

Discovering Buddhism Series

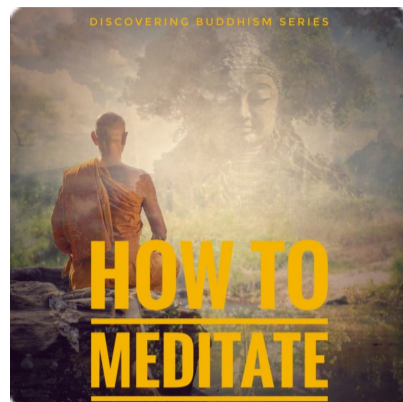
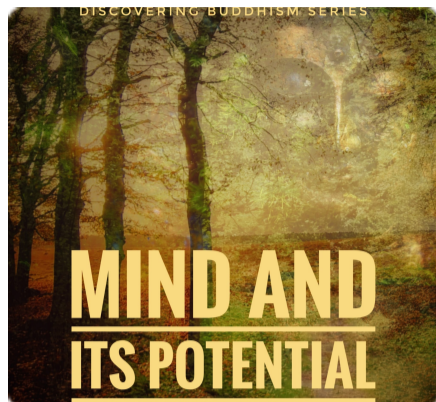
Awakening the limitless potential of your mind

Monday evenings with Annelies van der Heijden



DISCOVERING BUDDHISM SERIES

Awakening the limitless potential of your mind



What is this series all about?

It is a foundational series in Buddhist philosophy and practice, aimed at giving students a solid footing in the practice of Mahayana Buddhism. By engaging in this series, students gain a theoretical and experiential taste of the Buddha's teachings, into Buddhist meditation, and the skills we need to make our lives most meaningful. Discovering Buddhism is designed not only as an academic study of Buddhism—it is meant to change our lives!

“When we study Buddhism, we are studying ourselves, the nature of our own minds. Instead of focusing on some supreme being, Buddhism emphasizes more practical matters such as how to lead our lives, how to integrate our minds, and how to keep our everyday lives peaceful and healthy. In other words, Buddhism always accentuates experiential knowledge-wisdom rather than some dogmatic view.”
Lama Thubten Yeshe

This series of 14 topics is developed by international teachers from FPMT, under the guidance of the founders Lama Zopa Rinpoche & Lama Thubten Yeshe. It covers the complete Buddhist path to enlightenment (Lam Rim) e.g. Mind and Its potential, Death and rebirth, Refuge in the three Jewels, Establishing a daily practice, Samsara and Nirvana, Bodhicitta, Transforming problems, the Wisdom of emptiness, and more.

 [Short video with an introduction by Richard Gere and Ven. Robina Courtin on the first topic](#)

Discovering Buddhism is designed for people who wish to gain basic knowledge on and/or deepen their understanding of the key Buddhist concepts. You do not need to be a Buddhist or have previous knowledge, just an interest into the Buddhist view on life and on how this view might change your view on your life and the sentient beings around you. You may join at any point in the series and may freely choose some or all of these topics, according to your interests.

Each topic (module) consists of:

- 5 evening lessons (both at our center or online)
- meditations to explore the topic within your own mind
- inspirational study materials
- quizzes with thought provoking questions
- a morning retreat

All these are there to help you deepen your understanding of the topic.

“Discovering Buddhism is not about becoming a Buddhist, it is about discovering Buddhism as a way of living, as a way of looking at yourself and the world around you.”



Maitreya Instituut
WARM HEART CLEAR MIND

From the Buddha's time to you

Over 2,500 years ago, Shakyamuni Buddha gained direct insight into the nature of reality; perfected the qualities of wisdom, compassion, and power; and then revealed the path to enlightenment to his disciples. In the 11th century, Atisha Dipamkara, an Indian master who was very influential in Tibet, organized the Buddha's extensive teachings in the form of a graduated path to enlightenment (lamrim) to clarify how an individual practitioner should best put them into practice. The lamrim tradition was further systematized and elaborated upon by many holy beings of Tibet, including the great philosopher and practitioner Lama Tsongkhapa, and these teachings have continued to be passed from teacher to student up to this present day.

