

2010- Foundation Series on Buddhist Tranquil Wisdom insight Meditation (TWIM)

United International Buddha Dhamma Society (UIBDS)
Dhamma Sukha Meditation Center (DSMC), 8218 County Road 204, Annapolis, MO 63620

As taught by
Sister Khema and overseen by Most Venerable “Bhante” Vimalaramsi
The Gift of Dhamma is Priceless!

September 7, 2010
The BEGINNING POINT of the
BUDDHIST FOUNDATION MEDITATION TRAINING COURSE

Title: ‘FS-00- Introduction explanation

Dhamma Greetings to everyone and Welcome!

This project is being written by Rev. Sister Khema and overseen and edited by Most Venerable Bhante Vimalaramsi.

The course is the culmination of many years of hard work figuring out what works the best to help people to study and practice the Buddhist Meditation found in the texts and which is now called **Tranquil Wisdom Insight Meditation or TWIM for short.**

It doesn’t matter when you begin to read these installments and you are to progress at your own pace and send in questions as you go along.

The project will keep on going until it is completed.

We call the project:

“Buddhist Foundation Meditation Training “.

This Buddha Dhamma is being taught to you in direct alignment to the Tranquil Wisdom Insight Meditation (TWIM) approach which is a directly expressed RIGHT EFFORT practice from the texts and is now being used at the Dhamma Sukha Meditation Center or DSMC in Annapolis, MO.

For those who don’t know, “Dhamma Sukha” Means ‘Happy Teaching’ and this practice brings us to understand why the Buddha expressed the idea that “We are the Happy ones” in many parts of the Dhammapada. Happiness seems to be a byproduct of keeping this practice going with a smile

As you go along, remember that although the practice is easy to understand and immediately effective in many ways, this does not mean it is simple to reach the final goal!

That takes an immersion into practicing all the time! It takes ongoing curiosity, determination and discipline to do that. There are, however, many levels of attainment and satisfaction along the way. Each level of understanding brings more relief. All that we learn here is a handy addition to in life’s little toolbox for everyday life!

The first steps of this project began in January 2010. It will continue on each year until it is completed and then it will be reorganized and turned into a free book.

So don't give up... sometimes I don't get to write for a time due to travel or things needing attention in the center as it is being built and so, I'll ask you to hang in there with me. <grin>

Your contribution of questions and comments are very important in the process of completing this project. Your comments will end up determining where more training is needed or simpler words or more material on a certain point. So your participation is important in that way.

The goal of the project is:

1. To demonstrate consistency and interconnectedness within this Foundation Buddhist Meditation training found the Pali canon texts and to demonstrate it's usefulness in daily life today.
2. To clearly see that when we understand the Dhamma, it improves our practice immensely and relieves suffering in life. You will discover many answers here to challenges in your life that have to do with upsetting emotions.
3. To come up at the end with a good leadership manual so others can learn to successfully share TWIM with meditation groups.
4. To create material to help monastics reclaim what was priceless about Buddhist teachings for the common lay person in today's modern world.
5. To produce a training manual for leaders and teachers to use for reference in the future when teaching TWIM and Foundation Buddhism to others.

If a strong foundation is set up in the beginning with full understanding there is a lot of potential in this meditation.

Imagine boosting mind's potential to it fullest by letting go of all tension and abandoning fear and worry.

How about clearing mind enough to have space for creative solutions to pop up for life's challenges.

What if you could eliminate the weight of the past and the pressure of the future?

You could then be absolutely "alive" in the present moment and get things done and be happier too.

How about learning to manage pain, sleep soundly, and learning about healing your body and mind without using such heavy drugs.

I am not talking about just considering this. I am talking about making it a reality and using it in life. That is an exciting prospect!

The Buddha uncovered the true nature of suffering and the cessation of suffering through re-examining universal laws that revealed the true nature of everything.

By repeating his same investigation, you can discover how things work too.

There is no question that the truth has a way of setting mind free.

Meditation is the vehicle the used to see clearly universal truth.

Q: Which Meditation will be used in this course?

A: It's obvious the Buddha changed something on the night of his enlightenment. The texts gave us hints about what he did. They tell us that he yoked together Serenity and Insight (Samatha and Vipassana) into one practice.

The Majjhima Nikaya and Samyutta Nikaya preserved some instructions with very specific steps that support this.

These steps have been re-activated and taught to students now for over 15 years by Most Venerable Bhante Vimalaramsi.

Today some of his students are beginning to teach with his supervision.

Monastics and lay people alike are being guided to assist groups of people to use this practice as taught at DSMC today.

Over 3,000 students worldwide have tried this meditation with extremely interesting results.

Meditators succeed '*if they keep doing the practice correctly*'.

Listen to the instructions, follow them exactly and, keep the steps going.

If you keep the practice going in daily life, then life will become easier and smiles will arise more easily.

Q: What kind of results?

