

# **Buddhism in a Nutshell: A short course at Tibetan Buddhist Institute May 2021**

## **Providing an overview of key points of the Mahayana Buddhist path in the Tibetan tradition**

*'My religion is simple. My religion is kindness'.* Tenzin Gyatso, 14th Dalai Lama

*Worldly works never reach an end, even if we struggle for an eon. Do not make them the centre of your life. But spiritual practice is just the opposite, and every effort brings an according benefit that extends far into the future.* Gendun Gyatso, 2nd Dalai Lama

*The mind is but a conceptual designation. Nothing exists apart from this designation—pure and simple. Even the very designation is devoid of innate reality.* Nargajuna, Bodhicittavirarana

### **Buddhism in a Modern Context**

The big ideas of Buddhism, that suffering in all forms derives ultimately from our mind and that we can achieve a permanent cessation of all suffering, are far-sighted, lofty goals. It requires a degree of faith, curiosity, willingness to start down the road with the idea that things will become clearer as time goes by.

So, if the ideas of Buddhism speak to you, then I would encourage you to learn more, read more, seek out teachers and communities that support your learning and practice.

At the same time, it's important to be realistic. Be patient with your progress, or lack of it. The monkey mind will be with you for a while yet!

Samsara is not going to end with a few meditation sessions. Even with quite a lot of meditation sessions, I suspect.

From the Buddhist point of view, working towards liberation and enlightenment is a long term process. We should expect to be working at this for years, decades, lifetimes.

*When we do things like studying under a lama we may develop a superficial renunciation and for a few days frantically practice virtue. After a while, we get fed up and give virtue a wide berth. So, do not be intermittent in your practice...you should always maintain the right pitch, neither too intense, nor too relaxed.* Pabongka Rinpoche, Liberation in the Palm of your Hand

And yet, the benefit of these practices is immediately evident even for people of the modern world, even without having attained any lofty spiritual states described in ancient texts.

There will be glimpses of the peace found in stillness of a meditation session, that carry over through a busy day at work.

There will be flashes of insight when you see that what you hold so tight can be let go of.

There will be times of connection and love towards others that take you away from your own small life goals towards something more universal.

Study, reflect and meditate on the Dharma therefore, without dissociating one from the other, on the firm basis of love and compassion of bodhicitta. Without first eliminating doubts through study, you will never be able to practise. It is said, *“To meditate without having studied, is like climbing a mountain with no arms”*. Patrul Rinpoche, *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*

I hope you have the good fortune to meet with practitioners who do embody this wonderful tradition of mental development. Meeting a true Buddhist master can have a deep impact on people’s lives and brings these philosophies to life. Take care to seek out genuine teaches with a true lineage. Remember the importance the ancient masters placed on lineage is still as important today, and fortunately for us those lineages are still alive today.

It is not for nothing that Buddhism has been a cornerstone of spirituality across Asia and surrounds, in diverse cultures from India, China, Japan, central Asia and Tibet, for over 2500 years. This tradition holds within it a deep wisdom and immediate practicality that still rings true today.