



Dhargyey Buddhist Centre

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

Sunday 24 July 2011 lam rim

Please listen to this talk with the highest motivation of wanting to achieve the state of a Buddha for the benefit of all sentient beings.

This morning I want to talk about Bodhicitta – Bodhi means enlightenment and citta means motivation to achieve enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. It means to wish to achieve enlightenment for ultimate and temporary happiness of all beings. Like all other people somehow sub-consciously believe that we must be driven by enlightened self-interest to achieve anything for ourselves. Throughout beginning-less existences that we have had we have been invariably influenced by this self-interest. Driven by this we have done all kinds of things because one thought that one was doing things for one's own happiness. Even in this lifetime the same thing happens. Even when we practice Dharma we think I do this because it is good for me. It is always me and me at the bottom of all actions. Driven by this we have done all sorts of activities in order to achieve some degree of happiness. If pursuit of happiness driven by self-interest is the right approach it is high time we had some happiness we can rely on considering the length of time and the mountain of effort we have made. When you do something you can expect an outcome, but what can we expect? If self-centredness is the right attitude and actions based on these are right then there should be happiness we can rely on at all times. But there is not as what we have is the result of all kinds of problems, suffering physical and psychological distress. What has happened in the past is happening now again in this lifetime from birth until now as conditions of doing things for ourselves we have done all sorts but what are the tangible outcomes we have achieved as humans that we can fall back on. Despite the fact that we have made a great deal of effort to achieve this, practically there is nothing we have actually found. On the other hand, since life is fraught with suffering and mundane existence is, the suffering arises from negative actions which are invariably performed through self-interest. As a result we have had a great deal of problems with health, not achieving what one has sought and separation from beloved one, something is always going wrong. This clearly shows the past is repeating itself. As long as we live in mundane existence the pattern will continue in the next lifetime as well. This is the very sad story of long suffering.

That is why we need to draw a line in the sand and make a change. We have not been able to make a change because to date we have this attitude that if you do something for others, then only others benefit and there is no benefit to self. That is where the fault lies in our perception. When this issue of doing things out of other-cherishing thought, altruism, is viewed by somebody who knows the matter of issues of life then it is apparent for such a consciousness that all forms of physical, mental goodness and happiness and well-being that we experience invariably and ultimately comes from respect for others' life and out of compassion for others. Given this what Buddhism takes as given is self-cherishing attitude – or enlightened self-interest – and its backbone which is grasping at intrinsic existence, Buddha has perceived these as two chronic issues that we need to address and overcome. They need to be overcome by two fresh perspectives that counter the ignorance that believes in the intrinsic existence of things when in reality from a higher enlightened consciousness point of view it does not exist. Self-interest needs to be countered by a perspective that flies in the face of this wisdom that needs to dawn on us that other-cherishing is better. This two-pronged attack is how to tackle these problems.

The knowledge of selflessness in the sense of lack of intrinsic existence in people and other phenomena is the profound wisdom. It is not easy to gage or develop but if one makes the effort to study Buddhist writing of ontology as well as meditate on the teaching about this, backed by merits that support one's efforts and insightful meditation then in time emptiness of intrinsic existence will begin to make some sense. Chronic self-

centeredness has to be addressed with other-cherishing feeling or attitude. It could have many layers of expression but the highest form of it is called Bodhicitta in Sanskrit, a determined mind to achieve the state of Buddhahood. It is therefore claimed time and again that the only way to achieve one's and others' highest enduring state of well-being is cherishing others and particularly Bodhicitta. What is Bodhicitta? Maitreya is now a Bodhisattva but he is going to be the 5th Buddha to appear in the world. His teachings are already available and he says in the Ornament of Clear Realisation: 'Mind generation (Bodhicitta) is to want to achieve Buddhahood for others.' Generation of altruistic mind is a mind accompanied by twin aspiration, to achieve Buddhahood and to serving others ultimately: to serve sentient beings whose number is as vast as the universe itself and to remove all their suffering and to help them achieve the highest form of happiness.

What do we do in order to develop Bodhicitta?

1. You make an effort to understand the steps or teachings on the steps leading to the development of Bodhicitta.
2. You vow and take oaths that one shall not forsake Bodhicitta until the state of Buddhahood.
3. You take further vows to translate that Bodhicitta into practicing Bodhisattva deeds.

