



STUDY GUIDE

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Table of Contents

Introduction to This Guide.....	1
Chapter 1 – Exploring Buddhism	1
Chapter 2 –The Buddhist View of Life.....	3
Chapter 3 – Mind and Emotions	4
Chapter 4 – The Spread of the Buddhadharma and Buddhist Canons.....	5
Chapter 5 – The Buddha’s Teachings Form a Cohesive Whole	7
Chapter 6 – Investigating the Teachings.....	8
Chapter 7 – The Importance of Kindness and Compassion.....	9
Chapter 8 – A Systematic Approach.....	10
Chapter 9 – Tools for the Path	11
Chapter 10 – Making Progress.....	12
Chapter 11 – Personal Reflections on the Path	13
Chapter 12 – Working in the World	13

Approaching the Buddhist Path Study Guide

Introduction to This Guide

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has been publicly teaching Buddhism for decades. *The Library of Wisdom and Compassion* shares the Buddha's teachings on the complete path to full awakening that he himself has practiced his entire life. This study guide supports *Approaching the Buddhist Path*, the first volume of the series. The contemplation points are organized by book chapter as well as by the dates of [recorded teachings given by Venerable Chodron](#) during 2018-19.

Approaching the Buddhist Path starts from the universal human wish for happiness and presents the dynamic nature of the mind. It also provides a wealth of reflections on Buddhist history and fundamentals, contemporary issues, and the Dalai Lama's own personal experiences. It stands alone as an introduction to Buddhism, but also provides a foundation for the systematic illumination of the path in the volumes to come.

Chapter 1 – Exploring Buddhism

JULY 20, 2018

PROLOGUE

1. What does it mean to be a 21st century Buddhist?
2. At what point in our practice should we also study other Buddhist traditions? Why is it important to study other traditions as well?
3. If Buddhism had a slogan, which slogan do you think His Holiness the Dalai Lama would give?
4. His Holiness encourages us in the prologue to “please think deeply about the various topics in the manner explained. Contemplate how these topics relate to one another and to your life.”

AUGUST 3, 2018

OVERVIEW OF THE ENTIRE SERIES

1. Why does Ven. Chodron not teach the Lamrim meditation on the student – teacher relationship in the traditional way in the West, but instead starts teaching the Lamrim with Karma or Rebirth, for example?
2. The spiritual path is essential for your life! Why?
3. What do we need to know in order to stop suffering?

4. His Holiness divided the seven billion human beings into three groups. What are these three groups? How do they differentiate from each other and what do they have in common?

Ven. Chodron's advice:

Review what you read and write out the main points for contemplation.

AUGUST 10, 2018

BUDDHADHARMA AND THE OTHER RELIGIONS

1. Why is it important to understand the Four Noble Truths?
2. Why is spirituality important in the world?
3. What are the three main challenges for Buddhism according to His Holiness the Dalai Lama? What might more recent challenges be?
4. Why do we need to pay attention to our past actions?
5. Why is it important to think about dukkha?
6. Why is it helpful to cultivate a broad outlook and a deeper view about the meaning of life?

AUGUST 17, 2018

THE BUDDHIST VIEW OF LIFE

1. Part of Ven. Chodron's motivation was her encouragement to contemplate earnestly who we use; who we look at with the thought of what we can get from them. It takes courage and time to look at it, but it's an important step for the development of bodhicitta.
2. What is the purpose of Dharma education?
3. If we really want to understand the Dharma, what do we have to know?
4. Our mind is changing from moment to moment. What does this quality of changeability indicate?
5. What is an analogy for the changeability of mind?
6. In order to prove that the afflictions can be eliminated from the mind, what is it we have to prove?

Chapter 2 –The Buddhist View of Life

SEPTEMBER 14, 2018

BODY, MIND, REBIRTH, AND SELF

1. How do you know the mind exists?
2. What factor differentiates a corpse from a living being?
3. What is the source of all our happiness and suffering?
4. What is the substantial cause of mind?
5. In the book, Ven. Chodron cites: *The moment of mind at the time of conception arose due to a cause, a previous moment of mind, and in this way the continuum of mind prior to this life is established.* How would you put the above quotation into a meditation instruction?
6. What is a subtlest mind?

