8 ENLIGHTENMENT

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ENLIGHTENMENT

Enlightenment is a state of unwavering fearlessness, complete joy and boundless compassion. One experiences oneself fully connected with everything and perceives the mind as a luminous conscious space, which by its nature is insight, by its experience is supreme joy, and by its expression is energetic love.

Is there a permanent happiness, independent of all external circumstances?
Realizing that everything that is composed is impermanent and dissolves again, Prince Siddhartha left his royal palace 2600 years ago and set out to find a way to overcome suffering. He became Buddha, the "Awakened One" - awakened from the dream of ignorance. The historical Buddha Shakyamuni showed that this state can be experienced permanently. He gave teachings about the foundation, path and goal. He showed his disciples methods how enlightenment can be realized. This path of experience is still passed on today.

In Buddhism, two levels of realization are distinguished on the path to enlightenment.
The first level is called **liberation**, in which one develops the insight that everything personal, such as the body and inner states, are in constant flux. Accordingly, one lets go of the ego concept. A state of inner peace and clarity is experienced, free from any disturbing feelings. Theravada Buddhism primarily uses meditations to practice mindfulness, aiming for inner serenity and ego-lessness. This means the end of suffering. Buddha Shakyamuni explained this in the so-called Four Noble Truths.

In the Great Way (sanskr. Mahayana) and in the Diamond Way (sanskr. Vajrayana), liberation is considered the foundation for the further path to full **enlightenment**. Here it is about the development of compassion and wisdom with the motivation to be able to benefit all beings. Wisdom means to realize the emptiness of all appearances - beyond dualistic concepts. Through meditation the separation between experiencer, experience and experienced dissolves, so that one experiences the non-separateness of all appearances, one experiences space and joy inseparably. In the Diamond Way, one applies Pure View, that is, one practices seeing the world as the free play of space and beings as potential Buddhas.

COMPASSION

Enlightened mind (sanskr.: Bodhicitta) is the desire to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. This attitude is based on the understanding that one is not separate from other beings and that one's own happiness is not more important than the happiness of other beings. **Compassion** and the abilities to help others unfold naturally. This attitude makes both meditation practice and action in everyday life very powerful. Every action becomes the action of a **Bodhisattva** (literally, "hero of the enlightened mind") and thus a step on the path to enlightenment.

WISDOM

Wisdom includes the understanding of cause and effect, the knowledge of impermanence, the realization of the relativity of attributions and one develops the insight that experiencer, experienced and experienced - subject, object and action - cannot be separated and are parts of a totality. All phenomena are conditioned and arise in inter-dependence; they are devoid of independent self-existence. This is called emptiness in Buddhism. Everything is experienced in a beyond personal way.

ACTIVITY

By combining energetic **compassion** and beyond-personal **wisdom**, the scope of action expands. Wisdom and compassion have become so natural that every action arises spontaneously, without the dualistic notion of "I am doing something to you or for you," and contributes to the benefit of other beings. Simply put, every situation is accurately grasped, and enlightened activity does exactly what is most appropriate. Buddhas and realized teachers act for the benefit of beings. Depending on what is needed, they act to **pacify, enrich, fascinate, and/or to powerfully protect others.** These are the four enlightened spheres of activity.

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

COURSE OF LESSON – SECONDARY LEVEL II

OBJECTIVES

The students will be able to:

- explain the terms "liberation" and "enlightenment" from a Buddhist perspective.
- understand the developmental path to enlightenment from a Buddhist perspective.
- reflect on habitual perception and judgment.
- understand the connection between lasting happiness and enlightenment.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER	Outside the comfort zone -every journey begins with the first step	**Material 4** Students discuss the cartoon
EXERCISE 2	Expression of enlightenment in compassion and wisdom	**Material 3** **WS 4 and Answers to WS 4** Students secure understanding and establish personal reference
DEPPENING KNOWLEDGE 2	Vajra Song of an enlightened Yogi	**Material 2** Students let impression have an effect on them
(OPTIONAL) DEEPENING 1	Habitual perception and judgment	**WS 3 and Answers to WS 3** Students question perception and judgement
EXERCISE 1	Overcoming the ego illusion	**WS 2 and Answers to WS 2** Students reflect on ego concept and feelings
INSIGHT	Is there such a thing as lasting happiness?	**WS 1 and Answers to WS 1** Students work on core questions about Buddha's quest
INTRO	We are very inventive in the pursuit of happiness.	**Material 1** Students think of examples from their experience and associations

FOUNDATION

What might interest the students in the topic:

- What do we focus our lives on?
- What is enlightenment?
- Was only the historical Buddha enlightened?
- Can any person attain enlightenment?

