



Dhargyey Buddhist Centre

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

Sunday 8 May 2011 *lam rim*

Please generate the highest Bodhicitta motivation to achieve the state of Buddha in order to help all sentient beings.

Let us all think about the motivation or the attitude about our daily effort. People do all kinds of things, train for different jobs and do different jobs in order to earn a living and make some money. What they earn, how long will it last? Hopefully it will last until this life ends. After that what can they do with that money? On the other hand think about what we have been seeking all this time: lasting peace and happiness. What will happen to us after we have gone from this world? Have we got all the necessary provisions for happiness in the future? It is more important to think about the long-term prospects. It is also clear for all that as soon as one becomes more reflective the more success and fame one has achieved one has done so through training and this will be of some benefit for maybe 60 or 70 years. After that when this life ends, all the learning, the name and wealth is to be left behind. All these things we have gathered in this lifetime will not make us happier in the lives to come. At the moment it is not apparent that all these mundane things like education do not really help us in the long term. On the other hand, we think these are real sources of happiness, but when one is nearing the end of this lifetime, e.g. one is suffering from cancer for example, it is time to review what one has done in this life. It then becomes apparent that all the hard work for material success will not be useful at the point of death. It will be a time of regret that one has not done better in terms of lasting happiness. Particularly people of higher status, wealth and standing in society will suffer more psychological stress. People who are attached to their successes, education, wealth, fame and recognition will suffer more painfully at death. We can see that from the way celestial beings live fantastically pleasurable lives but when it comes to the end they experience omens of death. They are about to lose all pleasure and joy and fall down to more miserable realm and this will cause extreme stress at the time of death. If you compare the human suffering to the severity and degree of pain of the celestial, the latter is much greater. The degree one has success in this life is the same degree to which the suffering occurs at death.

It is apparent that one cannot count on material successes. Since nothing material acquired in this lifetime is of any benefit at death and beyond death and one cannot carry these to future lives then it is logical to think what else is of benefit and can bring lasting peace of mind. As one explores the avenues for future lives' happiness and mental wellbeing one has no options but to explore spiritual possibilities. There are many spiritual traditions and here we have gathered to talk about Buddhist spiritual traditions. Before one embraces this it will be a good thing to explore other possibilities and then make a decision. When one has decided that Buddhism is one that one likes then there is so much in Buddhism. You can then explore Buddhist teachings on the Four Noble Truths, on the three main paths, renunciation, right view and Bodhicitta, or you can simply examine what Buddha has required his followers to do: to analyse everything critically and not accept even Buddha's own words as gospel. One can do that by using three forms of logical reasoning similar to a gold smith, when about to buy a yellow metal, puts it through different tests. Only when it is confirmed to be real gold the goldsmith will buy it. The same way Buddha has required one to be critical – not in a cynical way - and critique everything and that alone is quite satisfying.

Buddha made this statement about the need to critique everything including Buddha's own words 2500 years ago. He made this bold statement at a time when 6 prominent non-Buddhist teachers competed with him as well as other religious traditions in India. He gave total freedom to all to choose on the basis of reason and

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positive criticism. I believe it is only Shakyamuni Buddha who has the conviction to make this statement whilst other traditions require their followers to have trust and have faith in what they teach. Buddha went against the current and people must examine and accept his teachings only if they are satisfied based on reasoning. As I have said before, as Buddha says, you can examine and there is a huge body of teaching to examine and then sift through what is acceptable or not.

Of this body of teaching, 3 topics stand out: Three Principles of the Path and this is covered by *lam rim*, the Stages of the Path. Going through *lam rim* there are four main sections and we are dealing with the 2nd section, how to guide spiritual disciples on the path through actual teaching and instructions. This is described under two further sections:

1. How to develop right relationship with the spiritual teacher or guru, the foundation of the path.
2. How to train in the *lam rim* topics after cultivating the right relationship.