Thus, when Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche began to transmit these teachings to their disciples in the 1970s, they came from a deeply experiential tradition of study and practice. This tradition is the core of *Discovering Buddhism*, a 14-module series that gives students a solid foundation in the teachings and practice of Buddhism from the Tibetan Mahayana tradition, the tradition from His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

What value has this series brought to students' lives?

"The Discovering Buddhism program has opened my mind and heart to the principles of Buddhist teachings, showing me a way to find happiness. Since joining the program, I have been feeling calmer and more connected to sentient beings, with a deepening wish to help them. The bonds built within the participant group and with Annelies will remain in my memory with warmth. I hope we can continue this journey in the future."

- Annelies (Student at MIA)

"Studying together with other people, Discover Buddhism gives me a wider perspective on how the mind works, how fortunate we are to be living in these times, and at the same time, how lost we are. It also shows that there is a way through all the suffering and confusion that we frequently encounter in our lives.

There is a way, and it works.

It opens a whole new chapter in my life that twists and turns the way I was shown that reality actually was. Annelies is an amazing teacher, armed with a lot of compassion, patience, warmth and helpfulness.

I fully recommend it to others, actually to everyone. Thank you so much for all the teachings!"

- Mihai (student at MIA)

"Twee jaar lang heb ik de cursus Discovering Buddhism gevolgd en het heeft me veel waardevols aangereikt. De start was direct intensief met meditatie en veel studiemateriaal. Gelukkig kan ik alles opnieuw terugzien want het was te veel om direct op te nemen. Dit is eigenlijk tot het einde toe zo gebeven. Het pad heb ik leren kennen, heeft me veel gebracht en doet me beseffen dat ik nooit uitgeleerd raak. Heel veel dank aan Annelies, voor haar kennis en rust waarmee ze mij hierin begeleid heeft. Het is dankzij haar kwaliteiten dat ik deze twee jaar mezelf nooit onder druk gezet gevoeld heb en ik steeds nieuwsgierig naar het centrum toe gekomen ben. Ben benieuwd naar de volgende stap...."

- Annette (Student bij MIA)

About your teacher - Annelies van der Heijden

Annelies is a Dutch, registered FPMT teacher and qualified mindfulness teacher. She has been a Buddhist practitioner in the Tibetan Gelug tradition since 1994, this is the tradition of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Her Buddhist path gained footing in an FPMT Discovering Buddhism course at Kopan Monastery in Nepal in 1992.

"This left an indelible impression on us, especially by the person who taught this course, Venerable Robina Courtin. There we were, part seeking backpackers, part devout Buddhists, crammed into Kopan's beautiful old prayer room. The image is still clear in my mind, this impressive, inspiring and very dynamic Australian nun. Her teachings were a rich mix of deep knowledge, a large dose of (self) humor and her own personal life experiences, including those she had with Lama Yeshe. It was laughing and crying at the same time, confrontational, unconventional but here the seed was planted for me, not only for Tibetan Buddhism but certainly for a strong connection with FPMT."



She is actively involved with the Maitreya Institute and with the FPMT organization since 1997. She has been a teacher for many years and facilitates program activities at both the Maitreya Institute in The Netherlands and within the FPMT organization worldwide. She has a background as a dietician, shiatsu therapist and yoga teacher. ([Click here for a personal interview with Annelies - in Dutch](#))

“My aspiration is - how can I bring the pure profound Dharma from our tradition to our students without diluting it, but in such a way that it inspires and encourages thinking about the topics on a level that it touches their lives.”

The 14 key topics of the Discovering Buddhism Series

1. Mind and Its potential

Examine what is “mind,” its nature and function, and how it affects our experience of happiness and suffering. Come explore the differentiation between mind and brain, mind as the creator of our experiences, and the implications of possessing a mind that has no beginning and no end.