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

DIDACTIC REFERENCES - SECONDARY LEVEL II

OBJECTIVES

The students will be able to . . .
1. explain the terms "liberation" and "enlightenment" from a Buddhist perspective.
2. comprehend the developmental path to enlightenment from a Buddhist perspective.
3. reflect on habitual perception and judgment.
4. understand the relationship between lasting happiness and enlightenment.

INTRODUCTION

Material 1 above shows a woman, the sentence "In the pursuit of happiness we are very inventive" stimulates a class discussion in which the students contribute their experience and associations. The pupils bring examples of happiness through success, consumption, love, etc.

Material 1 below shows the possible downfall, because happiness, which depends on external conditions, is never permanent. It cannot be relied upon.

INSIGHT

"Is there lasting happiness - beyond crises, old age, illness and death?"

Worksheet 1 provides information about Buddha's life, his decision to give up the comfortable palace life and embark on a quest for lasting happiness.

Assignments and critical core questions, worked on in partners, encourage reflection. The **Answers to WS 1** give possible suggestions.

NOTES

From the Buddhist point of view, lasting happiness is only possible if, firstly, one overcomes the ego illusion so that one no longer experiences oneself as a target of suffering, which is called "liberation" and, secondly, one recognizes at every moment that the external world is also an "illusion". One gives up conceptual notions and constricting judgments step by step and develops wisdom. In enlightenment, one experiences lasting happiness, independent of all conditions. Unwavering and fearless, joyful and full of love, one acts for the benefit of beings. Meditation is a method to develop more clarity, stability, joy and other enlightened qualities.

EXERCISE 1

Worksheet 2 shows the core questions for overcoming the ego illusion. In partner work, the students reflect on the fact that the ego is not a fixed entity, but is in a constant state of change. The questions encourage them to become aware of feelings and when they become too restrictive and hinder happiness. In the Buddhist context one speaks of "disturbing feelings".

Answers to WS 2 give possible answers to the questions.
If desired, a short exchange takes place in the plenary.

DEEPENING 1, OPTIONAL

This is about becoming aware of habitual perception and judgment.

Due to our cultural background, upbringing, personal history and sensory perception, the world is experienced and evaluated differently. These conceptual ideas can be questioned by the students with the help of **Worksheet 3**. This can be done in group work. The teacher gives background information on **Answers to WS 3**.

If desired, a short exchange takes place in the plenary.

NOTES

In Buddhism, we speak of fundamental ignorance because we do not perceive how things really are through the veils of concepts. In order to achieve liberation, it is necessary to overcome the limitations of ego-based experience in the form of experience - and not only through intellectual knowledge. To realize enlightenment, one needs to deepen meditation and experience the space nature of mind. Enlightenment means that all conceptual veils of ignorance are dissolved.

DEEPENING KNOWLEDGE 2

In plenary, the Vajra Song of the enlightened Yogi

Milarepa in **Material 2** is read. The students allow the impression to sink in. The poem form serves as inspiration and shows the joyful and free mind after overcoming all concepts. Completely fearless, he rides the waves of the sea.

EXERCISE 2

Material 3: The Buddha image can be projected as a background during the elaboration phase of **Worksheet 4** to convey a classical representation on a thangka.

In **Worksheet 4,** the students learn that enlightenment is expressed in fearlessness, joy, and love. The combination of energetic compassion and beyond-personal wisdom produces activity for the benefit of beings.

Working individually, they comment on these qualities and answer whether they are also relevant to themselves and whether they can imagine people today following this path to enlightenment. **Answers to WS 4** give hints to possible replies.

