

Checking Into Your Reality Course I

Diamond Mountain University

Answer Key, Class One

1. Where does enlightenment come from? Is it an inward process or outward?
Please list five of the places that we go looking for it.

Enlightenment comes from inside of us. Five places we may go looking for it include:

- 1. Traveling**
 - 2. Sitting under a magical tree**
 - 3. Drinking sacred water**
 - 4. Being touched by an enlightened being.**
 - 5. (Students can submit their own answer here)**
2. Name five advantages and some disadvantages to doing a retreat at home.

The advantages to doing your own retreat at home are the following:

- 1. Convenience**
- 2. Comfort**
- 3. Cost**
- 4. Timing**
- 5. A sense of security**

The disadvantages are usually related to the presence of family members, the telephone and the door bell. The less obvious disadvantages have to do with patterning and familiarity - falling into the traps of habitual behavior that break your concentration.

3. Explain what a “time demon” is.

The biggest demon we encounter when thinking about going on retreat is our sense of lost time. It is almost as if time is the enemy - time has us in its grasp, running us ragged, constantly pushing while never giving enough of itself. Time slips past us in the stealth of the night and appears abruptly to startle us in the morning. It dominates our lives with reminders everywhere beside our bed, in our kitchen and attached to our arm.

Thoughts pop up such as “When I do have time for retreat?” or “Sitting quietly, doing nothing? It seems like such a waste of time.” When we are in

this territory, these arguments seem so logical and so correct that they usually win us over.

4. Describe a resistance mechanism that could stop you from doing a retreat.

It is any kind of circumstance that can stop you from doing a retreat. Invariably before a retreat, things will come up, such as temptations out of the blue (e.g. business opportunities), family crises, or things that seem important enough to draw us away from our objective. We need to be very clear and strongly directed toward succeeding in initiating a retreat.

5. When you close your retreat boundary is it a physical thing that you do, mental, or both?

It is both of them because (i) you isolate yourself (e.g. by restricting yourself to a certain place, unplugging the phone, etc) and put up protection markers in the four directions (N, S, E, W), and (ii) mentally you have to shut out the world in order to have a successful retreat.

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Answer Key, Classes Two and Three

1. What is the name of the root text that you are studying? (Please give the English and Tibetan)

English: *The Three Principal Paths*
Tibetan: *Lam Tso Nam Sum*

2. Who wrote the root text and who did that person communicate with while he was writing it? Give his dates and the town where he was born.

Je Tsongkapa wrote the root text while he was communicating with Manjushri

Dates: 1357-1419. Je Tsongkapa was born in Tsongka, in the Amdo area of Northeast Tibet

3. What are the names of the text books that were chosen for this class?

***The Essence of Tibetan Buddhism* by Lama Thupten Yeshe**

***The Three Principal Teachings of Buddhism* by Je Tsonkapa, with a commentary by Pabongka Rinpoche, translated by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Lobsang Tharchin with Geshe Michael Roach**

4. Why were these text books chosen?

Both of the texts were chosen because in order to reach tantric enlightenment when you do a lerung retreat you have to great understanding about the Three Principal Paths. The wisdom of these paths act as protection circles in any kind of retreat that you plan to do and therefore provides an excellent foundation for tantric study. Most of the great masters say that if you study emptiness and karma and you don't have knowledge of the Three Principal Paths, then you cannot become enlightened. This is the main reason that these texts were chosen for retreatants. The Three Principal Paths contain all the essence of the Buddha's teachings.

5. What are the names of the Three Principal Paths?

Renunciation, Bodhichitta, and Correct View

6. Give a definition of Renunciation, Bodhichitta and Correct View.

Renunciation: A realization that your bad thoughts keep you chained in the circle of suffering. You must first have an awareness of suffering or samsara before you try to get out of it. It is your bad thoughts that keep you chained to the cycle of rebirths and perceiving yourself as a human being living in this mistaken realm. Renunciation happens in your mind and has nothing to do with giving up physical possessions. You must have a strong desire to get out of the suffering of this life in order to achieve freedom.

Bodhichitta: The Wish to achieve enlightenment for the sake of every living being. There are two kinds of Bodhichitta, one in the form of a prayer, and the other in the form of action, wherein you take vows.

Correct View: The way that you perceive your world - the world is basically coming from projections from your mind forced upon you by past karmic seeds that are ripening. You can understand this intellectually before you see it directly.

7. What is the relationship between samsara and renunciation?

If you don't have an understanding of the sufferings of samsara and a strong desire to get out of a state of unhappiness, then you will not be able to achieve renunciation.

8. Does renunciation mean throwing away all your physical belongs? Is it a mental state of mind that you develop about the world? (Give the Tibetan and Sanskrit for renunciation)

Renunciation is not getting rid of all your physical possessions since, for the time being, your body is still in samsara and requires physical things to sustain it. Renunciation is considered to be more of a mental state of mind which has acquired the wisdom of perceiving the suffering in samsara and it is totally an inner experience. This helps you to have less craving of sensory pleasures. Someone could live in a palace but have a deep sense of renunciation. It is the feeling that Shakyamuni Buddha had when left his palace and went into town for the first time and saw people suffering. It is not an activity only for monks and nuns.

Tibetan: *ngen jung*

Sanskrit: *nihsara*

9. What is sugar cane renunciation?

It is the kind of renunciation that one has when one experiences a tragedy.

For example when your mother dies (or someone else that you love), you develop feelings of deep regret and maybe a feeling that you want to get out of the suffering of the wheel of life. However, this form of renunciation can fade if one gradually gets caught up again in conventional life.

10. Describe a deeper level of renunciation than sugar cane renunciation?

There is a very deep level of renunciation that one can experience from doing a three year retreat. It is awareness that one is a human being and an understanding that all the activities that one does in life continuously do not bring ultimate pleasure. Because of this realization, you can then understand why you have great attachment to things and objects in samsara and therefore you know what you are trying to get out of.

11. List the eight worldly practices

- a. Being happy when we acquire something**
- b. And being unhappy when we don't**
- c. Being happy when we feel good**
- d. Being unhappy when we don't**
- e. Being happy when we become well known**
- f. And being unhappy when we don't**
- g. Being happy when someone speaks well of us**
- h. And being unhappy when they don't**

12. What are the four laws of karma?

- a. Actions are certain to produce similar consequences**
- b. The consequences are greater than the actions**
- c. One cannot meet a consequence if one has not committed an action**
- d. Once an action is committed, the consequence cannot be lost**

13. Why do we need the Wish for enlightenment? (Please quote verse 6 from the root text)

**Renunciation though can never bring
The total bliss of matchless Buddhahood
Unless it's bound by the purest wish; and so,
The wise seek the high wish for enlightenment**

14. What are the two methods for achieving bodhichitta and how does equanimity fit in?

The two methods are (i) the seven step cause and effect method and (ii) exchanging self and others. You must develop equanimity before practicing the seven step method.