It is said that developing Bodhicitta is many time more meritorious than any other other-cherishing attitude. It is also many times more meritorious to resolve that one will not forsake Bodhicitta, you will always nurture that mind and never lose it. It is even more meritorious to resolve to engage in the Bodhisattva deeds and ideals. Bodhicitta or seamless, space-like altruism is extremely powerful and the merit one gains – spiritual energy resources – are incalculable. For example, if a despot were to imprison all sentient beings of the three realms of existence and then take their eye balls out, then someone comes and frees them all and gives them sight again, how much merit would that person gather? It is simply unimaginable. Even more meritorious than that is one moment's meditation or reflection on true love. If that is so then Bodhicitta itself which results from universal love is 100 000 times more meritorious. Not only are there scriptural citations that substantiate this claim, given that it is indeed meritorious to free all those beings from prison and give them perfect sight, the benefit of perfect sight is the state of well-being of one lifetime. Once that is lived and another life comes up it is all new. All sentient beings have to manage themselves. Whereas when you develop Bodhicitta your resolve is to achieve the highest and greatest good of the greatest number of beings, all sentient beings, and that is the state of Buddhahood. When you resolve to place all sentient beings without exception in that state where it would never change then the merit from such actions would have to be much more.

Bodhicitta is extremely powerful and normally as many as 10 benefits are attached to Bodhicitta. Most scriptures talk about these 10 whereas Shantideva talks about the benefits of Bodhicitta in terms of 6 analogies.

1. The analogy of transmuting base metal into gold through alchemy.
2. The analogy of wish-granting jewels.
3. The analogy of a heroic guide, powerful, strong in body and mind.
4. The analogy of the fruit of stately fruit-yielding tree that year in and out never stops giving fruit as opposed to banana plantation.
5. The analogy of fire at the end of time.
6. A series of analogy where Bodhicitta is likened to the earth that supports all on it.

This collection of analogies is in Ghandarvyuva Sutra. It would take a long time to go through these.

It is more powerful and meritorious to resolve not to give up Bodhicitta as opposed to merely developing it and leaving it to itself where it could easily be lost. If you resolve to uphold Bodhicitta until Buddhahood then it has immense benefit and power. We can deduce that resolving this will yield much more merit than simply generating Bodhicitta and leaving it to fate. It is said, if there are two people, non-violent and do not kill, but one does it because he has vowed to refrain actively to taking any life. The other has no such vow and by habit does not kill. Buddhist scriptures say that the first will incessantly gather merit of refraining from killing whereas the other does not gather as much merit. Yet again, it is more powerful when somebody enacts their aspiration and puts them into practice with their resolve. Rather than holding Bodhicitta and not doing anything about it you don't get much further. But if you translate that resolve into enlightening and liberating deeds like generosity, ethics etc. and these are grounded in the initial resolve to not forsake Bodhicitta until enlightenment, then that naturally brings more merit.

With regard to Bodhicitta there are two: aspiring and engaging Bodhicitta. In the context of Bodhicitta vows as opposed to the vows of celibacy of the ordained or tantra vows, the person wishing to take on Bodhicitta vow are encouraged to study the ins and outs of the vows so they can check whether they can uphold them or not. It is crucial that one studies the vows. Upon careful study of the vows you think 'this is too much' then you don't need to take the vows. What you could do is to think I will achieve Buddhahood for all sentient beings – that is mere generation of the mind. Once you have studied the Bodhicitta vows and you think you are going to be able to keep them and then you take a special wishing Bodhicitta vow by participating in a ceremony conducted by the guru who bestows the wishing Bodhicitta vows. As said before, translating that wish into action obviously is more meritorious. Once you have taking wishing Bodhicitta vows then again study the engaging Bodhicitta vows and then see whether one is going to be able to keep them or not. If you think you can, then again participate in a ceremony conducted by the guru through which the guru will bestow engaging Bodhicitta vows. A lot of us here have taken both forms of Bodhicitta vows. There are a lot of people who have taken tantric vows.

Whilst taking these vows is extremely meritorious, equally failure to keep them has quite grave consequences. This is understandable. When you took the vows you were moved by strong love and compassion for all beings. Driven by this you said to yourself that you will achieve the state of highest Buddhahood for the sake of each sentient beings' highest good. You take the vows not just from the guru but by visualising the presence of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in the 10 directions and before them you resolve. You take upon yourself the lion share of responsibility for the highest good for each sentient being which if you keep is unimaginably meritorious. If you failed to uphold that aspiration and commitment, it would be as if you had given a false promise to all sentient beings in front of all Buddhas. When the crunch time you let everybody down and the consequence of letting down each sentient beings that you had promised the greatest good. You also lied implicitly to all these Buddhas and Bodhisattvas from whom you have taken these vows. The failure of keeping Bodhicitta vows has far-reaching consequences.

As said in the beginning, failure to keep Bodhicitta and breaking one or two vows would be more serious and graver than if you were to gouge out the eyes of all sentient beings of the three realms where the pain would be excruciating but it only pertains to one lifetime. We need to know the precepts of Bodhicitta. I am going to talk about the precepts of Bodhicitta vows.

Precepts of Bodhicitta vows

If you take wishing Bodhicitta vows there are 2 precepts,

1. To ensure non-separation from Bodhicitta in this life.
2. And that you will not lose Bodhicitta in future lives.

There are 4 ways to ensure that you will not lose Bodhicitta in this life.

