



Shantideva Study Group

FPMT Israel

Study Program: October 2016 to January 2017

Teachers: Andy Wistreich and Shan Tate



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Andy Wistreich and Shan Tate joint bio

Andy Wistreich first visited Israel aged 18 in 1968, several years before becoming a Buddhist. Aged 29 he began to practise Buddhism and soon started to teach in the FPMT centre in London, which is where he first met Shan Tate. Shan and Andy helped to organise the centre in London in the eighties and then moved to southwest England where they started the Saraswati Study Group, in 1991, which still meets regularly in their home and elsewhere. In the meantime, they brought up a family and had challenging careers in education and family therapy. Now retired, they are travelling together and continuing to support the learning of Dharma in various places and contexts. Andy is registered with FPMT as an in-depth teacher, and Shan assists by leading meditations and facilitating discussions. They came to Israel together in 2015 at the invitation of the Dharma Friends group.

1. Discovering Buddhism

1.1 Module 4 - The Spiritual Teacher

Dates and times:

1.1.1 Part 1 Saturday 29-10-16 15:30-19:30.

1.1.2 Part 2 Saturday 05-11-16 15:30-19:30.

1.1.3 Part 3 Saturday 12-11-16 15:30-19:30.

Venue: Meditation Factory, 27 Maskit street Herzeliya Pituach

In this module we will be looking at the various kinds of teacher-student relationship that exist within the Buddhist tradition. In particular we will focus on the Guru-disciple relationship.

There is a lot of confusion about this relationship, partly because it carries a lot of emotion, and also due to the issue of surrender. One thing that we aren't asked to surrender is our critical faculty, whereby we figure out for ourselves what is right and wrong, and what is true and false.

Therefore, the module will be an objective presentation of all aspects of the teacher-student relationship - what qualities a spiritual teacher should have, what qualities a good student should have, what are the benefits of having a Guru and the disadvantages of not having one, and what are the correct and incorrect ways of relating to a spiritual teacher.

Without a clear understanding of these topics there are many pitfalls in teacher-student relationships, particularly when we come from a culture that doesn't really understand the roles of Guru and disciple well. One of the purposes of the course is to demystify this whole issue. Take the time to investigate the role of the teacher on the spiritual path: the need for a teacher, the qualities of a teacher, the qualities of a student, and how to relate to a teacher for greatest benefit in one's spiritual life. Consider the challenges we face when thinking of entering into a "guru-disciple" relationship and learn how to overcome these skillfully.

1.2 Module 5 - Death and Rebirth

Dates and Times:

1.2.1 Part 1 Saturday 19-11-16 15:30-19:30.

1.2.2 Part 2 Saturday 26-11-16 15:30-19:30.

1.2.3 Part 3 Saturday 10-12-16 15:30-19:30.

Venue: Meditation Factory, 27 Maskit street Herzeliya Pituach

This module enables the participants to reflect on the meaning and implications of death, in relation to the way we live our life. It helps us to come to terms with the facts that we will definitely die at some point and that we don't know when it will happen. Although we know these facts very well, we often live life as though it will last forever.

Accepting and understanding our mortality is the doorway to the spiritual path, if only because it raises the question, "What comes next?" On top of that it throws our attachment for people, possessions and our own body into relief, and enables us to begin the process of becoming less attached to these things, which eventually leads to spiritual liberation.

The module will also help us to think about rebirth - the beginningless and endless nature of our mindstream - and how we pass from life to life. There will be meditations on the death process, which can help us prepare for that time.

Those who live with a realistic knowledge of death, and who live in a positive way, need have no fear of this process of transition from this life. Transcending fear of death is a major benefit of spiritual practice.

Explore the process of death and rebirth and its impact on how we live our lives. Be guided in skillful reflection on the meaning of death and what to expect at the death-time. In this way, fulfill your purpose in life, resolve conflicts, and develop the skills to help both yourself and others at the time of death. Eventually, through Buddhist practice, one can overcome death altogether.

1.3 Module 6 - All About Karma

Dates and Times:

1.3.1 Part 1 Saturday 17-12-16 15:30-19:30.

1.3.2 Part 2 Saturday 31-12-16 15:30-19:30.

1.3.3 Part 3 Saturday 07-01-17 15:30-19:30 .

Venue: Meditation Factory, 27 Maskit street Herzeliya Pituach

Unless you understand the way that karma works – which is the law of the cause and effect of actions, you cannot seriously enter the Buddhist path, nor understand the teachings of the Buddha. This process, that underlies all our experience and all our activity of our body, speech and mind, is fundamental to our existence, yet most people don't really know about it.

Moreover, the working of karma doesn't make sense unless one recognizes the possibility of past and future lives. How can someone have terrible problems in life, yet be a kind, gentle, ethical person, whilst meanwhile another person has great conditions in life yet be mean, cruel and arrogant? It is hard to explain without recognizing the possibility of past and future lives.

In this module, the Buddha's teachings on karma will be presented clearly with examples, and the opportunity to discuss fully all that is taught. Through meditations one will have the opportunity to deeply understand and recognize how the law of cause and effect of actions is operating within one's life.

Moreover, there will be instruction and practice in how to purify negative karma, so that we don't have to undergo the effects. Most of us have made mistakes in our life, and have caused harm to ourselves and others that we now regret. Feeling guilty about this doesn't help, but just makes us feel worse.

Purifying our negative karma, however, helps a lot, and can lead to new beginnings in life.