15. List three benefits of achieving bodhichitta.

a. If a person possesses this holy wish to achieve enlightenment for the sake of every living being, then all the countless Buddhas in all the ten directions of space look up to him/her as their son and daughter.

b. If you truly gain this great wish, you become a person who truly deserves to have the entire world - with all its different kinds of beings, up to humans and gods - bow down at your feet, just as holy books like *The Bodhisattva's Life* and *Entering the Middle Way* describe it.

c. For full enlightenment, a person needs to develop within his mind all three of the principal paths, and more specifically, he must have gained the second path: the Wish to achieve enlightenment for every living being. You may possess extra-sensory powers, you may be able to perform miracles, you may have any number of fantastic qualities, but unless you have this precious jewel in your ear, you will never enter that select group of people who practice the Greater Way. Without the Wish, none of your qualities will ever bring you total bliss. None of them, none of them at all, will bring you to Buddhahood: the ability to free each and every living being from all the troubles of cyclic life, and from the unbearable pain of the three lower realms.

16. Why is it important to have correct view and how does this one path relate to the other two. (Please quote verse 9 from the root text)

**You may master renunciation and the wish,
But unless you have the wisdom perceiving reality
You cannot cut the root of cyclic life.
Make efforts in ways then to perceive interdependence.**

Checking Into Your Reality Course I

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Answer Key, Class Four

1. What is your definition of a ritual?

The prescribed order of a religious ceremony.

A ceremony one participates in so as to express some form of formalization of conviction - for example, a marriage.

The body of ceremonies or rites used in a place of worship.

A prescribed form of conducting a formal secular ceremony.

Being a part of an established routine - like having a glass of milk at bed time.

2. Why does the ritual of marriage work in some cases, and not work in other cases? Is there something wrong with the way the ritual was performed?

It is the karma that both individuals bring to that particular relationship that determines the result.

3. How did Buddhist rituals come to be?

Since pre-historic time, man has always needed rituals in life, be they religious or mundane (e.g. marriage). It is not surprising that Buddhist ritual originated in the Buddha's time, in the presence of the Buddha Himself. For example, when Sariputra asked the Buddha questions, he bowed to him and clasped his hands to request knowledge. Rituals like these were not necessarily advocated by the Buddha, but sometimes they were carried over from the culture that surrounded the Buddha at that time.

4. What is the difference between Buddhist rituals and worldly rituals?

Worldly rituals serve many different purposes, for example, the solemnization of marriage serves to pronounce two people husband and wife and a convocation ceremony serves to pronounce your complete and successful graduation. Likewise, Buddhist rituals also serve many different purposes. For example, going through the ceremony of taking the 5 Precepts expresses your willingness and readiness to live by basic Buddhist morality, and going through the ceremony of taking the Bodhisattva Precepts expresses your "upgraded" resolution to live by precepts to benefit as many beings as possible. Though there are many different Buddhist rituals, they all serve the single purpose of helping to put your mind in a wholesome and

calm posture. This is a crucial step working towards purification of the mind. Any ritual that is otherwise cannot be considered a genuine Buddhist ritual.

5. What part do emotions play in performing a ritual?

Human beings are not beings composed entirely of pure rationality, but of emotionality too. Rituals thus can be very useful in connecting our emotional aspects of being to our convictions. While we connect rationally to the Dharma through study and understanding, we also need to connect emotionally. You can say it is a matter of having enough EQ (Emotional Quotient). The more "religiously" you participate in a ritual, the more sincere or "serious" you are, regarding the significance of that ritual. In this sense, it can be safe to say, for example, that a religious Buddhist couple who take their marriage vows as religiously as when they take the Threefold Refuge is more bound for happiness together in marriage than a non-religious couple who take their vows half-heartedly, rendering the marriage ceremony meaningless and empty.

6. Why would you get the retreat land blessed and who is the best person to do this?

You should get the land blessed to get rid of any evil spirits or demons. The best person to bless the land retreat is your teacher. It is ideal to do a retreat where your teacher has done it before. You use the five substance of the cow along with other ritual objects and offerings. The five substances of the cow are urine, feces, milk, yogurt, and ghee.

7. What sutra is used to close the retreat boundaries?

The Heart Sutra is used to close your retreat boundaries; you should recite it for at least 15-30 minutes as you walk around the outer boundaries of your retreat place.

8. What is the function of protection markers in your retreat and where do you put them? And what are they made from? What are letters that are written on them? And what order do you put them up in?

The five markers are made from folding paper and putting kusha grass in the middle of them. The letters that are written on them are *om*, *ah*, *huung*. They are placed in the north, south, east and west directions, and the extra marker is for your bathroom if it is outdoors. You start placing them from the north, then proceed to west, south and finally east.

9. Describe the ritual that you perform to clean your retreat place?

You mix the five substances of the cow together (urine, feces, milk, yogurt, ghee) and you mop the floor of your retreat place. This is the basic ritual (but there are more parts to it).

10. List the main ingredients for making the tormas to start a retreat?

The main ingredients that you use to make tormas are honey, milk, ghee, bread and dutsi pills (you may substitute tsampa for bread). In our lineage, we use white “Wonder Bread.”

11. In what ritual do you find the mantra of pure morality?

The one day vow ritual.

12. Name the vows that you take when you do the one day vows?

**No killing
No stealing
No lying
No sexual misconduct
No intoxicants
Eat only once on that day, before noon
No sitting on a high chair
No singing, dancing or playing music**

13. What time of the day should you take the one day vows and how many times should you eat?

You should take the vows before sunrise. You should only eat once that day before noon, though you can drink all that you want.

14. Who is the deity that you visualize before you start to do the one day vows along with all the other Buddhas?

Guru Avalokiteshvara

15. Name the ritual that was discussed which can only be taken by monks or nuns. How often does it occur each month? How many monks do you need to perform this ritual?

Sojong is the name of the ritual - it usually done around the full moon, twice a month. It is a purification ritual; it cannot be performed unless four full monks are present.

16. Who is the deity that everyone is making offerings to in the Tsechu ritual? Is the ritual secret? How many items are there on her altar during the ritual?

The name of the deity is Vajrayogini and yes, it is a secret ritual. It takes about ten years to learn it properly. The altar has about 31 items on it, including pictures of your root lama.

17. Are tormas a part of the fire puja ritual? If so, what are their names?

Yes, tormas are a part of the fire puja ritual. They are called *tambulas* and *shidak* tormas. You need two of each.

