



Diamond Mountain University
Soaring to the Top of the Sky

Answer Key One: Planting the Seeds

*1) Give the name of the commentary that we will be using for this course, along with the name of the author and his dates. Also name the Sera Mey teacher who taught these vows to us in India (Tibetan track: give the Tibetan for names)

The commentary, which was given by Je Tsongkapa (1357-1419) is called *Getsul Gyi Labja Namtse Dengma* which can be translated as “Soaring to the Top of the Sky: Rules for Novice Monks and Nuns”, or as *Rules for Novice Monks and Nuns: A Commentary from Namtse Deng*. The commentary is based on notes taken by a student of Je Tsongkapa’s during his talks at Namtse Deng Monastery. We received oral instruction by Gyelrong Khensur Rinpoche Ngakwang Tukchok, at Sera Mey monastery. The instruction was translated into English by Geshe Michael Roach.

དགེ་ལུ་གྱི་བསྐྱབ་བྱ་གནམ་རྩེ་ལྗོང་མ་བཞུག

getsul gyi labja nam tse deng ma shuk

ཇེ་ཙོང་ཁ་པ་པ།

je tsongkapa (1357-1492)

རྒྱལ་ལོང་མཁན་བྱུང་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་དག་དབང་ལྷུག་མཚོག

gyelrong khensur rinpoche ngakwang tukchok

*2) Explain the two meanings of “Namtse Dengma”, and discuss the implications.

Namtse Deng is the name of the monastery where Je Tsongkapa gave this teaching, and therefore, the commentary is properly named: *Rules for Novice Monks and Nuns: A Commentary given at Namtse Deng*. But, the literal meaning of *Namtse Deng* is *Soaring to the Top of the Sky*. Since taking these vows with the proper motivation, and keeping them well, will at the very least, liberate you from suffering quickly, and at the end, with bodhisattva motivation, will lead you to enlightenment itself, the literal translation of the title, *Soaring to the Top of the Sky*, is also appropriate. It reminds us of where the vows will take us.

3) Discuss the links between Vinaya and Tantra. What is the ultimate goal for monks and nuns of the Middle Way?

In order to practice tantra, you must be keeping your morality extremely well. In fact, the extraordinary training of morality is the basis for the extraordinary trainings of meditation and wisdom, and without these three Tantra cannot be entered. Keeping the monks' and nuns' vows is the most powerful way to perfect morality. With this type of effort, you move into Tantra naturally. Without it, Tantra remains a secret, closed to you.

4) How many vows do novice monks and nuns hold? (Name the three ways of dividing them.) Name the first of these vows. (Tibetan track: give the Tibetan for the first vow.)

These vows can be divided into 10 (the basic 4, with the additional 6), or you can divide them into 13 (by adding 3 failures). This course will focus on the most detailed division: the 36 vows for a novice monk or nun.

མི་གསོད་པ།

mi supa

5) How do the vows of a novice compare with those of a fully ordained monk or nun? (Tibetan track: give the Tibetan for novice monk and full monk and the words that mean “wrongdoing”, “downfall” and “transgression”.)

Some of the transgressions committed by a novice monk or nun are similar to the downfalls for a full monk or nun.

དགེ་ཚུལ།

getsul

དགེ་སྦོང་།

gelong

ཉེས་བྱས།

nyeche

ཕམ་འདྲ་ཉེས་བྱས།

pamdra nyeche

and

རླུང་བ།

tungwa

ཕམ་པ།

pampa

or

སྤངས་པ་ལས་འདས་པའི།

langpa lende pay

*6) Name the four elements of a wrongdoing and explain them. What are these four elements for the act of killing a human? (Tibetan track: give the Tibetan for the four elements.)

The four elements are:

a) Foundation, which has two parts: the transgressor and the object. For killing, the transgressor is a novice monk or nun with pure or fixable vows and who is said, and the object is a human or human fetus.

གཞི།

shi

b) State of mind which also has two parts: the recognition and the intention. For killing, the recognition is that you recognize the object for what it is: a human or human fetus, or else you strongly suspect that it is. The intention is a sustained desire to kill this being.

བསམ་པ།	འདུ་ཚེས།	ཀུན་སྐྱེད།
<i>sampa</i>	<i>dushe</i>	<i>kunlong</i>

c) Undertaking the deed, setting out to do the wrongdoing. Using poison or weapons or the like you set out after the person.

སྐྱོར་བ།
jorwa

d) Completion of the deed: Successfully completing and “owning” the wrongdoing (“I did it.”). The human or fetus dies, and you think, “I did it.”

མཐར་ཏུག།
tartuk

7) Explain the notion of “concentric circles”. Give an example of something that would not break a vow, but would come close to breaking a vow. (Tibetan track: give the Tibetan for “wrongdoing to be confessed.”)

The idea is that at the center, you have the actual wrongdoing, such as killing a human. Around it, in concentric circles you have things that are close to, but somewhat lesser, like striking a human with your fist, driving too fast down the road at night, depriving yourself or others of food or medicine, etc. These are lesser acts of negative karma, but approach the act of killing. If you avoid even the smallest wrongdoing, then you will never commit the largest one. So it is important to make sure that you don’t even come close to the act of killing, by causing the least harm to another being, or yourself.