TRANSFER KNOWLEDGE

Material 4 shows a funny cartoon. It is about the inner step of leaving limitations behind and venturing into unknown new territory, analogous to Buddha when he left the palace.

The students spontaneously ask themselves if they know this experience of liberating “aha”-moments. Every path begins with the first step.

MATERIAL 1

IN THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS WE ARE VERY INVENTIVE





WORKSHEET 1

IS THERE LASTING HAPPINESS?

A STORY FROM THE LIFE OF PRINCE SIDDHARTHA, THE LATER BUDDHA

As a prince, Siddhartha had a wonderful life in his parents' palace. His father made sure that he was not confronted with the problems of the world. However, after secretly leaving the palace and seeing old age, sickness and death, the young prince could no longer find peace. The realization that these sufferings were part of the lives of all beings stirred him up. All joys, all possessions, all happy moments would pass away.

No matter how he looked at it, he could not find a way to protect his family and friends from suffering. Is there a lasting happiness and how could it be found? He would not find the answer there in the palace.

So Prince Siddhartha decided to give up his comfortable life and he set out on a search. He met many masters of different philosophical schools. After six years of learning and meditation, Siddhartha, the future Buddha, made a firm decision to dwell in deep meditation. He sat down under the Bodhi tree in Bodhgaya. After six days and nights of intense inner experience, he achieved enlightenment on the full moon morning in May. He became radiant awareness in the here and now, through every cell he knew and was everything. That is why he is called Buddha, the Awakened One.

EXERCISES

1. **In bullet points from the life story, note essentials about the following steps:**
   - Initial situation
   - Motivation
   - Path
   - Goal

2. **Discuss the following key questions with your partners:**
   - What do you think of the Buddha's decision to leave his familiar surroundings?
   - Do you think the urgency of Buddha's concern is still relevant in today's life?
   - Look for situations from your life experience where you have had similar situations.
   - Consider whether there are possible solutions to lasting happiness?
   - Do you see a way to change the outer world in such a way that lasting happiness is achieved?

ANSWERS TO WS 1

IS THERE LASTING HAPPINESS?

EXERCISES

1. In bullet points from the life story, note essentials about the following steps:

- Initial situation: wonderful life in the palace, king's son
- Motivation: find lasting happiness for oneself and all
- Path: go away, meet teachers, learn, meditate, dwell in deep meditation
- Goal: radiant awareness in the here and now, enlightenment

2. In partner work, discuss the following key questions:

- What do you think of Buddha's decision to leave his familiar surroundings?

  It is understandable, he wanted to try something new.
- Do you think the urgency of Buddha's concern is still relevant in today's life?

  Yes, there is much suffering in the world.
- Look for situations from your field of experience where you have left familiar paths.

  Individual responses, including transgressive experiences (e.g., drugs, extreme sports).
- Consider whether there are solutions to lasting happiness.

  If so, then most likely through inner attitude.
- Do you see a way to change the external world to bring about lasting happiness?

  Although one hopes this, wars, catastrophes, etc. happen again and again.

WORKSHEET 2

OVERCOMING THE EGO ILLUSION

In Buddhism, two levels of realization are distinguished on the path to enlightenment. The first level is called liberation. Its basis is the realization that the body, thoughts and feelings are in constant change and therefore do not represent a truly permanent "I". By not following habitual notions of a fixed identity, one becomes free from disturbing feelings. A deeply relaxed state of inner peace and clarity is experienced.

The idea of an "I" exhibits no constancy: As a kindergarten child, the "I" felt different than it does now; as a person in his mid-forties, it will be different from that of an old man; and if the "I" really existed, what would happen to it after death? "I" as a mental construct is constantly present, everyone experiences the world from his or her own perspective at all times, yet it cannot be found.

Once one has experienced that the ego is an illusion, there is also no one left to suffer. One no longer sees oneself as a target and has achieved "liberation". Inner freedom means being able to decide what to cultivate in one's mind.
Regular meditation helps to be able to keep enough distance.