18. When do you perform the fire ritual puja and how long does it take for you to prepare for this puja?

The fire puja is performed after a *lerung* and generally takes three days to prepare. You should do it on a Tsechu date. After the Great Three Year retreat, it took about four days to perform the ritual (not counting the days which were required to go shopping for the supplies).

19. How big is the platform for this ritual? And please describe all of the elements on the altars to the left and right.

The platform is 4' x 4'. The elements on the left altar are 7 water bowls, the fire puja text, a bowl with rice and flower, strands of kusha grass, and 6 additional water bowls to hold (i) Incense, (ii) three bowls with rice and conch shells inside, (iii) light, and (iv) food. The elements to the right of the altar are the drum, mala, dorje, bell, ritual vase and dutsi.

20. Name the four different types of fire pujas.

Peaceful, Increasing, Subduing, Forceful

21. Madana liquid and bala are used in two rituals, please name them.

Tsechu and fire puja ritual

22. In which ritual do you find the special offering?

In the fire puja ritual

23. Is there such a thing as a tantric funeral?

Yes

24. What is a *lerung*?

It is a one month tantric retreat - you have to get the appropriate blessing to do this retreat. You have to say 110,000 mantras in a month. 10,000 mantras are for all the mistakes that you make during the retreat.

25. Name the deity that is used in the death ritual?

Yamantaka

26. What are some elements that make a ritual work?

The karma of the person performing it - it has nothing to do with what you do. It is just like magic.

Checking Into Your Reality Course I

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Answer Key, Class Five

1. Why did Christians throughout the ages use concentrated visualizations?

Christians throughout the ages have used concentrated visualization to set themselves into the stories of Scripture, so that they can feel and sense and ‘see’ what went on as if they were there. This form of visualization can be very vivid and exciting, and can open up many sides of Scripture that you might otherwise have missed.

2. According to the *Spirit Home.com* reading, (a) what are images that vividly play in one’s mind, and (b) how can visualization help your health?

a. In a harmful way, information that goes into your visualization is a lie – most often, it’s a lie you tell yourself over and over again. You play the movie in your head, for example with scenes that show how awful your spouse treats you, how generous and kind you are, or how great you look. The movie does not show the truth (for example that you live more like a two-timing con man with a beer gut!)

b. It’s in vogue right now to use visualizations as a mind over-matter concentrative technique. For instance, a cancer patient pictures the tumor, then pictures the natural defenses or the drug rushing to it. Advocates of this kind of visualization believe that visualizing it helps to bring it about.

3. How does visualization help you get to paradise or heaven?

You burn images of what paradise is when you do your *lerung* practices, while you are studying the 11 yogas by visualizing them over and over again.

4. Describe the first visualization: The Setting of the Sun in *The Sutra of Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite Life*. How many visualizations does this sutra contain?

“The Buddha said to Vaidehi, “You and all sentient beings should single-mindedly concentrate your thoughts with one-pointed attention, on the Western Quarter. How is this to be done? All the multitudes of sentient beings who are not born blind and have the sense of sight have seen the setting sun. Focusing your attention and sitting in the proper posture, you should face the sun to the west. Contemplatively examine the sun, with your mind firmly fixed upon it. Firmly concentrate upon the setting sun and do not let your sight wander from it. It should appear like a (red) drum

suspended above the horizon. Once the sun is visualized in this way, then whether the eyes are shut or open, it can be clearly seen. This is the image of the sun and is called the First Visualization.”

There are 16 visualizations in this sutra.

5. What was your experience when you did the above visualization?

(experiences differ by student)

6. What is the name of the ninth visualization in the above sutra?

The Body of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span

7. What was your favorite visualization from *The Sutra of Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite Life* and why?

(answers differ by student)

8. What are the names of the two Bodhisattvas used in the visualizations in *The Sutra of Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite Life*?

Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara and Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta

9. The Buddha said to Ananda, “Those who wish to visualize Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara must do so with this method of visualization. Those who perform this visualization will not encounter any misfortune; their karmic obstructions will be purified, and the evil karma binding them to birth-and-death for countless eons is eliminated. Even to hear the name of this Bodhisattva is to gain immeasurable merits; how much more so if this Bodhisattva is clearly visualized?”

What is the name of the visualization that the Buddha is talking about in *The Sutra of Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite Life*?

The tenth visualization: Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara

10. In what visualization is there ground which is made from the gemstone lapis lazuli?

The second visualization: Water

11. What is the relationship between your imagination and visualizations?

One doesn’t exist without the other. Imagination is the ability to create an idea or mental picture in your mind. In creative visualization you must use your imagination to create a clear image of something you wish to manifest.

12. In the text *Creative Visualization*, it is stated that “creative visualization is magic in the truest and highest meaning of the word.” Please explain.

Creative visualization is magic in the truest and highest meaning of the word. It involves understanding and aligning yourself with the natural principles that govern the workings of our universe, and learning to use these principles in the most conscious and creative way. You can use the power of visualization to plant the seeds for actually manifesting and experiencing that which you visualize.

13. How many channels should you be visualizing with your body? What is the name of the middle channel and its color? Which channel is more important than the others?

There are three channels in your body. The name of the middle one is called the *uma* in Tibetan and it is bright red. It is more important because when you become enlightened, the right channel and the left channel collapse into it. Your positive thoughts ride along the *prana* in the central channel.

14. The law of radiation and attraction is explained in the text, *Creative Visualization*. How does this differ from one of the laws of karma “As you sow so should you reap” and how does this help your powers of visualization?

It does not differ at all. It is the same principal as the first law of karma. This is very helpful to your visualization practice because you understand that if you visualize positive things that you will experience positive results.

15. What are four basic steps for effective creative visualization according to the author, Shakti Gawain?

- 1. Set your goal - decide on something that you would like to work on or create**
- 2. Create a clear picture or an idea**
- 3. Focus on it often**
- 4. Give it positive energy**

16. Discuss the mental images that you are supposed to imagine when visualizing the throne in the *Ganden Hla Gyama* Practice

On the throne are a variegated lotus and sun and moon disc. To each side of that throne is a similar one. The central throne is a little higher than the other two. On it sits your guru, a transformation of the transcendental wisdom of all the Victorious Ones (Buddhas), which is of the same taste as the dharmadhatu, the absolute nature.

17. What is the mantra associated the fire puja for purification?

Om vajra daka kaka kahi kaahi sarwa papam dahana basmim kuru soha

18. How many steps are there to learning to recite your mantra? List five of them.

There are ten steps.

