

SCRIPT FOR DHARMA BASIC COURSE ONE "FUNDAMENTAL BASICS"

Titisee, 18 May – 26 May 2024

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Introduction

Among the six different strands of the 10-year curriculum, the two Dharma Basic Courses in Titisee each year are primarily dedicated to learning, both alone and in a group. Three other courses (Mahamudra courses in Candili, Beatenberg and Landguet Ried/Gruyère) are mainly about meditation, and the Vajrayana course after New Year will be a mixture of teaching and practical application.

A script like this one will probably only be available for the Dharma Basic Course in Titisee. This script will serve as a guide for preparatory or follow-up self-study. The plan at least is to have a script like this for every Basic Course. Additional references for helpful further reading may be added after the course.

The Basic Course will follow the sequence of topics listed below, but will also be geared towards the needs and capabilities of the group. There may, therefore, be deviations.

In his talks, Lhündrup will introduce the 10 topics on 7 mornings and 3 afternoons, answering questions, leading practical exercises and explaining the group work. In the afternoon group, the main focus is on people expressing the Dharma themselves, identifying unresolved questions and possibly clarifying them with the help of others.

- On 4 afternoons (Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday) we will practise and study together in small groups.

We will set up the groups at the beginning of the course, unless you have already found each other. You can prepare yourself with the help of this script. It was sent to you because you signed up for the Dharma Basic Course email distribution list. Please pass this on to others: if they want to receive the information about the Basic Course directly, they must sign up for the Basic Course on the website.

I. The Dharma Basic Course as a whole and the topics of Basic Course 1

On the first afternoon, we'll familiarize ourselves with how the Basic Course is structured, which reference works we'll use, how we'll organize the work, how the small groups identify and clarify their questions and what support is available to us for in-depth study. We will briefly go through the week's topics and set out initial priorities. Then we'll meditate and the first teaching will be in the following morning:

II. Distinguishing between the essential and the non-essential

This is a fundamental theme of our lives: to tell the essential from the non-essential and to act accordingly! The Dharma opens our eyes, we develop compassion and wisdom, and our priorities change. We see what really makes sense and is essential to us. Other things that used to be important fall away. A constant process of becoming clear and tidying up until the end of our lives. Apart from the unavoidable, we really only have time for what's essential. All Dharma texts direct our attention to what is actually essential, what is urgently needed.

Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Rinpoche does this in an inspiring manner in his book "Es geht nicht um Glück" (German text, title translates to 'It's not about happiness'). The book is actually a guide to the preparatory practices for Mahāmudrā and Dzogchen. However, Dzongsar Khyentse does not go into much detail about the basic tantric exercises (ngöndro), but explains the basics of *all* dharma practice in a humorous and inspiring way. 250 pages, easy to read: <https://shop.manjughosha.de/es-geht-nicht-um-glueck.html>

III. The Four Truths and the Eightfold Path

Buddha Śākyamuni began to teach the Dharma with the Four Truths or Realizations of the Noble Ones (*catvāri āryasatyāni*). They summarize the entire teaching. We, too, will start with them to understand what the Dharma path is all about. This will open up several layers

of understanding. Chapter D in the book "*Buddhistische Psychologie*" (German language book on psychotherapy by Tilmann and Wolfgang) provides applicable insight into the topic. You can find an overview with more traditional information at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Noble_Truths.

The teaching of the Buddha himself can be found in the Pali Canon in the Linked Discourses (*Samyutta Nikāya*, discourse 56.11) as "Words of the Realised One" (*Dhammacakkappavattana Vagga*): <https://suttacentral.net/sn56.11/en/sujato>

We use a shorter version from the Collection of Middle-length Discourses (*Majjhima Nikāya*, discourse 141) "Analysis of the Truths" (*Sacca-vibhaṅga Sutta*), available in English translated by Ṭhāssinaro Bhikkhu at <https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/MN/MN141.html> and in German at: <https://www.palikanon.com/majjhima/zumwinkel/m141z.html>. The language is a little old-fashioned, but it is good to read the Buddha directly. This makes it clear what an enormous translation process is currently taking place in our culture. We will provide the new German translation of the Saccavibhaṅga Sutta (MN 141) by Raimund Hopf as a pdf and photocopy in the course, as well as the English and French one by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

- Exercise: it is said in Tibetan literature that the "Jewel Ornament of Liberation" by Gampopa explains these 4 truths. Since this is a central reference text, have a look at how the 21 chapters can be matched to the 4 truths.

You will find further explanations of the Four Truths in our other Abhidharma reference work, Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche's "Gateway to Knowledge", specifically Volume II, Chapters 8-12.

The "Eightfold Path of the Noble Ones" (*āryāṣṭāṅgamārga*) is the Buddha's fourth realization or truth. It is mentioned in several places in the Pali Canon. A good overview can be found at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noble_Eightfold_Path. To study the four truths and the eightfold path, we can also take the Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta: "The Long Discourse on the Establishing of Awareness", Collection of Long Discourses (*Dīgha Nikāya*, discourse 21), where everything is described in the context of awareness practice.

