

# NALANDA INSTITUTE *for Contemplative Science*

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300 Central Park West, 1D, New York, NY 10024

Instructor: Dr. Joe Loizzo

Fall, 2008, 12 Mondays, 6:00-7:30 pm

Tuition: \$800 full/\$600 reduced

## Clearing the Mind: The Gradual Path of Self-Transformation

### Course Overview

This beginning-intermediate course teaches the contemplative art and science of social self-transformation central to the practice of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. The course follows the distinctive Tibetan tradition of integrating all three vehicles of the gradual path within the contemplative art of mind-clearing (*lo-jong*), commonly known as mind-training. Its unusual method is to place the best loved text of mind-clearing by the thirteenth century master Chekawa in the context of the gradual path (*lam rim*), as a thread tying together the quintessential pearls of Theravāda, Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna theory and practice in a format tailored to lay life in the world. It is this formulation of practicing all three vehicles in everyday life that makes this tradition so well-suited and helpful to people trying to build a contemplative way of life in today's stressful and competitive world. The enormous benefit of this practice for our way of life is that it protects us more effectively than any other from social stress, our primary source of confusion and suffering, while also permitting a level of social-emotional purity and change that make truly loving and caring relationships attainable and sustainable in a world hijacked by childhood trauma and childish fantasies of happiness.

The class moves through the seven points of Chekawa's text, following the Gelukpa edition and format of the text and linking each point and precept to the context of theory and practice that actually prepares one to understand and master this complex art. The first point, learn the preliminaries, connects to the context of Theravāda theory and practice, covering the individual scope of gradual reflection with a special focus on spiritual self-determination as well as the *Dzog-chen* practice of letting go through "deep" mindfulness of mind and its objects. Second, the actual practice of conceiving the conventional spirit of enlightenment, connects to the Mahāyāna scope of gradual reflection, with a special focus on the two main methods of conceiving that spirit and the supporting arts of nurturing it, including giving and taking, mounting give and take on the breath, and cultivating analytic insight into the traumatized mind and its misperceptions. To complete the second point, we turn to cultivating the ultimate spirit of enlightenment with a special focus on the galvanizing effect of realizing emptiness as well as the powerful method of transcending mindfulness of mind with analytic insight, following the Ganden/Kagyū *Mahamudra* tradition. The third point, turning adversity to advantage, connects to the Vajrayāna scope of reflection with a special focus on the esoteric teaching of transforming the five poisons contaminating compulsive life into the five intuitions that purify and perfect enlightened life. The class links this art with the Action Process of

White Tara and Orange Mañjuśrī, specifically the role-modeling practice of protecting the mind from the five compulsive forms of existence and purifying one's experience of the five elements of the natural, social and cultural environment. The fourth point, integrating practice, teaches the coalescence of all aspects of theory and practice that characterizes advanced stages of spiritual development in all vehicles, as well as the ways to accelerate growth in the course of a multi-life process that includes death and afterlife practice. The fifth point, measuring progress, applies the Vajrayāna framework of basis, path and fruit to map progress on the path of self-transformation. Starting with the meditative attainment of single-minded intention, it lays out the traditional milestones for mapping transformational states of mind, including the wisdom of accurate self-correction and the positive motivations of peace, love, care and joy. In all vehicles, the final marker of progress is the gradual purification of the emotional and cognitive blocks to the freedom and omniscience of full enlightenment. The sixth and seventh points, vows and commitments, spell out the don'ts and do's guiding everyday practice, bringing a degree of proscription and prescription usually reserved for the monastic vows of Theravāda practice and/or the contemplative vows and commitments of Vajrayāna practice. These pithy guidelines make it easier to bring the rigor of a full-time spiritual professional to the time-challenged limits and chaotic complexity of contemplative life in the everyday world.

Prerequisites: initial familiarity with loving-kindness or mind-clearing, the reflections of the gradual path, and the practice of basic mindfulness, visualization, yoga or their equivalents.

### Syllabus

- September 29: Mind-Clearing: Mastering Three Vehicles in One  
*Buddhism with an Attitude (BA), 7-11*
- October 6: Beyond Addiction: The Path of Inner Peace and Freedom  
*BA, 13-63*
- October 13: Deep Mindfulness: Opening the Lifespace of Mind  
*BA, 83-95*
- October 20: Beyond Narcissism: The Life-Breath of Social Engagement  
*BA, 154-163*
- October 27: Cultivating Compassion: Unearthing the Wish-Fulfilling Jewel of the Heart  
*BA, 163-190*
- November 3: Beyond Reification: Dismantling the Prison of Self-Indulgent Perception  
*BA, 65-83, 94-112*
- November 10: Cultivating Wisdom: Opening and Clearing the Intuitive Eye  
*BA, 112-153*
- November 17: Beyond Childhood: Turning Trauma to Competence  
*BA, 191-206*
- November 24: Transforming Agency: Turing the Toxic Self into Embodied Love  
*BA, 206-216*
- December 1: Integration and Mastery: Empowering Transgenerational Practice  
*BA, 217-227*

December 8: Progress as Perfection: Learning to Live with Happiness  
*BA, 229-235*

December 15: Narrowing Down the Path: Making Every Step Count  
*BA, 237-278*

Required Readings:

Wallace, Alan B, *Buddhism with an Attitude (BA)*. Ithaca: Snow Lion, 2005.

Recommended Readings:

Jinpa, Thubten, editor, *Mind-Training: The Great Collection*. Boston: Wisdom, 2006.

Loizzo, Joe, *Clearing the Mind in Seven Points: Gelukpa Text and Commentary*. New York: Nalanda, 2008.