- 1. Memorize your mantra,**
- 2. Hold your mala in your left hand**
- 3. Push the bead back with your thumb while the mala is resting on your ring finger**
- 4. If you are sitting, put your body in meditation posture**
- 5. Do the appropriate visualization that belongs to the mantra**
- 6. If you are walking keep your eyes down, and walk in a circle**
- 7. Don't over extend yourself - try to recite for a reasonable amount of time (30-45 minutes)**
- 8. One of the most important things to do while reciting is to try to keep your mind from wandering. Prepare by become very familiar with your visualizations before hand**
- 9. Don't recite it too loudly or too softly. Pace yourself, especially if you are doing a *lerung* mantra retreat**
- 10. In some cases it is okay to break up your visualization pictures into segments until your mind is strong enough to pull up elements of the entire scene together.**

19. What is the name purification mantra that is known as the 100 syllable mantra? Please describe one of the visualizations that you have studied.

The name of the purification mantra is The Warrior of Diamond or Vajrasattva.

Visualization One: *Dispelling obstacles from above*

Red nectar pushes down all the impurities which are in the form of liquid coal. The earth splits open. The Lord of Death and a retinue of surrounding demons are waiting with their mouths open to swallow the impurities. The demons are always watching and waiting for a chance to terminate your life. After swallowing all your impurities, they become satisfied and decide not to harm you. With this the earth closes up

Visualization Two: *Dispelling from below*

Nectar flows into your body from the bottom up. Your bad deeds float up like flakes of rice husk held by water in a glass. The bad deeds are expelled through the upper doors - they come out and are expelled into space. The bad deeds disappear into space, joining the bad deeds that were previously washed away.

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Answer Key, Class Six

1. Write a short summary on the readings from the retreat manual, and please include how this information will help you with scheduling a retreat in the future.

(answers differ by student)

2. How does the oral tradition explain the word *torma* (i.e. its derivation)?

In the oral tradition the word is explained in the following manner: *gtor* derives from the verb *gtor-wa*: to dispel, to disperse, to break up. In addition a broader meaning has been added to the concept *gTor*: to cut attachments, to purify the motivation and to destroy the concepts of subject/object. The act of *gtor* develops the mind and destroys the concept of self.

The second word *ma* is the feminine suffix and is the equivalent of mother. The act of cutting through attachments is the catalyst for developing the compassionate awakening mind, unconditional love for others, which is similar to the selfless love a mother feels for her child. Making *tormas* is equivalent to purifying the mind and offering *tormas* is the equivalent of developing the awakening mind.

3. To make *tormas*, white bread is a substitute for one of the main ingredients that was hard to get in the USA when Khen Rinpoche Geshe Lobsang Tharchin came to New Jersey from Sera Mey Monastery, in India. What is the main ingredient that he substituted it for?

Tsampa - barley flour

4. What are the toothpicks and the American processed white cheese used for in the *torma* making process?

The cheese is cut into different shapes depending on the size of the *torma* that you are making. In the finishing process, the toothpicks are used to attach the cheese parts to the *torma*. The cheese is the last thing that you put on the *torma*.

5. What are the names of the *tormas* for which you use a cotton ball to make a lamp wick and how many of them do you make? What is the reason for making them?

These are the lamp tormas, which are a part of the overall gektor. Three lamp tormas are made, with each having its own wick inside. You make gektors to obstruct any obstacles that may come into your retreat.

6. What is the last ingredient you should put in your torma mixture and why?

You should put milk in last because it will help you to control the consistency of the dough.

7. Describe how you use the bottle caps when you are making tormas?

Bottle caps are used like cookie cutters to make the circular cheese parts that finish the tormas.

8. What does the torma for the main deity of the *lerung* retreat look like? Please draw it.

(for students with initiation only) This is a round, white torma, heaped high with magic pills, and small balls of dough placed around the base. It has two or three flowers made of butter affixed to its body.

(for a drawing of the torma for the main deity, please see sheet handed out to students with initiation only)

9. What is the function of tormalettes? What are their shapes?

They are made for the purpose of refreshing torma offerings in a *lerung* retreat. You should put out one tormalette each day. Tormalettes are shaped like tetrahedrons or pyramids.

10. What is a changbus? When you are making the gektor torma, how many of them do you have to make?

A changbus is made from coiling the dough and imprinting it with your hand. Three of them are usually placed in front of the three butter lamps.

11. Draw a tikle, dutsi, lightening blot and explain what you use them for.

(for drawings, please see the Reading 6, Finishing Cheese Parts chart)

These three shapes are cut out from cheese and placed on some of the tormas which are used during your *lerung*.

12. The kendarohi torma which is used in *lerung* retreat has two versions of cheese finishing parts. Please draw them.

(for drawings, please see the Reading 6, Finishing Cheese Parts chart)

13. How many different shapes do tormas come in? (for example: three sided triangle)

There are six shapes: Three-sided pyramid, four-sided pyramid, cylindrical, cylindrical with one quarter cut off at the front , tambala (crushed cylinder), and boot

14. Name the four modes of tormas?

Peaceful, generous, powerful, wrathful

15. How many tormas do you have to prepare for your *lerung* retreat? Please list them.

You need to prepare seven tormas for lerung: shibdak torma, gektors, kendarohi, tsamto, the Lord of the Burial Ground, kandrochittor torma, and Okmin.

16. What part did Ton-pa Shen-rab Mi-wo play in the introduction of tormas? What offering did they replace?

The custom of sacrificing animals was transformed and a complex system of offerings, the making of sacrificial cakes or tormas was instituted in its place. According to Bon records, this tradition of offering dough animals as a replacement for the actual animal, was introduced by Ton-pa Shen-rab Mi-wo.

17. List the three main categories of torma.

- 1. An offering presented to be broken up and discarded**
- 2. Perfect food, to be consumed by participants**
- 3. Meditated on as a deity, as a meditative tool.**

18. What is the auspicious time to make tormas?

According to the text, the auspicious times are the fourteenth day of the waning moon and the eight or tenth day of the waxing moon. But with the right motivation, the offering of torma is beneficial every day. As the commentary the *Secret Treasure of Dakinis* makes clear: ‘torma offering should precede deity meditation offering, concentration, mandala rites and all other types of activities.’

19. What is one major benefit of making tormas?

It is said that if the materials are properly arranged, torma offerings are like the gathering of swans to the wonderful lake of turquoise. All protectors and

dakinis will gather around you and give you all the blessings and attainments, common and uncommon.

20. Explain why you make offering to guest and who are these guests?

The guests that gather grant you powerful attainments – they are the objects to whom tormas are offered.