Learn the essential facts about the law of cause and effect and generate a clear understanding about how karma works. Discover effective tools to accumulate merit - the cause of happiness and success - and purify mistaken actions done in the past. In addition, explore ways to become adept at dealing with life most effectively and thereby take control of your future.

2. Retreats.

2.1 Introduction to Kalachakra - Harmonizing the Inner and Outer Elements

Dates and Time:

Thursday 1-12-16 afternoon to Saturday 3-12-16 early evening.

Venue: Nave Shalom Retreat Center.

Kalachakra, meaning cycles of time, is a sophisticated Buddhist system of science, philosophy and spiritual practice for utilising the nature of time in personal, societal and environmental transformation. It is powerful and has ancient roots in knowledge of the natural cycles of time that exist within the cosmos and the individual.

This short retreat serves to introduce participants to the Kalachakra system, especially focusing on the harmonisation of the six elements – earth, water, fire, air, space and consciousness – both within the individual and between the individual and the environment.

This topic is very beneficial for our personal health as well as for the health of the environment. When the elements become disharmonious there are diseases and environmental disasters. Since these things are becoming more widespread in our time, the Kalachakra can make a very positive contribution to our understanding of the problems and our search for solutions.

Although it is necessary to receive an initiation in order to undertake the practices of Kalachakra, this retreat will be open to all, as it will provide an introduction to the Kalachakra worldview.

2.2 Meditation Retreat on the Nature of the Mind (Introduction to Mahamudra)

Dates and Time:

Thursday 12-1-17 afternoon to Saturday 14-1-17 early evening.

Venue: Nave Shalom Retreat Center.

This short retreat will introduce profound practices for discovering and meditating on the nature of our own mind. Because our mind is already present naturally, these meditations do not go beyond what is ever present in us.

What is perhaps strange is that every moment of the day and night we are using our mind, yet very few of us have the slightest idea of what our mind is. The reason is that we always focus on the objects that our mind experiences, rather than the subject of those experiences, the mind itself.

When you learn to meditate on the nature of the mind, something vast and extraordinary opens up for you, and this can transform your life. The mind has the conventional nature of clarity and awareness. Moreover, ultimately the mind lacks any independent autonomous existence whatsoever. Recognizing and realizing this ultimate nature of the mind frees one from all problems and suffering, and enables one to be of ultimate benefit to others.

This retreat will introduce participants to the understanding of the nature of the mind, and will teach practices that may be continued beyond the retreat.

3. The Importance of Lineage

Dates and Time:

Tuesdays 19:30-21:30 1/11, 15/11, 29/11, 13/12, 27/12, 10/1

In this 6 sessions programme we will examine the nature and meaning of lineage in the Buddhist tradition, and specifically the roots of the FPMT tradition. It will help us to understand why we are developing FPMT in Israel.

3.1 What is Buddhism?

3.2 What is the Nalanda Tradition?

3.3 What is Tibetan Buddhism?

3.4 What is the tradition of Lama Tsong Khapa?

3.5 What is the role of His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama?

3.6 What is the FPMT tradition of Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche?

In Buddhism, as in most spiritual and secular traditions, it is important to know and be willing to state where you are coming from, historically. One of the reasons is to show that you didn't just make it up in order to impress people. This is one reason why knowing the lineage is important.

The founder of Buddhism is the Buddha and it is taught that the Buddha knew everything there is to know, and had perfect skill in transmitting his knowledge. Therefore, subsequent Buddhist teachers and practitioners don't have anything new to discover or to say. They simply practice and present the teachings in a way that is relevant to their situation and time. The goals they reach are the same as they have always been – liberation from all suffering, and the full enlightenment that enables one to benefit all sentient beings. These goals are timeless.

Lineage isn't simply passing on what one has heard. It is necessary to reflect and meditate on what one learns from the teachers, in order to fully actualize the meaning in one's own mind. Then one is able to pass the teachings to others and maintain the lineage. All the lineage masters from Buddha down to those alive now, have actualized the Dharma in their own mind streams.

This program will explore the lineage leading to the FPMT, step by step, in six sessions. It is open to all who are genuinely interested in understanding this lineage in order to have more confidence in it. When you have confidence in a lineage you become more open to the teachings, and inner transformation can take place. Otherwise this isn't possible.

4. Vajrayana (Open to recipients of HYT initiations)

Dates and time:

Fridays 13:00-17:00 11/11, 18/11, 25/11, 9/12, 16/12, 6/1.

Venue:

31 Trumpeldor street, Kiryat Ono.

This program is open only to those who have an initiation into the Highest Yoga Tantra of Buddhism. If you need to check your eligibility, please get in touch before attending. We will cover all the essentials for practicing the Vajrayana according to the Highest Yoga Tantra systems. The means for doing this will be the Short Six Session Guruyoga in nine verses by Ngulchu Dreyjung. You will need a copy of this practice for the course. Please enquire if you don't have one.

We will have plenty of time for any questions about tantra practice to be discussed. It is anticipated that this will be a small group, so there will be a relaxed open atmosphere, and the chance to widely explore whatever comes up in discussion.

5. Geshe Tenzin Zopa Visit to Israel.

Shantideva Study Group - FPMT Israel is deeply honored to host Venerable and Precious Geshe Tenzin Zopa

Arrival January 18, 2017

Departing January 30, 2017

Please look at these links

<http://geshezopa.blogspot.co.il>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tenzin_Zopa

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lr3_W997zw

<http://fpmt.org/teachers/konchog/tenzin/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gy9AFwvzmok>

More details to follow as we move forward.