A: People who gain a clear understanding of the Dhamma become lighter and happier. After personally experiencing the true nature of suffering, they see specifically what suffering is, how suffering arises, how to release it, and replace it with wholesome states.

It is this knowledge and retraining that sets mind free.

By continually practicing Right Effort, mind gains a new freedom and ease.

Q: What is this training project online about?

A: This training project is a concerted effort to create the first manual that will help monastics, lay Dhamma teachers, group leaders, and future students alike to discover an easier way to present the Dhamma so people can readily understand it and use it today.

Bhante made the challenge to me during the winter of 2009-2010 to turn what we've learned over the years into written form. The challenge has been accepted and the students can help it to become a reality.

--Each installment is limited to 5 pages using 10 pt font (that's give or take about 2,000 words). (Those of you who have been around for awhile know this will be a hefty challenge for me. haha! And there may be some exceptions that come out longer.

--Installments will arrive every week to 10 days, posted, as possible, onto this list and then onto the website also.

It is Your involvement that will keep this project going.

Please remember, as Bhante has often pointed out,

“there is no such a thing as a stupid question! The more you ask, the more you will receive and this will help everybody learn”.

So, keep on asking and making comments to us.

Q: What do you mean by Foundation information?

A: “Foundation” information is like the foundation for a house.

Without a strong foundation, a meditator can drift around for years without any real relief from suffering or real progress towards clear understanding of Dhamma.

Q: What is included in the Foundation?

A: A running continuous updated syllabus will let you know the dates that installments are posted.

This information provides the foundation you need for balanced meditation with understandable progress.

If you have attempted other practices before this one, every practice has a form of discipline and value strengthening your determination to find answers. Just look at this practice as another level of coaching to tweak your skills and increase deeper understanding.

To succeed with this practice you are encouraged to come to it with a beginner's mind and embrace what the Buddha is saying as closely as you can.

We know the practice works.

A question I often asked was if the Buddha found a direct route to the cessation of suffering, then why would you take a back road to get to your destination when you could take the inter-state highway; a direct route to the cessation of suffering? IF this is here, its worth some time to purely try this practice out.

After initial materials are written , they are always edited by Ven. Vimalaramsi twice, back and forth,

before posting onto the support list.

Q: What else is covered?

A: Generosity will initially be visited. Then looking at the balance between the precepts and hindrances. Then the 37 Requisites of Awakening will be visited to demonstrate their inter-connection to your practice. Dependent Origination will be examined from many angles during the training and discussed in depth in ways not used for a very long time. You may find it interesting that this process can be so useful to understand the emotions we face in daily life.

Some of what the Buddha had to say about development charts and progress charts will be shared with you along and some of the drills the Buddha gave his monks to help them understand things more deeply will be offered to you.

Sometimes references will be made to supporting texts or you may be asked to go into the www.dhammasukha.org website to listen to certain suttas for more information.

The next document coming up for you is

The Buddhist Foundation Meditation Training syllabus will show new installments with their initial posting dates.

Q: What's next?

This gives you some idea of the material to be touched on.

Every so often TRAINING NOTES may be added to accommodate your added questions and discussions.

The meditation instructions are given to you in the beginning so you can actively practice while you train. They are located at the Website at www.dhammasukha.org

You will gain lots of insights with full understanding if you keep the entire set of information and use it often.

The training starts at the beginning encompassing explanations on the subjects of **Generosity** (dana) , **Morality** (sila) and **Mental Development** (bhavana).

The 5 Aggregates, the 6 Sense Doors are covered which each being is made up of. Then we examine **how each person experiences their existence in this life through feeling (Human Cognition)**. We discover **how Feeling arises and see why Feeling is not Emotion.** By the way, this is great news because it leads to the hope of getting a handle on life instead of being beaten up by it! (grin)_

This is an attempt to give you clear and simple terms in a terminology to use for communication with the teachers. Short definitions define **Craving and Clinging**, their similarities/differences. **Meditation and Mindfulness** become clearly defined and how they work together. **Proper investigation** is demonstrated by the Buddha in the texts. Because things are so clear, most students come to fully experience and understand how the actual **purification of mind is happening through this**

meditation. You will learn **what the Four Noble Truths are for and eventually how they exist within each of the links of the impersonal process of Dependent Origination.**

In short, you will learn how to practice the same experiment the Buddha did. The training is interspersed with **exercises monks did in the beginning of all this**. We will also try to address some of the questions people have about how to sit, walk, where to meditate, when to meditate, and so forth

You'll be instructed how to give a 4-point report about your meditation experience to a teacher so you can get advice on the next step. The Dhamma will be met in a new way with the Buddha as a premier meditation teacher who spent 45 years refining the teaching. .

Referrals are given to supporting Dhamma talks, videos, and other references found on the website at www.dhammasukha.org These co-inside with the teaching as much as possible.

As we study together, we'll see examples of interactions between people in daily life and how understanding of what's going on in mind can change the outcomes of several situations and reduce suffering moving closer to peaceful coexistence.

Q: What is our responsibility for this course?