In the scriptures the guests are categorized as follows:

- a. **The Three Jewels, Buddhas, bodhisattvas, pratyekabuddhas, Sravakas**
- b. **Dharma protectors, including various deities and saintly lamas, such as Padmasambhava, Lord Atisha, and Je Tsongkapa**
- c. **Local deities, minor spirits and gods**
- d. **The being residing in the six realms**

21. Nagarjuna said that tormas represent body, speech and mind. What are the symbols used to represent the body, speech and mind?

The moon, sun and the nada represents body, speech, and mind.

22. Please describe the symbolism represented by the following ornaments below:

a. the lotus

This is the unfolding center of the heart. All visualizations and deities originate from the heart. The lotus flower symbolizes the heart, the center of creations clean and uncontaminated even though it grows in the mud. Many tormas have a lotus for a base, which sometimes symbolizes pristine wisdom, the female aspect.

b. the star (interlocking triangles)

Sometimes used as an ornament and sometimes as a base for the torma. It represents the union of method and wisdom. It can also denote the reality source.

c. the stepped base

The stepped base is used specifically as a base for the meditational deity, when an extensive torma is constructed. Often there are five steps, representing the five mental and physical constituents of an individual and the five elements that make up the world: air, fire, water, earth and space. These are the five fields of action to be purified.

d. the nada

This can be seen ornamenting almost all tormas whether an extensive or short ritual is to be performed. The nada represents the spiritual fire that results from the union of method and wisdom. It represents the transcendental wisdom that has reached the other shore. It can also represent the mind. It is an essential symbol in conjunction with the symbol of the moon and the sun in the visualization of the dissolution of elements that takes place, for instance, at death.

e. the sun

This symbol too can be seen on most tormas. It usually represents the wisdom that illuminates the obscurations of the mind. It is the female aspect of tantric wisdom. It represents the speech. When colored red, it represents the female aspect and great bliss.

f. the moon

This symbol is always to be found in conjunction with the nada and the sun adorning most tormas. It represents the active aspect of tantric practice, method. It symbolizes the active male force, compassion. When it is colored white, it represents the male aspect and emptiness. It also represents the body of the Buddhas.

g. the vajra

The diamond is the hardest and most precious of stones, it can cut any other stone but it cannot be damaged by others. As the vajra it symbolizes method.

h. the flames

In torma decoration there are two kinds of flames: peaceful and wrathful. They represent the fire of wisdom burning the obscurations of the mind. They also form a protective barrier against noxious disturbances and harmful forces.

i. the four or five petaled flowers

These are symbols of the five elements or the five mental and physical constituents that are to be purified.

j. the side wings

Some tormas have attached to the main body a set of wooden decorations that look like wings. They represent the two channels that run alongside the

central channel parallel to the spinal cord. The body of the torma functions as the central channel. These channels are used for meditation purposes.

23. Do tormas vary in size and name depending upon different traditions within the Tibetan community? If so, please explain how.

According to the first Panchen Lama, the shapes of tormas offered to deities are not mentioned in the Indian Buddhist Tantric texts. They mention only various food offerings. However, in Tibet, offerings have different shapes which have been recommended by the deities and dharma protectors, through divinations, visions and dreams. All different shapes were given to the lamas by deities. Some torma shapes are part of a tradition that has been codified in the scriptures. Each monastery creates its own distinctive design. Some texts contain detailed explanations for the manufacture of 108 different tormas, ranging in size from only a few inches in height to as tall as 10 feet or more.

24. What are regular tormas?

This is a torma which is created for everyday or regular use.

25. How do food tormas differ from Morsels and tormas for hindering forces?

Food tormas or edible ritual cakes reveal the basic root shape, which is known as the cow's horn. Like the first letter of the alphabet, it is the basis for all the other shapes. The cake is sometimes placed on a lotus, which symbolizes purity. The two of them symbolize the union of method and wisdom. Once purified the cake is transformed into pure nectar, the food of the gods. This kind of torma (zhal-zas) belongs to the class of outer offerings. It is represented along with the other outer offerings of water, flowers, incense, and music.

The basic shape is decorated with touches of butter. The use of butter derives from Vedic rituals, in which it was regarded as the supreme of all foods. A later Tibetan development was the addition of different designs made of colored butter. The color was extracted from various plants and roots. Gradually these simple shapes became very complex structures. There are two types of edible ritual cake: the peaceful, which are white in colour and have three petals on the midriff, and the wrathful, which are black or red and have a small figure on the midriff. This type of torma represents food and drink on the main altar.

Morsels are small dough cakes similar to tormas. Presented as offerings, they vary in colour and shape, depending on the deity they are given to. For example those offered to the spirits known as *btsan* are red and shaped like a

pyramid; those offered to interfering spirits known as *bdud* are black and four sided; those offered to gods are white and round.

26. When would you use a white torma?

This torma is presented to the lord and owner of the earth and roads. These beings are everywhere. In general they have a neutral character, but are easily annoyed. Therefore, before any incursion upon their territory is made, such as by building a fire upon their territory during a ritual or the casting of a random cake (*glud*), their permission must be requested. Consequently, this torma too is indispensable. In thread-cross rituals and ransom cake ritual offerings, this torma prepares the road and clears the obstacles. It is carried out of the temple and thrown in the direction in which the thread-cross rituals and ransom cake ritual offerings will be taken. It is also offered before preparing the mandala and hearth for ritual fire offerings. The torma is round and white. It has butter ornaments and pills around the base. Sometimes it has bird or bear-shaped decorations which are animals favoured by the Lord of Death.

27. Is there such a thing as a portable torma? If there is, when would you use it?

Yes. A portable torma is usually made of metal, sometimes clay, and is carried by a lama for bestowing initiations when he is traveling and without the facilities for making fresh dough tormas. They vary in style and design, some are designed with a fierce aspect to represent a wrathful deity on one side and with a peaceful aspect on the other. Some are made of precious metals, silver and gold, and inlaid with turquoise, coral and other precious stones to represent flower decorations.

28. When do you offer a small dough figurine, with hair, nail-clippings, pieces of cloth that the person has worn, and possessions such as jewelry which are imbedded in the dough?

This cake is offered as a substitute for the ill person for whom the ritual is being performed.

29. When a torma is just covered with white ghee as compare to red ghee what does this mean?

It a peaceful torma.

30. Why does everything have to be clean and nothing stolen when you are making tormas?

Because you are making it for a holy being as an offering and the karmic results will be very powerful in a negative way if anything is stolen or unclean.

Checking Into Your Reality Course I

Diamond Mountain University

Answer Key, Class Seven

1. What is the yoga of make believe and why is it so important to use it in any visualization?

You cannot get to paradise in our tradition without entering the creation stage, which is called the yoga of make believe. The practice involves the visualization of the 11 yogas.