EXERCISES

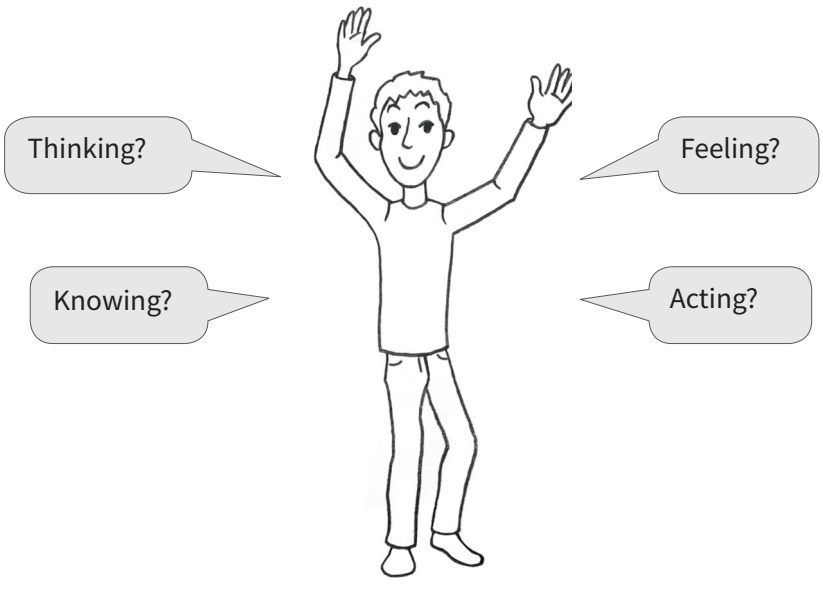
Discuss with a partner.

1. The idea of the self:

- Can you relate these Buddhist statements to your own experience?
- What does this statement mean about no longer being a target? Find examples from everyday situations.
- Make suggestions on how to act less ego-centered.

2. On dealing with feelings:

- When are feelings disruptive?
- What "disturbing feelings" can you name?
- How do "disturbing feelings" express themselves when you act them out uncontrollably?
- What is the advantage of not acting out a "disturbing feeling" but consciously letting it go?
- How can you learn not to act on "disturbing feelings" but to remain calm?



"I am not my thoughts and feelings, I have them."
"I am not my body, I have it."

ANSWERS TO WS 2

OVERCOMING THE EGO ILLUSION

EXERCISES

1. On the idea of the ego:

- Can you relate these Buddhist statements to your own experience?
  Yes, it is obvious.

- What does this statement mean about no longer being a target? Find examples from everyday situations!
  Instead of getting angry, one remains calm and acts with compassion. In loss, one is aware that things change. In difficult situations, one understands that others have similar problems.

- Make suggestions on how to act less self-centered.
  One also thinks of others and acts accordingly: I share my cake, etc.
  One understands higher-level relationships and that others also want to be happy:
  One takes responsibility.

2. On how to deal with feelings:

- When are feelings disturbing?
  When they are too strong and take over. When one becomes dependent.
  When one harms others and oneself.

- What "disturbing feelings" can you name?
  Anger, rage, resentment, jealousy, envy, greed, addiction, dullness, sluggishness, arrogance, mistrust ...
  Desire, depression, listlessness, anxiety, ...

- How do "disturbing feelings" express themselves when you live them out uncontrollably?
  Too strongly, one is at their mercy. One makes oneself ridiculous. You destroy friendships and trust.

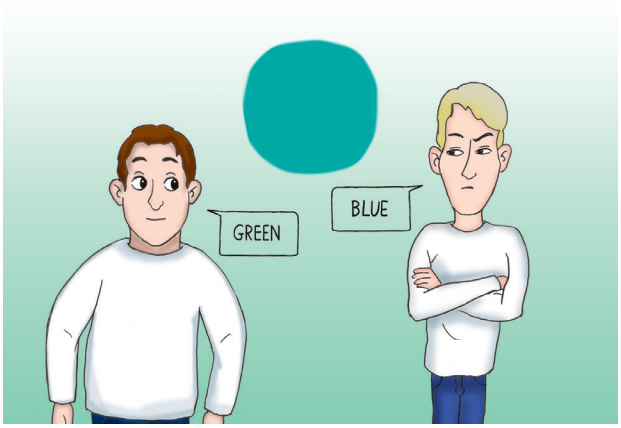
- What is the advantage of not acting out a "disturbing feeling" but consciously letting it go?
  You gain freedom to make decisions. You remain sovereign. Others can rely on you.