SEPTEMBER 21, 2018

THE FOUR TRUTHS OF THE ARYAS

1. What are the four things that the Aryas have seen as truth?
2. Why is it important to learn the four truths?
3. Why is it purposeful to recognize and reflect on our suffering?
4. What is the Dharma we take refuge in?
5. What are the reasons for the uniqueness of the Three Jewels?

DEPENDENT ARISING AND EMPTINESS

6. What are the three levels of dependent arising?
7. What is the subtlest meaning of dependent arising?

SEPTEMBER 18, 2018

DEPENDENT ARISING AND THE THREE JEWELS

1. What is the foundation of all Dharma practices?
2. There are two levels of dependent arising that are the main factors through which spiritual practitioners accomplish aspiration. What are they?
3. Please describe briefly how dependent arising underlies the four truths.
4. How do we actualize the body and mind of a Buddha?

THE POSSIBILITY OF ENDING DUKKHA

5. What two factors make liberation possible?
6. What is the cause of cyclic existence?
7. What is nirvana?

Chapter 3 – Mind and Emotions

OCTOBER 5, 2018

1. Describe how karma is created using the process of the 12 links. Choose a personal example with a certain result.
2. What is the difference between science and Buddhism with regard to emotions?
3. Why is it so important to think about the long-term effects of negative and positive emotions?
4. Think about an emotion you had recently and clarify for yourself if this feeling is virtuous or non-virtuous. How can you change your mind to create virtuous states?

OCTOBER 26, 2018

PAGES 44-48

EMOTIONS AND KLESHAS

1. Take some time and reflect on what it would be like to live in a culture that does not focus on “my emotions.” Take a specific aspect of your life and consider how it would be different without this focus.

CONSTRUCTIVE AND DESTRUCTIVE EMOTIONS

2. Attachment: Why is jealousy based on attachment? How can you overcome it?
3. Fear: When meditating on the lower realms, sometimes you can be overcome by a panicky fear. What is the best antidote for this kind of fear and how do you proceed in practicing?

NOVEMBER 16, 2018

WORKING WITH AFFLICTIONS, PAGES 56-60

1. If you have wrong views that tend towards nihilism or absolutism and want to move away from those views, which stages would you have to go through?

CULTIVATING LOVE AND COMPASSION, PAGES 61-62

2. What is the difference between ordinary and unconditional love and compassion?

DECEMBER 21, 2018

PAGES 63-67

1. What are the advantages of practicing joyous perseverance/effort?
2. What worldly activities have you done that were infused with joyous effort? What difficulties have you overcome with a joyful, determined mind?
3. What dharma activities have you done that were infused with joyous effort? What difficulties have you overcome with a joyful, determined mind?
4. How do we kick joyous perseverance into gear?
5. What are the obstacles to joyous perseverance?
6. Share examples of joyous perseverance that you have seen in others that inspire you.

DECEMBER 28, 2018

PAGES 67-74

DISAGREEMENT AND CONFLICT

1. The Buddha lays out the root of disputes (AN 6.36):

There are, O monastics, these six roots of disputes. What six? Here a monastic is (1) angry and vengeful, or (2) contemptuous and domineering, or (3) envious and miserly, or (4) deceitful and hypocritical, or (5) he has evil desires and wrong views, or (6) he adheres to his own views, holding to them tenaciously and relinquishing them with difficulty.

Which one of these do you do frequently? Which do you see other people do frequently?

2. What are the benefits and disadvantages of each?
3. What practices can you apply to overcome each of these six roots of dispute?

Chapter 4 – The Spread of the Buddhadharma and Buddhist Canons

JANUARY 4, 2019

1. What is Buddhism and what is culture? Take some examples from your own experience either with practicing and studying Buddhism or from simply observing.
2. Apart from the Four Noble Truths, what are other categories that can be used to distinguish culture and Buddhism?

JANUARY 11, 2019

VEHICLES AND PATHS; BUDDHIST TRADITIONS

1. What is a yāna? What meaning stands behind it?
2. Explain the different motivations that differentiate the three vehicles.
3. How does one enter a Mahayana path?