2. Explain the name of the title *Ganden Hla Gyama* in English.

***Ganden* is a name of a paradise. There is also another *Ganden* but in this case we are referring to paradise. *Hla* has two meanings but in this case it stands for an enlightened being. *Gyama* suggests one hundred, or a lot, and *Ma* is the feminine ending which is usually used at the ending of some Tibetan books. Here, the title is translated as *A Thousand Angels of the Heaven of Bliss*.**

3. Who is Je Tsongkapa?

The following is an excerpt from Khen Rinpoche Geshe Lobsang Tharchin's foreword to the English translation of Pabongka Rinpoche's commentary on the *Three Principal Paths*.

"Lord Tsongkapa's full name is Gyalwa Je Tsongkapa Chenpo Lobsang Drakpa, and he holds a unique position in our Tibetan Buddhist tradition. All in one he was the greatest philosopher, most eloquent writer, and most successful organizer of Buddhism who ever lived in our land; as time continues to pass after the forced opening of our country's doors, I feel sure he will come to be recognized throughout the world as one of the greatest thinkers in history.

He was born in 1357 in the Amdo area of northeast Tibet, in a district called Tsongka (hence his name, which means "the one from Tsongka"). He was granted his first, basic vows at a tender age from one Chuje Karmapa Rolpay Dorje, and received the name Kunga Nyingpo. By the age of eight he had taken his vows as a Buddhist novice, and already received initiations into the secret teachings of Buddhism. He excelled in his studies and on the advice of his teachers journeyed to central Tibet in his sixteenth year, to seek further instruction from the many sages there

It would be impossible to relate here all of what Je Tsongkapa then studied. Briefly put, he mastered the entire open and secret teachings of Buddhism, as well as the various classical sciences. A few examples of the subjects he covered with different teachers are: the secret teachings of Naro and the Great Seal from Chen-nga Chukyi Gyalpo; the ancient medical traditions from Je Konchok Kyab; the perfection of wisdom from masters at Dewa Chen Monastery, the great Sakya teacher Rendawa, and Nyawon Kunga Pel; the Steps of the path and other Seer precepts from Hle Rinpoche; classical logic from Lochen Dunsang, Venerable Rendawa, and Dorje Rinchen; the treasure of knowledge from Lochen Dunsang and Venerable Rendawa; the middle way from Venerable Rendawa and Kenchen Chukyab Sangpo; older sutras from Kenchen Losel; vowed morality from Venerable Rendawa and Master Chukyab Sangpo; the secret teachings of the wheel of time from Yeshe Gyeltsen and others; those on the secret collection from Venerable Rendawa, as well as from Hle Rinpoche and others, according to the system of their own teacher, Buton Rinpoche; the "blue book" of the Seer masters, the deeds of bodhisattvas, and early mental training texts from Kenchen Chukyab Sangpo; and the list goes on and on.

This does not include all the teachings that Lord Tsongkapa is said to have received directly from enlightened beings through dreams, visions, and direct contact; we read for example that for many years he was tutored by the divine being Gentle Voice. At first one of his principal teachers, Lama Umapa, acted as sort of a translator; later on, Lord Tsongkapa was able to meet and learn from this being on his own.

We should say a word here about these "divine beings." We Buddhists believe that there are many Buddhas in the universe, and that they can each appear on one or more planets at the same time, if this will help the beings who live there. We believe that a Buddha is the ultimate evolution of all life; that he can know all things, but does not have all power: he did not create the universe, for example (this we have done by the force of our own past deeds, good and bad), nor can he take all our sufferings away from us by himself—these too we believe come from our own past actions, and must be stopped by ourselves.

We do believe that by studying and practicing the teaching of the Buddha we ourselves can become Buddhas, as can every living being. Therefore when we speak of enlightened beings appearing to a saint directly and so on we do not mean that Buddhists believe in a great many gods or the like, but rather that any being who has removed all his suffering and gained all knowledge can appear to any one of us, in any form that may help us to reach this ultimate state ourselves.

Only after he had received a great many teachings did Lord Tsongkapa take his full ordination as a monk; this was in Yarlung, south of Lhasa, when he

was twenty-five. The ordination name he had already been granted, upon becoming a novice, was Lobsang Drakpa—and it is in Lord Tsongkapa's memory that so many Tibetans are given "Lobsang" as their personal name.

By now his transition from student to teacher was accelerating quickly, and in fact he later tutored a number of his own greatest teachers. We can understand his life from this point on more clearly if we look at the influence his teaching still has on Buddhism today, rather than simply retracing his career up to the final moment at Ganden Monastery in 1419, when he passed away at the age of sixty- two.

Buddhism is counted among the handful of great religions in the modern world, but it is actually close to extinction. In some countries it has disappeared, only recently, through violent political upheavals. In other countries it remains, but typically not in its whole form: the Buddha taught the so-called "greater" and "lesser" ways, contained in four great schools of thought, and all four of these are now studied and practiced actively only in the Tibetan tradition. This tradition itself survives mainly in our monastic universities; among these, the three great institutions of Ganden, Drepung, and Sera are the mainstays. We can learn much of the adult years of Lord Tsongkapa by searching for his influence upon these last great bastions of the total Buddhist path.

And in fact we see his hand here everywhere. A young monk at Sera Monastery, for example, begins his formal education with the study of logic, and as his textbook is likely to use either the *Path to Freedom* or the *Jewel of Reasoning*. Both were written by direct disciples of Lord Tsongkapa: the former by Gyaltsab Je (1362-1432), and the latter by Gyalwa Gendun Drup (1391-1475).

For his next course, twelve years on what we call the "perfection of wisdom," our monk will be using the *Golden Rosary*, a commentary composed by the Master at Kyishu and Dewa Chen, following his final ordination. The monk will refer as well to the immense *Essential Jewel*, another work by Gyaltsab Je. When he reaches the "special topics" part of the course, he may well commit to memory the entire 230 pages of Lord Tsongkapa's *Essence of Eloquence*, on certain tenets of the great Buddhist schools.

Between courses the young monk will often have opportunities to attend discourses delivered by visiting lamas; perhaps by the Dalai Lama himself. The present is the fourteenth of his line and, as we might expect, the first was another of Lord Tsongkapa's direct disciples. Popular subjects for these public discourses are the *Greater Steps on the Path* (by Lord Tsongkapa), *The Bodhisattva's Life* (Gyaltsab Je's Door for Bodhisattvas is likely to be the commentary used), or the *Three Principal Paths* (our present text, again by Lord Tsongkapa).

The monk student's next course will be the very difficult "middle way" philosophy of the highest school of Buddhism. He will be using Lord Tsongkapa's *Great Commentary* for understanding the early Indian commentaries. If he goes deeper, the monk might read *Eye-Opener*, the great exposition on emptiness by Kedrup Je (1385-1438), again a direct disciple of Lord Tsongkapa.