1. The first precept is to reinforce delight in Bodhicitta. How do you do that? You think about incalculable handsome, liberating, enlightening Bodhicitta for self and others. If one did not think about the benefits of Bodhicitta then this will gradually undermine it. Therefore it is important to meditate or reflect on the benefit of Bodhicitta once a day in order that Bodhicitta becomes more and more accentuated in your mind.
2. To regenerate Bodhicitta 6 times a day so that you do uphold Bodhicitta.
3. Never to let sentient beings – even one – for whom you developed Bodhicitta to start with – behind.
4. To engage in merit-gathering and purification practice because to develop Bodhicitta we need to meet right conditions and we need to be free from adverse conditions.

1. To think about the benefits of Bodhicitta once a day. Refer to sources as *lam rim* and the Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life.

2. To generate Bodhicitta 6 times daily. Those who have taken tantric vows have daily 6 session yoga. This means if they recite not in a mechanical way of course, but with fervent feelings, that would meet this part of the criteria very nicely. What about other people without highest yoga tantra? They too can regenerate

Bodhicitta by reciting the four line refuge and Bodhicitta stanza 6 times and think about the meaning of it as well.

3. Never forsake sentient beings. This means even if you let down or forsake one sentient being it amounts to letting sentient beings down. This is difficult. You may think 'I will work for all sentient beings' and you have a fuzzy warm feeling, but if you have an obnoxious being and you think, 'I will work for all but not this one' then this amounts to forsaking sentient beings.

4. What I said before about gathering merits and purifying the mind to gather prerequisites, it amounts to minor Bodhicitta vow fraction if one does not ground any virtue in Bodhicitta. No matter what kind of virtue you may do like giving a piece of bread to a being born as an animal to meditating on emptiness, renunciation, all virtues need to be grounded in Bodhicitta. If one does not base all one's virtues in Bodhicitta then it amounts to Bodhicitta fraction. They are quite demanding and hard to keep.

These are 4 ways that ensure success of upholding Bodhicitta in this lifetime and training to ensure that you do not lose Bodhicitta in other lifetimes. There you engage in two sets of four items:

1. Four negative items.
2. Four positive items.

Four negative items we need to be free from so that we keep meeting with Bodhicitta in the next lifetimes:

1. Deliberately, intentionally hurt gurus and parents and people of learning and immense kindness to one.
2. To find faults and declare and announce faults in other people, whether they have Bodhicitta or not, out of malice to them. If you pick faults and that person has such failings – it amounts to the second item.
3. To discourage others in the practice of virtue.
4. Deception of sentient beings.

Four positive items that help to keep Bodhicitta in future lives:

1. Not to consciously tell lies to any sentient beings.
2. To develop a perception of Buddha with regard to all sentient beings, to consider all sentient beings as if they were Buddhas.
3. To nurture people that you can nurture only through Mahayana teaching.
4. Incorruptible honesty with regard to sentient beings, total transparency.

Four negative items can be avoided when we cultivate the four positive items. If you can't remember the specific items, at least these two things that will undermine your Bodhicitta definitely: Telling lies consciously and deceiving sentient beings. When you take wishing Bodhicitta vow you would go against it when you find yourself involved in the negative aspects of these items of the vows. These are specific things that we need to be aware of and to cultivate and to refrain from. There are some minor general infractions of Bodhicitta that could occur: not holding Bodhicitta in one's mind even in ordinary human behaviour like walking downtown, shopping, lying down etc. also if one failed to pay homage to 3 Jewels once or 6 times a day. Thirdly one would commit minor fraction if any virtue is not grounded in Bodhicitta. Being aware what they mean, upholding them at all times, once you think that you can uphold them then you take the next steps: taking engaging Bodhicitta vows. This implies taking 3 Bodhisattva vows. These are Bodhisattva vows of actively refraining negative actions of body, speech and mind, to work actively for the good of all sentient beings, and incorporating all virtue in Bodhicitta. When you take these three engaging Bodhicitta then you have what is called 18 root vows and 46 secondary vows.

Today we won't have time. That is why I said at the outset, there is nothing like Bodhicitta that accomplishes lasting highest good for oneself and for others. If only one engaged in elimination of four negative items and positive items to sustain Bodhicitta in subsequent lifetimes, if only one engaged in four things, you could do to sustain Bodhicitta in this life time. Then there is no doubt you would please all Buddhas as nothing would please them as a sincere effort in implementing these precepts of wishing Bodhicitta and engaging Bodhicitta. These will definitely help achieve the highest good of sentient beings in time and they will definitely please Buddhas. Incidentally your own happiness would also be achieved. Bodhicitta is extremely powerful and it cuts both ways, if you keep both in mind, the benefits are simply unfathomable. Conversely if one breaks them they

have serious consequences as one has seriously promised and then let sentient beings down at a critical time. That is why I have briefly talked about Bodhicitta, wishing Bodhicitta vow and engaging Bodhicitta vows. Please make serious efforts in this.