- How can one learn not to act on "disturbing feelings" but to remain calm?
  Training, meditation, mindfulness exercises, insight, learning from experience, developing humor, being able to laugh at oneself, ...

WORKSHEET 3

HABITUAL PERCEPTION AND JUDGMENT

In Buddhism, we speak of fundamental ignorance because we do not perceive how things really are. Because of our cultural background, upbringing, personal history, and sensory perception, the world is experienced and evaluated differently.



EXERCISES

In your group, discuss the following questions.

1. Culturally colored perception and evaluation

a) What is considered morally and ethically acceptable? Give examples from different cultures.
b) To what extent are hierarchies accepted as given? Give examples from different forms of society.

2. Subjective perception based on personal history

a) How does being in love influence your perception of your partner and everyday life?
b) How does a memory of an unreconciled quarrel influence meeting again?

3. Limited perception through the senses

a) What eludes our perception through the senses? Where do animals perceive more accurately/differently?
b) How real is reality? Does the research result listed below change anything in your relationship to the "reality of matter"?

At the Cern research center in Geneva, physicists deliberately collide particles and then observe what is created. They are looking for a smallest assumed particle, the so-called Higgs boson. However, they have not detected the particle itself, but the components into which it disintegrated again in a fraction of a second.

Compare this to Buddha's statement:
Form is emptiness, emptiness is form, form and emptiness are inseparable. Everything is the free play of space.

4. How can one overcome limitations that arise through habitual perception?

ANSWERS TO WS 3

HABITUAL PERCEPTION AND JUDGMENT

EXERCISES

In your group, discuss the following questions.

1. Culturally colored perception and evaluation

a) What is morally acceptable? Examples vary across cultures.
In arranged marriages, family loyalty is key, even if against individuals' wishes.
Homosexuality, food taboos, dress codes differ widely across societies.

b) To what extent are hierarchies accepted as given? Give examples from different forms of society.
According to research, for example, only 13% of Russians would point out a mistake to their boss, whereas well over 90% of the Swiss would. Totalitarian and dictatorial systems do not tolerate contradiction.

2. Subjective perception based on personal history

a) How does your infatuation affect your perception of your partner and everyday life?
The mood and feelings change the experience very strongly. In infatuation you see everything through rose-colored glasses, shadow sides are faded out.

b) How does a memory of an unsettled quarrel influence the renewed encounter?
Due to unresolved situations one is prejudiced and expects a repetition of the negative, the perception is distorted. One is tense and anxious or ready to attack.

3. Limited perception through the senses

a) What eludes our perception through the senses? Where do animals perceive more precisely/ differently?
Nuclear radiation, microwaves, electro smog, infrared, x-rays, etc. Sonars in dolphins and whales, to produce and perceive ultrasonic sounds; other hearing frequencies in dogs; compound eyes in insects, etc.

b)How real is reality? Does the research result listed below change anything in your relationship to the "reality of matter"?
The realization that reality is perceived to be more static than it is opens up an awareness of the mutability and limitless possibilities in space. In everyday life these realizations are blanked out by almost all people.
Quantum physics and Buddha's statement both give similar clues to the nature of phenomena.

4.How can one overcome limitations caused by habitual perception?

- One is aware of the limited point of view.
- One takes a super-personal point of view.
- There are also training methods.
- In the Buddhist context, one gets this freedom through meditation.

MATERIAL 2

VARJA SONG OF AN ENLIGHTENED YOGI

HAPPINESS

"I am happy in the radiantly clear meditation on the openness of the mind
so happy about the constant play of appearances
and still happier I become, the more up and down it goes in the experiences.
I am happy in this human world, free from bad karma, so happy about every chaos
and still more happy I become, the wilder the frightening phenomena rage.

I am happy about the simultaneous coming and passing of the unpleasant feelings.
So happy I am when the danger increases - and still happier when I am not ill.