JANUARY 18, 2019

THE BUDDHA'S LIFE; EARLY BUDDHIST SCHOOLS

1. Venerable Chodron mentioned that there are different ways to learn the Dharma. List these different ways of learning and describe each.
2. From the eighteen early schools, which three schools remain in today's schools?

JANUARY 25, 2019

EARLY BUDDHISM IN SRI LANKA

1. How do we develop a more open approach towards other religious traditions?
2. Why is it important to have tolerance and understanding towards other religious traditions?
3. How is this approach beneficial in the long-term?
4. What is the basis of your faith in the Buddha Dharma?

JANUARY 31, 2019

GROWTH OF THE MAHAYANA

1. Give reasoning why the Mahayana scriptures are from the Buddha directly. Consider some of the academic points that question that these scriptures are from the Buddha.
2. What are H.H. The Dalai Lama's reasonings for why the Mahayana scriptures can be attributed to the Buddha?
3. Tibetan and Western practitioners have different approaches to the sutras as well. What are they?

FEBRUARY 8, 2019

TANTRA; BUDDHIST CANON

1. Why does Buddha cherish all sentient beings?
2. Why is it contradictory to compete, be angry, be jealous, look with pride upon other sentient beings, etc while knowing that these are the same sentient beings that the Buddha cherishes so much?
3. To identify which basket a scripture in the Tibetan tradition belongs to, a convention of homages has been established. Which homage belongs to which basket? Give examples of texts for each basket.

FEBUARY 15, 2019

SUTRA AND ABHIDHARMA BASKET

1. List some of the benefits of cherishing others without looking at a text. Make your own list, if necessary, from your own experiences.
2. Why do we still hold on to self-cherishing even though we know that it's of no benefit in long-term (and even short-term)?
3. Why is it important to study the Abhidharma?

Chapter 5 – The Buddha's Teachings Form a Cohesive Whole

FEBUARY 22, 2019

1. Draw a chart of the description on pages 99-102 of the three turnings of the Dharma wheel. This chart can include where the Buddha taught the teachings of each wheel, to whom he taught, which texts he used, the key teachings, and fruit of that path.

MARCH 1, 2019

AUTHENTICITY OF THE MAHAYANA SCRIPTURES

1. How do you personally approach the Mahayana sutras and commentaries in regard to its authenticity? Do you find them beneficial for your life?
2. Why are the Mahayana teachings valuable for humanity?

MARCH 8, 2019

NAGARJUNA AND THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE MAHAYANA SUTRAS

1. Why do you think people might doubt the authenticity of scriptures?
2. Why is it important to be aware of your spiritual lineage?

FOUR AUTHENTICITIES

3. How do we develop faith and confidence in the teachings of the Buddha?
4. Identify the teachings you have heard that you know in your bones to be true.
5. Venerable Chodron said: When doubts arise or people are challenging you, come back to this, what is true for you. This really grounds you. Identify at least with one thing that helps ground you in your faith.

APRIL 12, 2019

THE FOUR BUDDHA BODIES

1. Staying within the framework of the Mahayana view of the four buddha bodies, describe the reverse order of the Buddha's awakening.
2. To what understanding do you come when viewing the Buddha's awakening in the reverse order?
3. What does it mean to "see the Buddha" or, in other words, why can't we see the Buddha?

APRIL 19, 2019

BUDDHISM IN TIBET

1. Why is it easier to practice the Pratimoksa precepts than the bodhisattva or even tantric precepts?
2. Why do we need reasoning and the application of Buddhist practice together and not just one of them?

Chapter 6 – Investigating the Teachings

MAY 3, 2019

THE KALAMAS' EXPERIENCE

1. What are reasons why someone could buy into a doctrine in a non-reliable way? Say it in your own words.
2. What criteria should you be aware of when looking for reliable teachings?
3. What are the reasons someone could get into a situation where they could meet an unreliable teacher or teachings?

MAY 10, 2019

TREASURE TEACHINGS AND PURE VISION TEACHINGS

1. What are your thoughts when reading about the treasure and pure vision teachings? Do you believe in them?
2. If you believe or don't believe in them, what are your reasons?
3. How do these teachings affect your actions in daily life (for example, the relationship to others who are worthy of respect such as our teachers)?