Everywhere the young scholar goes he is surrounded by the Master's influence. The very monastery in which he walks has been founded either by Lord Tsongkapa or one of his direct disciples: Ganden in 1409 by the Lord himself, Drepung in 1416 by Jamyang Chuje Tashi Pelden, and Sera in 1419 by Jamchen Chuje Shakya Yeshe. The very robes that the monk wears were in part designed by Lord Tsongkapa. When he sits down in his room to meditate, he is likely to start off with a mental picture of the Master, as taught in a popular *Lama Practice* manual. When he fingers his beads, he may well be counting *miktsema's*, the Tibetan equivalent of Hail Mary's, in supplication to Lord Tsongkapa."

4. Who were Je Tsongkapa's disciples?

Gyaltsab Dharma Rinchen, the elder disciple, sits on his right and Khedrup Mawai Nyima sits on his left side.

5. Which one of his disciples was the throne holder?

Gyaltsab Dharma Rinchen

6. Quote the verse that prostrates to body, speech and mind in *A Thousand Angels of the Heaven of Bliss, A Prayer of Lama Devotion*.

**Your mind
Is knowledge
That wraps around
The entire mass
Of knowable things**

**Your words
Are jewels
Of explanation
That we the fortunate
Wear on our ears**

**Your body
Shines forth
Shines with brightness**

**Shines with a glory
That the world will see**

**I bow to You
Just to see you
Just to hear you
Just to think of you
Brings great things**

7. *Ganden Hla Gyama* is also used in one common daily practice; please name the practice and its steps.

***Ganden Hla Gyama* is used during meditation practice. It is a form of the 7-ingredient practice, and in this case is focused upon Je Tsongkapa. The seven steps are:**

1. CHAK-TSEL: (Prostration) With folded hands, touch the crown, mouth, and heart to wish for the body, speech, and mind of a Buddha. Go down slowly and wish not to go down to a rebirth in the hells, then get up quickly. Do three prostrations for the teacher, the teaching, and for those who follow the teaching.

2. CHU-PA: (Offerings)

3. SHAK-PA: (Open yourself) Confession, purification of broken freedom, bodhisattva, and secret vows (very important). You can't concentrate if something is in your conscience. Purify through practices such as Vajrasattva visualization.

4. YI-RANG-WA: (Rejoicing) Being glad about the good things which you and others have done. It is more powerful to rejoice about your own goodness than that of others. To rejoice in your own good deeds multiplies, exponentially, your virtue and potential.

5. CHU-KOR KOR-WA: (Turn the Wheel of Dharma) Requesting the holy beings to teach.

6. SOLN-DEP: (Requesting) Asking the holy beings to stay and not to break your relationship or to die.

7. NGO-WA: (Dedication)

8. Who are the holy beings in the mantra included in the *Ganden Hla Gyama* prayer besides Je Tsongkapa?

Chenrezig, Jampelyang, and Sangwedak

9. Describe the meaning of the objects below which are shown in the *Ganden Hla Gyama* Visualization Chart in the readings.

a. clouds of all pure offerings

Offerings that are pure and of the wisdom understanding emptiness, they are not stained by seeing things incorrectly, as self-existent.

b. eight lions supporting the throne

Tails turned toward each other, faces turned towards Lama Tsongkapa, one eye up and one eye forward or downcast. The eyes of the lions signify that precise meditation leads to more enjoyment, and that the less complete the meditation, the less enjoyment and more boredom and eventually doubt.

c. lotus and moon disc on throne

A variegated lotus with a moon disc on top, on the moon disc is Lama Tsongkapa. He is inseparable from one's own lama and the emptiness of the Buddhas. Usually this combination signifies the Three Principal Paths.

d. Lama Je Tsongkapa

White body with red complexion symbolizing the union of method and wisdom, a transformation of the wisdom of all the Buddhas.

e. Lama Je Tsongkapa's hands

The mudra of turning the wheel of dharma on one hand signifies the Causal Paramitayana and the other hand signifies Resultant Vajrayana; also symbolizing the connection between emptiness and dependent arising.

f. sword

Cuts the root of ignorance which is the source of Samsara, cuts the ignorance which does not understand the emptiness of all things

g. text

Each syllable of these texts teaches the path to reach enlightenment, Lama Tsongkapa reveals the pure teachings which have been analyzed as correct and bring realizations

h. robes and hat

The three robes signify a life of moral conduct, and the monk's vows; the golden hat signifies pure teachings checked by the three tests, and its shape signifies the highest view, which is prasangika

i. Je Tsongkapa's two disciples

Lama Tsongkapa's main disciples in vajra posture signifying no more learning or Buddhahood

j. Manjushri

At Lama Tsongkapa's heart, Manjushri's heart emits light due to the attainment of transcendental wisdom.

9. Name two teachers that taught JeTsongkapa between the ages of 3 -33.

Many, including Choje Dondrup Rinchen and Sakyapa Master Rendawa Shonu Lodro. See readings for additional information.

10. List five of Je Tsongkapa's major accomplishments.

JeTsongkapa accomplishments include:

a. He was the first to renovate the Maitreya and he organized a great Tibetan festival for the Tibetan New Year 1400 at Dzingji

b. He gave an extensive teaching code of discipline for the ordained which he, Rendawa and Kyapchok Pel Zangpo gave for several months at Namtse Deng thereby revitalizing the tradition of monasticism.

c. He established a great prayer festival in Lhasa in 1409, beginning a tradition that has continued until now of devoting the first two weeks of the Tibetan new year, starting on the full moon, to prayers for universal well-being. He donated everything he himself had received from benefactors to support this event and offered ornaments made of gold and precious stones to the famous statue of the Buddha in the main temple in Lhasa.

d. He constructed Ganden Monastery. It was completed and consecrated in 1410.

e. His students included the first Dalai Lama of Tibet

f. He founded the three great monasteries in Tibet

g. Je Tsongkapa wrote the Three Principal Paths and numerous other treatises

Checking Into Your Reality Course I

Diamond Mountain University

Answer Key, Class Eight

1. What are the 6 steps to seeing the emptiness of our emotional state? How can these steps help you stop those initial emotions from growing into a real problem?

The six steps to analyzing the emptiness of your situation are: (i) Is it changing or unchanging? (ii) Can you control it in the moment? (iii) Is it an accident? (iv) Do you have an objective judgment? (v) Can you transform it? (vi) Is it just a label?

These steps can help you understand where it is coming from and more importantly, what you can and cannot do about it at that moment.

