



Dhargyey Buddhist Centre

Teacher:- Venerable Geshe Jampa Tenzin Title:- Sunday Meditation Venue: D.B.C. Dunedin

Date 20th March 2011

I am very pleased to be here at this Centre founded by Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey and visited by His Holiness The Dalai Lama and Khensur Dorje Chang Rinpoche – the latter two being my root gurus. I feel privileged to continue their tradition. As you know I am here to serve people and especially Buddhism and the Buddhist teachings in general. An important reason for me coming was that the late Khensur Rinpoche told me I should. Also The Rinpoches here and Board have frequently requested me. To comply, I have come here.

Apart from study in the monastery, I don't have special teaching skills and certainly not in teaching westerners. My approach – I'm not an extrovert person. I might not be able to laugh and talk as much as you are used to. I might look reserved, but I am not reserved, it's just that I'm like this. When I speak it will be straight forward. If things don't go down well, please be forthright in giving me feedback, so we can be both on the same page. Don't be hesitant to offer suggestions.

Don't consider me as your lama. As you've heard before we need to take time to observe each other. If we are too rash in taking up a guru-disciple relationship, things can go wrong, just as they do in familial relationships. Just consider me a friend with relatively more knowledge about Buddhism. Spiritual friendship doesn't need to be as guru disciple. This will be more productive. What is important now is to learn from each other so we can benefit from this. The Centre is not here to proclaim its existence and its greatness. We need to quietly pursue the prime purpose of bringing spiritual growth.

I am here to talk about Buddhism – which is embraced mainly for inner transformation. You should first look at other traditions and consider the philosophy underpinning Buddhist lifestyle. Embrace it if you find some benefit for yourself. Don't embrace it as a fad. Analyse all traditions and find what is available and useful through thick and thin – only then, should you embrace Buddhism. As with all major traditions it is a means of helping; a spiritual away of tackling the problems of life. You have had lots of teachings. So you're at home with the basics. Still there is no harm in reiterating this fact; Buddhism seeks within the mind and uses this reservoir to find solutions to the various problems.

I am told Sundays entail prayer recitation, the lama's talk and meditation at end. These three go hand in hand; hearing teachings, personal reflection and single pointed meditation. There are two types of meditation – progressively scanning steps and single pointed meditation. I feel when you recite, this is the time to meditate, so I'm not sure if we need a separate time for meditation when we meet. For example when we chant the first two lines of the refuge prayer 'sangye chodang ...' about refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, for one's own enlightenment, you recite it three times. This involves duration of our practise, doing things, how it can save us, what skills do we have, are we free of problems etc. You could be considering many things during this time - that is a scanning meditation in itself, of many points.

Buddhist introductions by lamas are usually in relation to the four noble truths. All practice lies within this framework. Suffering, origin of suffering and so on. The four truths are of (1) suffering physical and mental, (2) the origin of these stresses, (3) the truth of the possibility to get relief from all distress and (4) the means to the state of that permanent relief.

To explain it by a medical model; if someone is physically ill, that is akin to bodily pain. What triggered it is usually lifestyle, food etc. The persistence of it is likened to the origin of that pain. You go to see a doctor who prescribes variously, and as you take it the body responds to the ailment and that relief is likened to the truth of cessation – the end of all suffering.

Other religious traditions talk of how to deal with these issues. According to them salvation is bestowed by a greater, outer force – god or some primal substance or what-ever. Buddha said no one can confer it, but the way to salvation can be taught and individuals can achieve it through their own effort.

How did Buddha show that the way to peace and freedom from suffering was through effort? By proclaiming the Four Truths. First you must know what your suffering is. Secondly, once you know it, analyse its origin and you'll realize the cause. Once you know the cause you can rid yourself of it. To rid yourself of it you have to know that there is a way to freedom. The Fourth truth is that of Path (lam gampa ja). Meditate on path. Do all the necessary practice. In time, as you work on it, you will succeed in relieving self of all suffering and its causes. This is called cessation –realise cessation.

Buddha said we must know suffering (dung ngel shepa ja). Of course even animals realize what is the source of their suffering. We are not talking of physical pain. There are some kinds of suffering which most ordinary people consider as objects worthy of seeking. Buddhism says there are three actual sufferings; that of pain, change into pain and pervasive conditioning - which ordinary beings do not see as real. “Realise suffering” is a pointed statement which brings up the real cause of suffering.

Of the three 3 sufferings, hardly anyone doesn't know suffering of actual pain. It is not crucial just to realize suffering, we have to find relief. If we aren't aware of our mental and physical stress we can't be even a beginner spiritual practitioner. If we don't realize pervasive conditioning we'll never want to get out of cyclic existence, we'll be complacently happy and not achieve the status of the middling practitioner. If we don't also realize that all sentient beings situation is like that, then there is no reason for compassion, and so no success in the advanced practice of Mahayana. Realizing suffering is crucial in the practise of the three levels of practitioners.

What is mostly done in the modern world and throughout history is that scientists and medical professionals are there to find solutions and attain relief from actual mental and physical sufferings and threats. Thus they provide only a temporary state of relief. I feel the material approach of the medical and scientific communities do not address underlying reasons and factors.

Buddhism attacks the pervasive conditioning of the entire mundane cyclic existence (of birth, aging, sickness and death), which is unrecognizable unless it is introduced to you. Buddhism addresses them so they are abandoned in such a way they never come back.

Can we identify and know the third suffering of pervasive conditioning? Yes via its cause/nature/entity and its result. How can we know it in terms of its cause? We know that through the first truth 'origin of suffering', namely karma. There are two types of karma – negative karma and negative mental attitudes or delusions. The way to address all causes of suffering is to rely on truth of path. There are a raft of topics which cover this, from the very basic means/paths to the very advanced means/paths employing the use of tantra. Through familiarity with true path and its raft of topics, you would in time reach the state of relief known as 'true cessation'. To know what that is like we all need to understand philosophy of middle way- madhyamika.

In doing all this we need to ground practice in the refuge of Buddha, dharma and sangha as our guide on true path with like-minded aspirants as our friends. All practice needs to be grounded in these three refuges.