MAY 17, 2019

TREASURE TEACHINGS AND PURE VISION TEACHINGS

1. What is the meaning, the purpose, of giving your wife to the Buddha as practiced in the old stories?
2. Which story have you heard in a Dharma teaching that inspired you and why did it inspire you?
3. What is Dharma and what is culture? Define those and include specific examples.

MAY 24, 2019

BEING PRACTICAL; CHAPTER 7 BEGINS [20:00]

1. We want happiness, but employ misguided means to get it. What are the “means” that you think bring you happiness, when you are in reality running on automatic?
2. What are possible motivations for actions that bring us lasting happiness?
3. What does “being present in the moment” really mean?

Chapter 7 – The Importance of Kindness and Compassion

MAY 31, 2019

Note : Chapter 7 began in the May 24th teaching

1. Identify the dukkha of change in your own experience. Bring up one or two examples.
2. Ven. Chodron said: *Wisdom realizing emptiness can bring liberation, but not buddhahood. Buddhahood is attained only through great compassion and bodhichitta.* On what do the fruits of our spiritual practice rely and why?
3. What are some of the mind trainings that can counter emotional responses in difficult situations (i.e. what mind training techniques can you use to counter fear, anger or self-pity)? Make a couple of examples that you can imagine practicing or already practice.

JUNE 7, 2019

EIGHT VERSES

1. Why are our enemies precious?
2. Why do we have to respect ourselves in order to have compassion for others?
3. What is the benefit in “seeing ourselves as the lowest of all?”

JULY 5, 2019

1. Instead of suppressing emotions or pretending they aren't there, how does the Dalai Lama advise us to handle our emotions?
2. What is the most beneficial antidote in the long-term and why?
3. Why are situations where we are hurt by someone we trusted a precious opportunity to practice?

JULY 12, 2019

1. What disadvantages are there to always blaming the outside for this and that, such as when we are sick or something doesn't go OUR way?
2. Describe one or two practices to apply when challenges such as a sickness befalls you.
3. What are the disadvantages of wanting to receive praise? What are the antidotes to praise?

Chapter 8 – A Systematic Approach

JULY 19, 2019

1. Why do we have to apply many different practices in order to transform our mind?
2. Why is it so important to practice ethical conduct?
3. Why is it important to understand the Four Noble Truths when we want to take refuge?

JULY 26, 2019

FOUR TRUTHS AND THREE LEVELS OF PRACTITIONERS

1. What is the best approach to teach others?
2. What makes it difficult to approach the Buddhist path and develop a firm conviction in the teachings?
3. How do we naturally develop refuge in the Three Jewels?

AUGUST 2, 2019

VALUE OF THE STAGES OF THE PATH

1. What are some of the advantages of the gradual path?
2. Explain one advantage of the gradual path in more detail. Use your own words, reflecting on it in the context of your own experience.
3. In your own way, describe how one attains higher rebirth, and through which kind of meditation?
4. Examine your own practice and determine if you follow the two aims. Make examples of how you are doing this.

Chapter 9 – Tools for the Path

AUGUST 9, 2019

1. What are some of the differences between regular school education and Dharma teachings?
2. How can you balance formal Dharma practice with engaging in projects that benefit others?
3. How do you set priorities in your life? Sit and analyze what is important in your life right now and set your priorities accordingly.

AUGUST 16, 2019

1. His Holiness the Dalai Lama says: *Stabilizing our faith increases our resilience.* Why is this so?
2. *Stable faith is not affected by the opinions of others and prevents discouragement when viewing others' wrongdoings.* Why is this so?
3. What is the meaning and purpose of prayers in general?
4. What is the most important aspect of Buddha and why?
5. How does the Buddha protect us? How can we protect ourselves?

AUGUST 30, 2019

1. On what does our spiritual progress depend? What should we practice? How can prayers be effective?
2. How do the Buddhas benefit us the most?
3. Why is it important to first study the teachings? How are we already doing this?

