop – nowhere.

This raises the question how it's possible that something I can't find shows itself? That is not possible, and it is exactly where we try to go. All compounded things depend on each other.

This is important to understand as all the unfortunate behaviour of the mind depends on this ignorance, we will come to that. It is also important as this ignorance makes it impossible to develop compassion: you can't care for someone that really self-exists; if someone independently exists, there is a no reason to care for this person because you can't change the person because this person **is** that way.



We need the wisdom realizing emptiness on the one hand to free ourselves from aversion, hatred, jealousy, depression, and other hindrances and also to generate genuine compassion. Other beings do exist and like you, they suffer.

But there is a path out for us, not a path out of this universe but a path out of ignorance that offers the opportunity to really be with them, unconditionally and impartially. When our needs have been accomplished, we can do what we need to do for as long as it takes.

We will recite in a moment, referring to what Shantideva argues and what his holiness repeats often: *'for as long as space remains, for as long as sentient beings remain, may I too remain and dispel the miseries of this world.'*

That is the gift of emptiness. As Thich Nhat Hahn so beautifully says; *'the gift of emptiness is to know we inter-exist'*, or – when I rephrase this in my words; *'to know oneself to be empty is to know oneself to be full of others.'*

When I look for the laptop I find its parts and its causes and conditions, I find the language in which it exists.

When I look for *me*, there is no independent Gendun to be found, what I find is my body, my mind, and ultimately I find you, the stories we tell each other.

I am grateful to have found a place where a wholesome story is told, a story in which freedom is possible, peace is possible, happiness is possible.

I this is a good start of this term; I will introduce all this step by step

We will first focus as the tradition. Tsongkhapa advises us by to look at the emptiness of the cell and he will explain that understanding the self is empty, I have also affirmed that the self exists.

We do not argue the self doesn't exist, we argue the self exists by being empty. What I will show you is incredibly liberating. It opens you, you will be open-ended. Then you can finally chuck all the stories away that are of no use to you.

I really find it miraculous that every moment of self is also new to me; I wake up in the morning, and it is the first time I meet myself – and the last time because a new moment has arisen. To look at oneself with a sense of wonder and appreciation is quite something, awesome to the mind.

That is why we first focus on emptiness of self. In the end we need to realize we have Buddha nature, we can become infinite. But I don't want to just tell you so, I want you to see it for yourself.

Then we will broaden our insight to understand all things are empty and this will confuse you: even emptiness is empty. There is nothing to grasp, you were always free.

Additional material

We will use Kamalashila and there of the verses of Nagarjuna. Not immediately as they are difficult to understand and beautiful at the same time. On the IDMT-website you will find [Additional Materials](#). There already is a list of documents and I will keep adding more to clarify what we are talking about.



That's one thing I will do to assist you in your growth of understanding of what Nagarjuna and the Madhyamikas have to say. We will specifically follow the doctrine of Tsongkhapa and his great teacher Chandrakirti.

I will show you why, not as a view to hold on to, but as a way where you can taste what it does. The value of the practice is not proved by logic but by the freedom it realizes, the icing on the cake – the proof in the pudding.

Philosophy can only go so far. You have to experience things and what they do to you.

I will provide two weekends with an exposition on emptiness. One here at the Maitreya Institute in Amsterdam and one weekend in Stockholm.

This means teachings on emptiness for entire weekends and you can join us there.

These events are also listed on the calendar of the IDMT website.

Two weekends on emptiness

Emptiness is a very interesting topic, but in the beginning it is unfamiliar and difficult to grasp – though maybe not that difficult, once you get it, all the pieces fall together and you think like, 'oh, that is what you were talking about!'. But it takes time to get there.

I hope to provide you with the tools you need and gradually your experience will grow. First by simply navigating, holding the absence of something using mindfulness. The absence of future and past, the absence of the job I do, etc. so you develop familiarity with the concept and bit by bit we will deepen the understanding and learn to abide in emptiness.

We will also use calm abiding, to get a growing sense of what this absence is, understanding what the mind adds to the world that is not there; realizing emptiness and then hold on to emptiness using calm abiding. We will also look at the different practices of calm abiding and further cultivate it. That is when we hopefully can happily abide in emptiness, which is extremely healing to the mind.

Gendun does exist, but I have no independent control. I have to navigate body and mind.

Closure

Thank you for being here.

At the end of every term I think no one will come to these teachings anymore; now it's over. To find you are still here fills me with amazement.

His Holiness is now 91 years. We have a Buddha – let us pray he hangs on for a while. But as Buddha Shakimuni said, all things that come together must also separate.

We are the Buddha's children and it is a good idea to leave the nest before he finishes his tasks.



We develop a firm footing in both our understanding of emptiness and of bodhicitta, the mind of awakening. The Dalai Lama can pass away knowing that – regarding us – his task has been fulfilled. He set out to help us on our way and we are. When he passes away one day, hopefully in the far future, that we can send him on his way saying: *thank you, your job is done*. Now it's up to us. So that is something worthwhile to dedicate our prayers to.

Prayers

Final words

Thank you for your presence.
I wish you happy meditations, lots of it and I am looking forward to see you next week.
Karma willing.