I am happy in the space of my courageous mind, so happy about everything that
presents itself spontaneously and still happier I become the more that happens".

(quoted from Olivedi, Ulli: Tibet hinter dem Spiegel, Knaur, 2007)



Milarepa (1040 - 1123) is probably the most famous yogi of Tibet. Already a kind of folk hero during his lifetime, reports about his eventful, unconventional life were carried by wandering storytellers to the last corners of Tibet. His collected vajra songs, which have also become known as "Milarepa's Hundred Thousand Songs", contributed to his great popularity. These songs are the spontaneous expression of his direct insight into the true nature of things and show freedom from all concepts.

MATERIAL 3

BUDDHA SHAKYAMUNI



WORKSHEET 4

ENLIGHTENMENT EXPRESSES ITSELF IN COMPASSION AND WISDOM AND ACTIVITY

On the path to enlightenment, one first experiences liberation from disturbing feelings and a fixed ego conception, after which limiting concepts about the world fall away until the full experience of the unlimitedness of mind is realized.

The inherent **qualities** of the mind are brought to full fruition. One perceives the mind as luminous conscious space, unlimited and indestructible. **Fearlessness** results from this. In the space of the mind, all kinds of things can appear, comparable to clouds that appear in the sky, take on different forms and dissolve again. This playful richness is experienced as joy. It is recognized that all beings have the potential for enlightenment and want to experience happiness. **Love and compassion** are a natural expression of enlightenment.

COMPASSION

Enlightened mind (sanskr.: bodhicitta) is the desire to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. This attitude is based on the understanding that one is not separate from other beings and that one's own happiness is not more important than the happiness of other beings.

Compassion and the abilities to help others unfold naturally. This attitude makes both meditation practice and action in everyday life very powerful. Every deed becomes the action of a **Bodhisattva** (literally, "hero of the enlightened mind") and thus a step on the path to enlightenment.

WISDOM

Wisdom includes the understanding of cause and effect, the knowledge of impermanence, the realization of the relativity of attributions and develops the insight that experiencer, experienced and experienced - subject, object and deed - cannot be separated and are parts of a wholeness. Everything is experienced in a supra-personal way.

AKTIVITY

Through the connection of energetic **compassion** and beyond-personal **wisdom**, the scope of action expands. Wisdom and compassion have become so natural that every action arises spontaneously, without the dualistic notion of "I am doing something to you or for you," and contributes to the benefit of other beings. Simply put, every situation is accurately grasped, and enlightened activity does exactly what is most appropriate.

Buddhas and realized teachers act for the benefit of beings. Depending on what is needed, they act **pacifying, enriching, fascinating, and/or powerfully protecting**. These are the four enlightened spheres of action.

HIGHEST TRUTH IS HIGHEST JOY IS HIGHEST LEVEL OF FUNCTIONING

EXERCISES

1. Develop an understanding of the highlighted terms (fearlessness, joy, compassion, wisdom, and activity) from the text above.
2. Consider whether these qualities are relevant to yourself.
3. Can you imagine people today walking this path to enlightenment?

ANSWERS TO WS 4

ENLIGHTENMENT EXPRESSES ITSELF IN COMPASSION AND WISDOM AND ACTIVITY

EXERCISES

1. Gain an understanding of the concepts of fearlessness, joy and compassion, wisdom and activity from the above text.

Fearlessness arises because the experiencing mind is unlimited and indestructible.

Joy arises because we experience the playful richness.

Compassion arises because the happiness of others is important.

Wisdom recognizes cause and effect, understands impermanence and the relativity of attributions, recognizes that subject, object and deed are a wholeness.

Activity exists in four spheres of action, one acts supra-personally, effectively for the benefit of beings.

2. Consider whether these qualities are relevant to yourself.

Individual answers are encouraged.

3. Can you imagine people walking this path to enlightenment nowadays?

One hears about it. There are different Buddhist directions, e.g. Zen, Theravada, Mahayana, Diamond Way....

MATERIAL 4

EVERY PATH BEGINS WITH THE FIRST STEP

"REAL LIFE TAKES PLACE OUTSIDE THE COMFORT ZONE"