SEPTEMBER 6, 2019

1. How do you know you are angry? How do you recognize anger?
2. What are the main points of this week's teachings on "Memorization and Debate?" Memorize those points.
3. Why does Venerable Chodron advise us to write down the main points of every teaching we receive and memorize them?

Chapter 10 – Making Progress

SEPTEMBER 13, 2019

MAKING PROGRESS

1. What are the main points of the teachings on "Realistic Expectations" & "Advanced Practices at the Right Time?"
2. What is a healthy/ realistic sense of self?
3. What are your biggest identities and how do they hinder you in making spiritual progress?

ADVANCED PRACTICES AT THE RIGHT TIME

4. Check in with yourself to see if you really integrate teachings into your mind and life or if they are just mere words. Where in doubt, study and practice the basic teachings.

SEPTEMBER 20, 2019

FINISHING CHAPTER 10, "CHECKING OUR MEDITATION EXPERIENCES" AND "SIGNS OF PROGRESS"

1. Why does His Holiness the Dalai Lama recommend that we meditate on compassion when obstacles arise that are due to sentient beings? Why does he recommend that we meditate on emptiness when experiencing other obstacles?
2. How is it most beneficial to work with good experiences in our spiritual practice?

BEGINNING CHAPTER 11, "MY DAY"

3. His Holiness the Dalai Lama speaks about how he starts the day. He shows us clearly how to take care of our mind. How can you emulate that? Give detailed examples of the practices you can emulate.

Chapter 11 – Personal Reflections on the Path

Note : Chapter 11, “My Day” is included in the September 20th teaching

OCTOBER 11, 2019

GRADUAL PROGRESS

1. Why does the practice on emptiness make it easier to have love and compassion?
2. What does it mean to say “Buddha’s tradition is a living tradition?”
3. What is most important for transforming our mind?
4. What is important in your life?

OCTOBER 18, 2019

WILLINGNESS TO UNDERGO HARDSHIP

1. Ask yourself: What is more important, your present comfort or your spiritual aspiration?

WHAT I HAVE LEARNED IN LIFE

2. What practice helps to reduce feelings of barriers between humans?

Chapter 12 – Working in the World

OCTOBER 25, 2019

GOOD HEALTH AND DEALING WITH ILLNESS AND INJURY

1. His Holiness writes: *Everyone desires good health, and for Dharma practitioners, it facilitates our ability to practice. For this reason we should do our best to maintain our health by eating nutritious meals, exercising and sleeping enough...* How do you take care of yourself in this regard?
2. In mind-training practice, we see our illness as a result of destructive actions. What are some ways to purify those?
3. The Dalai Lama advises: “Sit quietly and observe the difference between the actual physical pain of the illness or injury and the mental suffering caused by fear and anxiety.”
4. Bring to mind an actual situation of physical pain such as stomach pain or another experience from the past. Try to differentiate in your imagination what is happening to you physically and what’s going on in your mind?

NOVEMBER 1, 2019

**USING DIVERSE METHODS TO BENEFIT OTHERS
ENGAGED BUDDHISM AND POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT**

1. What makes a practice Buddhist?
2. What is a good motivation for learning secular topics?
3. In what ways could we Buddhist practitioners serve society on a secular as well as spiritual level?

NOVEMBER 8, 2019

CONSUMERISM AND THE ENVIRONMENT

1. Why do we develop strength when recognizing and forgiving ignorant actions of the past?

THE WORLD OF BUSINESS AND FINANCE

2. His Holiness the Dalai Lama states: *I ask those involved in business and government to keep future generations in mind as you make decisions in the present.* Why do those in business and government not keep future generations in mind even though they have children or grandchildren themselves?
3. Why is it ok to be the best? What activities on an economic level are admirable in that regard?

NOVEMBER 15, 2019

1. Why should Buddhism not validate science and visa versa?
2. What is His Holiness' main purpose in having dialogue with scientists, and why?

NOVEMBER 22, 2019

1. What activities help to promote religious harmony?
2. Why is it that Tibetan Buddhist teachers set up their own centers in the West or in Asian Countries instead of joining with other centers?
3. Why is it beneficial to learn from other Buddhist traditions?



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