2. Name one thing about yourself that you try to hide from people. Analyze the emptiness of it:

- (i) Is it changing or unchanging?
- (ii) Can you control it in the moment?
- (iii) Is it an accident?
- (iv) Do you have an objective judgment?
- (v) Can you transform it?
- (vi) Is it just a label?

Let's say that you are someone who is prone to severe depression. You have gone through the check list and find that you are experiencing 5 or more of the symptoms characteristic of this condition and you have been experiencing them for more than a week. Symptoms include:

- **Significant weight loss or weight gain.**
- **Sleeping difficulties.**
- **A feeling of being "slowed down."**
- **Fatigue and energy loss nearly every day.**
- **Feeling worthless or excessive and inappropriate guilt.**

You really don't want anyone to know that you are experiencing this because you feel that you should be strong enough to overcome this on your own. But you know that at this point finding a professional to help you is the best thing you can do. What could have helped? If it all begins with ONE thought and if at the moment that that thought enters your mind stream you catch it and analyze it you could perhaps escape another stint with depression in the

future. Seeing the emptiness of that first thought or emotion is a good start. Let's say that this your depression began soon after losing your job.

(i) Is it changing or unchanging? Well, I've had other jobs before and I've always managed to find one when I looked. So my jobless state is changing.

(ii) Can you control it in the moment? If I think back to the laws of karma, I know that what I'm experiencing at this moment is being forced upon me and that I can't do anything from keeping it from ripening but I can be mindful not to plant new bad seeds.

(iii) Is it an accident? If I think about my world view, I know that this isn't random and that I must have done something in the past to cost someone their job. So maybe I should rejoice that this bad karma is passing.

(iv) Do I have an objective judgment? Does everyone think that it is the worst thing that I lost my job? Does the boss that fired me think so? Do my co-workers think so? If I think about it, everyone feels differently about my losing my job - so no, I do not have an objective judgment.

(v) Can I transform it? If in fact every mind is experiencing my losing my job differently perhaps I too can change the way I perceive it.

(vi) And if I can transform it, perhaps it's all just a thought and a label. My label of being SAD over losing a job could become the freedom that I had been waiting for to do something really meaningful. So losing the job can become FREEDOM and the more I look at everything in my life I see that it all stems from one thought and the label that I choose for it.

3. There are two types of depression. Please name them and briefly describe the more acute form. How do you know when you have the more acute form?

There are two types of depression. The first is mild depression. It is as common as a cold and it's basically a state of feeling blue. The second type of depression is called severe depression and is characterized by the presence of 5 or more symptoms (as described on the check list) for more than a week. The list includes:

- **Depressed mood nearly every day**
- **Diminished interest in regular activities.**
- **Significant weight loss or weight gain**
- **Sleeping difficulties**
- **A feeling of being "slowed down"**
- **Fatigue and energy loss nearly every day**
- **Feeling worthless, or excessive and inappropriate guilt**
- **Difficulty in staying on task or making decisions**

- **Frequent thoughts of death, including but not limited to suicidal thoughts.**

4. What emotion is often associated with quitting and why is it especially relevant to a retreat setting?

Mild depression is associated with the feeling of dejection. It is this feeling of dejection that often leads to a desire to quit that activity that we believe is making us unhappy. This may be the case, but it is also possible that there is some underlying issue that is making us unhappy and not the activity. Therefore, it is important to analyze ones thoughts about quitting and look carefully at the real cause of being unhappy.

5. How does Hedonism define emotions? Discuss how it is or is not similar to what Buddhism posits.

Hedonism posits that organisms are motivated to seek pleasure and avoid pain and that feelings result from input into the five different sensory systems (vision, hearing, taste, smell, and touch). Buddhism would suggest that our experience is forced upon us by our karma, suggesting that we can't control what is ripening in that moment. Furthermore, Buddhism would argue it is our 5 sense organs that feed us information that we misinterpret.

6. According to the iceberg diagram that was shown in class, what is the deepest level of our consciousness and what presides therein?

The deepest level of our consciousness is the unconscious. Within the unconscious dwell such things as fears, immoral motives, repressed anger, irrational wishes, and shameful experiences.

Checking Into Your Reality Course I

Diamond Mountain University

Answer Key, Class Nine

1. Codependency is a dysfunctional relationship with self. You feel the need to have someone to look down on in order to feel good about yourself. And, conversely, you always seem to find someone you can compare yourself to that can cause you to not feel good enough. Consider the list of emotions that was discussed in class and discuss those emotions that a codependent person might experience in retreat.

A codependent person might experience fear and anxiety over not being good enough. Loneliness might be especially prominent for those who are used to gauging their own self-worth against others, especially in a retreat setting. Doubt would also be a big obstacle for the codependent person since the absence of others usually leads to dwelling on the worst case scenario (e.g. everyone is improving except me, or others are improving more). Jealousy would follow close behind doubt.

2. An agitated mental state is the major obstacle to gaining wisdom. What is the mistake that many people make and what does this mistake make ever more difficult?

People often make the mistake of thinking that the ego and the mind are one - they think that if you rid yourself of your ego you are somehow going to lose your personality, your mind, and your human nature. If one makes this mistake, then one will never be able to separate mind from ego and reach beyond the ego.

3. What is the ego? Give the definition shared in class and the one specific to your readings. Regarding the ego, what is the bottom line?

The ego reconciles the blind aims of the id and superego with realistic demands of the external world. It introduces rationality into behavior. According to Lama Yeshe, it doesn't matter what the definition is, ultimately it's just a word and a symbol for that part of you that you think exists. In reality, what you believe to be "I" doesn't exist.

4. According to Lama Yeshe, did Lord Buddha prescribe anything for dealing with the ego? If so, what was prescribed, and towards what objects?

According to Lama Yeshe, Lord Buddha prescribed penetrative analysis of both our positive and negative sides. In other words, when your negative mind arises don't be afraid of it, analyze it.

5. According to Lama Yeshe, all of our feelings arise from the 5 senses and can be classified into three discrete categories. List the three categories. What happens when you experience pleasant emotions?

The three categories are pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral feelings. When we experience pleasant feelings (or emotions), emotional attachment ensues, and when the pleasant feeling subsides, then craving arises – it is the desire to experience it again.

6. What happens when we look at why something is making us unhappy? Is the object making us unhappy? Where does the feeling of being unhappy come from? What happens when we stop blaming others?

The only way to really look at the nature of this feeling is through meditation. If we look closely at why we are unhappy, we will probably find that it is not what we thought it was at all. It is not the object that is making us unhappy - it is coming from us. Once we stop blaming the object we can start to tackle the real problem (i.e. our own mind). It is this blaming that leads to most of the problems in the world. If we stopped blaming we would finally start to do something that really matters.