- Exercise: how do I implement the Eightfold Path? What do I want to pay more attention to?

IV. What Buddhist paths are there?

What is the Middle Way? Do I take the gradual or direct path, the path of the cause or the fruit? Lhündrup will give an overview of the various Buddhist approaches and lead on to the question: Which approach corresponds to me, my wishes and my abilities?

Notes on the middle way: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_Way

A brief overview of the nine vehicles: https://encyclopediaofbuddhism.org/wiki/Nine_yanas

The widespread depiction of three vehicles, in which the Pratyekabuddhas are omitted, and the Vajrayana is described as an independent vehicle, can be found here, for example:

<https://buddhismus.de/wege/> (German language). In the three-vehicle model, Vajrayāna actually belongs with the path of the Bodhisattvas after the Śravakas and Pratyekabuddhas and is not counted separately – this is only done within the "nine vehicles" as taught in the Nyingma tradition.

Mipham Rinpoche describes the various paths in detail in "Gateway to Knowledge", Volume 3, chapters 15-18. It is worth reading, but demanding.

V. Motivation - giving one's life meaning

- Exercise: what meaning, what direction do I give to my life?

We will practise here in a similar way to Chapter C of the book "Buddhistische Psychologie" (German language book on psychotherapy). Perhaps take some time for this at home. In addition, we will look at the meaning of life from a Mahamudra perspective: what is it about?

VI. Refuge in the Three Jewels - where is my "refuge"?

Almost every Dharma book talks about the Triple Refuge (*triśaraṇa*) in the Three Jewels (*triratna*). The chapter "Going for Refuge and Generating the Mind of Awakening" in Gendün Rinpoche's "Heart Advice from a Mahamudra Master" is recommended as an introduction.

Overview of the forms of refuge: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Refuge_in_Buddhism

We will mainly refer to Chapter 8 of Gampopa's "Jewel Ornament of Liberation" in order to build on this with a consideration of refuge from the perspective of Mahamudra.

VII. The basics of meditation: what is essential?

In Basic Course 1, meditation is only introduced briefly so that everyone can continue practicing at home. We will take as a guideline the chapters on general meditation for mental calm and insight in "Moonbeams of Mahāmudrā" by Dhagpo Tashi Namgyal (thus far only in English).

If you want an easy introduction in English, you can read the chapter "The Path of Meditation" in Gendün Rinpoche's "Heart Advice from a Mahamudra Master", which gives more than just a small taste of Mahamudra.

VIII. What is the "mind of awakening" (bodhicitta)?

We will discuss relative and ultimate bodhicitta and different types of bodhisattvas and bodhisattvis. The chapter "Going for Refuge and Generating the Mind of Awakening" in Gendün Rinpoche's "Heart Advice from a Mahamudra Master" and Śāntideva's "A Guide to the

Bodhisattva's Way of Life" (Bodhicaryāvatāra – several English translations) are recommended as an introduction.

We will mainly refer to the structured presentation in chapter 9 of the "Jewel Ornament of Liberation" by Gampopa and build on this by considering bodhicitta from the perspective of Mahamudra.

For the practical cultivation of bodhicitta, Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye's Lodjong commentary "The Great Path of Awakening" is of great importance, supplemented by other foundational texts of Mahayana mind training such as Shamar Rinpoche's "Lodjong".

IX. Three characteristics of authentic practice

How can I be sure that my practice is leading to the goal? For this, "The Three Seals" in Gendün Rinpoche's "Heart Advice" serve as a guide to ensure that our practice actually bears good fruit. It is about goal-oriented motivation, the main practice and dedication.

X. Text on refuge and bodhicitta

We will use the Śākyamuni Sadhana by Mipham Rinpoche as an inspirational text for deepening refuge, bodhicitta and devotion, a text that is also suitable for daily practice. It will be available in German, English and French. Photocopies of the printed practice texts for the morning practice at 9 am will be provided in the course. There is nothing for you to prepare in regard to this one.

Basic Course dates for the coming years
(from Saturday to Sunday)

2024: Course 1: May 18 - 26

2025: Course 3: April 22-30

2026: Course 5: April 18-26

2027: Course 7: April 17-25

2028: Course 9: April 15-23

2029: Course 11: April 14-22

2030: Course 13: April 13-21

2031: Course 15: April 12-20

2032: Course 17: April 17-25

2033: Course 19: April 16-24

Course 2: Aug. 10-18

Course 4: Aug. 09-17

Course 6: Aug. 08-16

Course 8: Aug. 07-15

Course 10: Aug. 05-13

Course 12: Aug. 04-12

Course 14: Aug. 03-11

Course 16: Aug. 09-17

Course 18: Aug. 07-15

Course 20: Aug. 06-14