2. How to meditate

Basic meditation techniques. Learn the definition and purpose of meditation, how to sit properly, how to set up a meditation session, the different types of meditation techniques one may employ, and how to recognize and deal with obstacles to meditation.

3. Presenting the path

Get an overview of the entire Tibetan Buddhist path to awakening. Hear about the life story of the Buddha and study the basic teachings of Buddhism. Discover the unique system for putting Buddhist philosophy into practice contained in the lam-rim, or “graduated path to enlightenment.”

4. Death and impermanence

Explore the process of impermanence and death 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, help us not only during our life but also develop the skills to help both ourselves and others at the time of death.

“Our problem is that inside us there's a mind going, "Impossible, impossible, impossible. I can't, I can't, I can't." We have to banish that mind from this solar system. Anything is possible; everything is possible. Sometimes you feel that your dreams are impossible, but they're not. Human beings have great potential; they can do anything. The power of the mind is incredible, limitless.” Lama Thubten Yeshe

5. All About karma

Learn the essential facts about the law of actions and their results. Explore ways to deal with life more effectively and take control of your future.

6. Refuge in the three Jewels

Find out what it means to take refuge in the Three Jewels – the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha – and the essential practices of refuge. Learn about the advantage of taking lay vows and their role in enhancing our spiritual growth.

7. Establishing a daily practice

Assemble the tools you need to develop a successful daily practice and find out the elements necessary to generate realizations. Get some tips for making every action you do meaningful.

8. Samsara and Nirvana

Investigate what “samsara” is and how we are stuck in it. Find out what “nirvana” is and how to achieve it. Learn how to be free from suffering and gain practical tools to deal with and eliminate disturbing emotions forever.

9. The spiritual teacher

Investigate the role of the teacher on the spiritual path: the need for a teacher, the qualities of teacher and student, and how to relate to a teacher.

10. How to develop bodhichitta

Discover practices that develop our innate qualities of compassion. Learn to apply these techniques to generate bodhichitta, the mind of enlightenment, known as the very heart of Buddha’s teachings.

11. Transforming problems

Learn the disadvantages of selfishness and the advantages of cherishing others. Learn to employ the special techniques of mind training (lojong) to transform problems into happiness.



12. Wisdom of emptiness

Learn how to develop calm abiding (*shamatha*), the ability to remain focused in meditation for as long periods as you want without distraction. Try different ways of meditating on emptiness, the lack of true existence of the self and all phenomena, the realization of which is crucial for the attainment of liberation and enlightenment.

13. Introduction to Tantra

Learn what tantra is, how it works, and why it is a powerful form of practice. Get a broad overview of the four classes of tantra and learn to practice simple kriya tantric methods. Learn how to integrate tantra with lamrim meditation to obtain the best results.

14. Special integration experiences - powerful practices

In all the traditions within Tibetan Buddhism, there is a great emphasis on supported practices, beside study, reflection, and meditation. Practices which clear away the blockages and obscurations within our minds and which empower and inspire us to progress towards the aims and goals of our spiritual journey. These practices can be summarized into three: purification, accumulation and supplication.

About FPMT and its founders

The FPMT (Foundation of the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition) is an international organization devoted to preserving and spreading Mahayana Buddhism worldwide by creating opportunities to listen, reflect, meditate, practice and actualize the unmistakable teachings of the Buddha and based on that experience spreading the Dharma to sentient beings.

We provide integrated education through which people's minds and hearts can be transformed into their highest potential for the benefit of others, inspired by an attitude of universal responsibility and service.

We are committed to creating harmonious environments and helping all beings develop their full potential of infinite wisdom and compassion.

Our organization is based on the Buddhist tradition of Lama Tsongkhapa of Tibet as taught to us by our founders Lama Thubten Yeshe and Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche.



Lama Tsong Khapa (1357-1419)



His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama
(with Lama Zopa Rinpoche)



Lama Thubten Yeshe



Lama Zopa Rinpoche