

***DHARMA ESSENTIALS, COURSE VIII
DEATH AND THE REALMS OF EXISTENCE***

Class One Outline

Class One

- I. Introduction to the Dharma Essentials Series and to this Course
- II. Introduction of the Text
 - A. Root text: *Abhidharmakosha, Treasure House of Higher Knowledge*, by Master Vasubandhu (c. 350 A.D.)
 - B. Commentary: *Illumination on the Path to Freedom* by His Holiness the First Dalai Lama
- III. The Three Realms of Suffering Existence
 - A. Desire Realm (6 levels)
 1. General description and divisions
 - i. Bad births: hell beings, craving spirits, animals
 - ii. “Good” births: humans, pleasure beings
 2. Acts which result in a desire realm rebirth
 - B. Form Realm (17 levels)
 1. General description
 2. Acts which result in a form realm birth
 - C. Formless Realm (4 levels)
 1. General description
 2. Acts which result in formless realm
- IV. Why All Three Realms are “Suffering”
 - A. The three sufferings
- V. Four Ways of Taking Birth
 - A. Born complete
 - B. Born from warmth and moisture (insect)
 - C. Born from a womb
 - D. Born from an egg

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VI. Karma: The General Cause of All Rebirth

A. The Four Principles of Karma

1. Karma is definite
2. Karma increases
3. If you don't create the karma, you cannot meet the result
4. If you do create the karma, the result will ripen

VII. Meditation Assignment

For 15 minutes per day try to imagine what each of the three realms is like and what it would be like to be born in each of these realms.

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Class Two Outline

Class Two

- I. Craving Spirits
 - A. General and specific causes for this birth
 - B. Particular sufferings

- II. Animals
 - A. General and specific causes for this birth
 - B. Particular sufferings

- III. Humans
 - A. Causes for this birth
 - B. The six particular sufferings associated with this birth
 - 1. Nothing is fixed
 - 2. Cannot be satisfied
 - 3. Forced to shed your body over and over - death
 - 4. Forced to take up a body over and over – rebirth
 - 5. After high comes low
 - 6. There is no companion

- IV. Demi-Gods
 - A. Causes for this birth
 - B. Particular sufferings

- V. Pleasure Beings
 - A. Causes for this birth
 - B. The particular sufferings associated with this birth

- VI. Meditation Assignment
 - 15 minutes per day, memorize the six sufferings particular to a human birth and review specific instances of them in your life

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Class Three Outline

Class Three

- I. Bardo Beings: The State In Between
 - A. Logical proofs of bardo beings
 - B. What they look like
 - C. How they enter next birth

- II. Sustenance and a Description of our Planet
 - A. Four types of sustenance
 - 1. Food
 - 2. Stained contact
 - 3. Stained movement of the mind
 - 4. Stained consciousness - the mind itself

- III. Hell Beings
 - A. Causes for this birth
 - B. Particular sufferings associated with this birth
 - C. Eight Different Kinds of Hells
 - 1. Revive
 - 2. Lines of Black
 - 3. Gather and Smash
 - 4. Screaming
 - 5. Great Screaming
 - 6. Heat
 - 7. Super Heat
 - 8. No Respite

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Class Three Outline

IV. Time

A. The great eons

1. The Five Degenerations of the “Eon of Good Fortune”
 - a. Life is very fragile
 - b. People not attracted to doing good
 - c. Bodies are weak
 - d. Food and medicine has no ability to sustain or cure
 - e. Ordained people not virtuous

B. When Buddhas will appear

C. How long it will take for you to become a Buddha

V. Meditation Assignment

15 minutes per day, meditate on why it would be necessary for there to be an “in-between state” as one moves from birth to birth.

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Class Four Outline

Class Four

- I. The Four Parts of a Death Awareness Meditation
 - A. Disadvantages of not cultivating death awareness
 - B. Advantages of cultivating death awareness
 - C. What death awareness is and what it isn't
 - D. How to develop death awareness

- II. The Three Main Parts and Nine Reasons of a Death Awareness Meditation
 - A. Death is certain
 1. Nothing can stop it
 2. You can't add time to your life
 3. You have no time to practice while you are alive
 - B. The time of death is uncertain
 1. Lifespans are not fixed
 2. There are lots of things that can kill you and few that keep you alive
 3. The body is extremely delicate and easily hurt
 - C. When you die, only Dharma can help
 1. Friends and relatives can't help
 2. Material possessions can't help
 3. Even your body fails you

- III. Three Resolutions
 - A. Knowing you must die, begin to practice Dharma
 - B. Knowing you can die at any time, quit your worldly work and begin Dharma today
 - C. Knowing nothing else can help, practice only Dharma

- IV. Meditation Assignment
15 minutes a day, analytical meditation on the three main parts, nine reasons, and three resolutions of the death awareness meditation.