

## **1. I'm interested in Buddhism, but some of it seems a little "foreign." What about meditation, mantras, and chanting in Tibetan?**

If any of it seems foreign, that makes sense, as the teachings come from centuries-old wisdom, far away in the Himalayas! At the beginning, some find the words difficult to pronounce, the mantras slow going relative to the warp-speed cadence of the older students, and keeping the mind focused a challenge. Generally, that's where most of us started.

However, it should not be lost among all this that, from the mantras to meditation to the good conduct which is an essential part of the path, everything about Buddhism is designed with great care and wisdom to maximize progress towards true happiness for oneself and others. In that sense, it can hit close to home. In fact, it is about coming home-- to one's own original, perfect true nature.

The Tibetan path has many means available for self-liberation, but as the Buddha stressed, take nothing on blind faith and choose only those parts that work from your own experience. Only do what you are comfortable doing.

## **2. Do I have to believe in reincarnation or karma to come to the meetings?**

Absolutely not. Buddhism is based on the Buddha's frequent advice, "Take what works for you."

By that, the Buddha stressed that no one take any of the teachings by faith or at face value, but rather incorporate only those that prove true through one's own experience. Due respect is given to wherever one is on his or her path.

## **3. What is enlightenment? How does meditation get you there?**

Enlightenment is a state of mind: one of total awareness, peace, joy, ease, fulfillment, and perfect freedom. It is the highest form of everlasting happiness, experienced following liberation from ignorance and delusion, as well as from conflicting emotions such as attachment and aversion. Anyone can realize this innate reality, which is your true Buddha nature. Meditation, the intentional cultivation of attention and awareness, is a method leading directly to enlightenment. To awaken fully and irrevocably is Buddhahood.

## **4. Enlightenment seems like Mount Everest! Is there any benefit just "going up the slopes"?**

Although it is possible to achieve enlightenment in this path during this life, enlightenment can take many lifetimes. The length of each path depends on where one starts, while the speed depends on how hard and effectively one works. Every step along the path, however, can yield positive future results-- that is the law of karma. Some of these results are almost immediate, while others take much longer. Peace of mind is a by-product of all Tibetan practice, although that also comes according to the same factors above. So, while it is important not to have expectations in your practice, good things do happen over time; in fact, at some point-- it is more often like going downhill than uphill

## **5. Why do we chant in Tibetan?**

We are chanting the very words in which these prayers and practices were revealed by enlightened masters; therefore, the syllables themselves carry a blessing. All Tibetan Buddhist teachings have three levels of meaning: outer, inner and secret. The English translation can only communicate the outer level, whereas Tibetan communicates all three.

Tibetan language was codified to communicate the dharma; the vibration of Tibetan actually brings the meditator into desirable states. Add to that the numerous methods of visualization as well as working with breath and subtle energy, and you have a powerful combination.

## **6. Who is Padmasambhava?**

2500 years ago the Buddha prophesied many times that he would be reborn. This came true in the 9th century with the greatly auspicious birth of Guru Padmasambhava, or Lotus-Born. Guru Rinpoche, as he is also known, came to Tibet from India in 817 C.E. There, in collaboration with King Trisong Deutsen and the great Abbot Shantarakshita, he firmly established Buddhism in Tibet.

Padmasambhava gave widespread teachings to many, especially his 25 principal disciples. For posterity he also hid hundreds of Treasures (termas) in the forms of scriptures, images and ritual articles, with instructions for their revelation for the benefit of future generations. Over the centuries, more than 100 masters have revealed these Treasures and taught them to their disciples. His own tantric teachings, the lineages of revealed teachings, as well as the Dzogchen (or Great Perfection) view, form the essence of our Nyingma lineage, of which the PBC is a part.

The core heart practice on this great master connects us with our true nature, as well as with our long lineage.

## **7. I'd like to do some research and reading. How do I do that?**

For your own study and investigation, there are several good books recommended on [www.pbc-tn.org/reading.html](http://www.pbc-tn.org/reading.html). And the Internet is teeming with information, of course. Here is one good link [www.buddhanet.net/l\\_tibet.htm](http://www.buddhanet.net/l_tibet.htm).