A: How much you get involved with this is totally up to you. We ask that you contribute questions, discuss them with us and dig deeper than you have before.

When you write to us, **please stay on topic**. Don't go far afield. Always, let us know what you want to better understand in these lessons. This is how they will improve.

Don't be shy. Write to us and tell us if a topic needs to be more clearly written about, shortened or smaller words used.

Do you need better examples or want more Pali words? Tell us what you need.

What other things in Buddhism do you want to know about?

All information will be considered and if not used immediately, it will be discussed in the future.

Most important, let us know if you do understand the installments. Let us know if you are using it in life. If this Dhamma does not lighten your life and bring you more contentment and balance, then, what good is this practice?

Q: Does this mean we get to contribute to this new manual and workbook?

A: Yes. This is a different approach to building a book. It means we acknowledge that this group of over 600 people across the world is the best measure of how we are doing when we teach the Dhamma in today's world. That's the key to this back engineering a very useful book! Can you learn this practice and can you keep it going?

Q: Is there anything else we need to know before we begin?

A: When you write comments, please **set up your subject line in the email very carefully so I can pick it up fast.**

Identify which installment your question is about this way;

FS-01 What is Dana? This is good enough.

These installments are already being translated in this early format into Spanish, into the language of Bangladesh, into Korean, Malaysian, German, and 6 more languages. So this is getting fun!

Q: Are you going to include a Glossary of words?

A: There is going to be a glossary but not in the same structured way we did this before. This may be done later before the book is printed. There may be an installment with glossary words every so often as a summary for a section. Most important pali words will usually be in bold for you in the installments. Please keep a notebook to build your own glossary of English-Pali words.

People speaking English or other western languages can learn to practice Buddhist Meditation very well in their own language. The Buddha knew this and encouraged monks to translate and then teach in the country in which they live. You may have noticed that this doesn't always happen in quite the way it was meant to happen

The point is that although learning proper pronunciation of Pali is very good to do, the fact is that a Pali course is not mandatory to learn about Buddhism or Buddhist meditation. You will receive help before this is over to get a reasonable handle on the primary words that most traditions use when talking about things.

Write your questions onto the group list or to sisterkhema@yahoo.com directly.

Remember! Stay light with this training. Have a fun journey. Above all else, keep smiling! Keep giving away smiles to others. Keep using this practice in daily life. Let's keep going now. You are all doing great so far!

Metta (Loving Kindness) and smiles.
Rev. Sister Khema (DSMC)

Background of Guiding Teachers:

Most Venerable "Bhante" Vimalaramsi Mahathera is one of three founders and President of the United International Buddha Dhamma Society (UIBDS) in 2003 and the current Abbot for Dhamma Sukha Meditation Center (DSMC) in Missouri, USA. He is the first lifetime representative from the USA to the World Buddhist Conference in Kobe, Japan. It meets about every two years to discuss the development of Buddhism in the world amongst the three primary schools. In 2005, Bhante began the Buddhist American Forest Tradition and the new tradition was internationally announced it in 2008 during the 5th Conference of the WBC. The USA has never been represented before on such a Buddhist council.

Venerable's spiritual journey in Asia took him 12 years working with many master teachers and elders and taking many long retreats. More of this story can be found online. After figuring this approach out from the texts, he has been teaching the Tranquil Wisdom Insight Meditation (TWIM) for over 18 years and worked with other meditation for over 37 yrs. He is well-known worldwide for his first book on the "Anapanasati Sutta: A Practical Guide to Tranquil Wisdom Meditation" Personal and group retreats in meditation are offered at DSMC from Mid-May through October each year by pre-registration. Venerable has made some lovely affiliations with other temples over the past 6 years in the US. He oversees various temporary and full ordination programs where both men and women are trained equally to become monastics in this tradition.

New book editions continue to develop concerning the Anapanasati Sutta and more recently a new easy to understand fireside translation for the Majjhima Nikaya suttas that will warm your heart beside the hearth is evolving! It is going to be very easy to use in support of your practice.

Rev. Sister Khema/ aka Samaneri Khema has been studying and practicing with Venerable Vimalaramsi for over 11 years and is the international secretary and one of the founders of UIBDS. After two years as an 8 preceptor wearing white, novice vows were taken in 2006 and at some point in the future she hopes to take full ordination. While following the practice and studying, she is also the Chairperson for UIBDS and serves as the co-administrator for DSMC. In 2003 Sister built the first DSMC Website to help support students online with their practice. She then created an online support group, by invitation only, for new and experienced students to consult. Public talks and teaching began in 2009. An "online retreat" concept was created and implemented from 2004-2008. This expanded into broader online training and writing. Time is also spent developing support materials for meditation retreats, for group leaders and teachers and teams who help with international translations of the training.. Today there is a near mirror site in Spanish heavily attended and 9 other languages training in part. Over 500.000 hits occur on the website monthly. New books are expected to come out in the future recounting her entire experience of learning and using this practice within a heavily Christian Western world.

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