Of these two we started to talk about the first one. This has three parts:

1. Preliminaries
2. What to do in the actual meditation sessions.
3. What to do in post-meditative session.

How to develop a right relationship with a spiritual mentor is mentioned first because there are two ways of developing insight into the three principles of the path, renunciation, Bodhicitta and the right views. To gain insight into these you can do two things, go through meditation steps on the topics of the Three Principles of the Path, and you can gather merits in relations to field of merit. Field of merit here refers to enlightened person. Of the many fields of merits you can gather merit from, guru is said to be a very powerful source of merit therefore it is mentioned at the start of *lam rim* teachings. *Lam rim* practice involves concerted meditation on the actual topic at hand and then relying heavily on the field of merit to develop the right realisations on the topic.

First Preliminary:

Before you meditate on the relationship between guru and disciple, you need 6 Preliminaries: the first one was to tidy up and set up the altar. I talked about the first part. The importance of tidying up the place of guru yoga or meditation is essential and having made it appealing. Then you need an image of the Buddha, Lama Je Tsong Khapa both regardless of material qualities. You don't need to set up these images on a daily basis but the important thing is to acquire them, set them on the altar and then do daily practice in relationship to them, observe them, knowing their profound qualities and reflect on them. It is thought to be extremely helpful to have a good look at the images on the altar day after day even if somebody happens to have a glimpse of the Buddha at the height of anger with regard to someone or something, the merit that person gathers is that they will be able to see tens of thousands or millions of Buddhas in the future. That is the first preliminary.

2nd Preliminary

The 2nd preliminary is setting up offering to the images in a beautiful way. These must have been acquired in an honest way. Even if it is only one flower or one stick of incense, it has to have been acquired through honest effort. I will talk more about this later.

3rd Preliminary

The 3rd preliminary is to observe 7 meditation posture of Variochana Buddha and do refuge and Four Immeasurable practice in a most fervent manner. The right body posture in doing meditation:

1. When you sit up your eyes must fall on the tip of your nose. The tip of the tongue should touch the palette softly. The lips and the teeth must be maintained in their natural position. The hands must be in meditation, the legs must be crossed in lotus position and the backbone must be vertically stretched. If you count breathing then it is 8 items, not 7.

Maintaining this posture is crucial for tantra and if you can maintain it would be the icing on the cake.

However, if you can't then it would not be terribly bad. What is important in the 3rd Preliminary is doing

refuge. You need to visualise a massive throne raised by eight lions in the four directions and four sub-direction at the height of your forehead and not too high and not too low. On top of this big throne you visualise five smaller thrones, one in the middle of the big throne, and four around the central throne. Shakyamuni Buddha is seated on the central throne. He is golden, has one face, two arms, the right hand touching the ground and in the left he holds an alms bowl filled with nectar. At the heart level of Buddha you visualise Vajradhara Buddha at whose heart is a blue letter HUM. This practice is a tantra related practice. On the throne on the right of the Buddha you visualise Maitreya. Maitreya Buddha then needs to be visualised as being surrounded the lineage gurus of the Expansive Path, like Asanga, Vasubandu and subsequent masters. On the throne to the left of Buddha you visualise Manjushri surrounded by the lineage gurus of the Profound Path, Nagarjuna, Chandrakirti and so on. On the throne behind Buddha's throne visualise Vajradhara, the tantra Buddha, surrounded by the Blessed Practice/Path like Telopa, Naropa and so on. On the throne in front of the Buddha we visualise the guru who has taught you this practice, *lam rim*. If you have been taught *lam rim* by several gurus you can visualise the guru who has made the greatest impact on your mind. This guru must be visualised as a living guru and all the features of the guru as you have seen him in life with one face, two hands, right hand in the mudra of teaching whereby the thumb and index finger meet and the remaining fingers standing upright at the heart level. The left hand in the lap in meditation mudra holding a vase filled with nectar. Shakyamuni Buddha on the central throne must not be seen separate from the guru who sits on the throne in front of Buddha. The Buddha is only in form Buddha but in reality we need to think that it is one's own guru appearing to one.

These five figures seated on respective thrones are called Five Gurus. In front of the guru on the throne you visualise all other spiritual teachers who have helped you in spiritual growth right from the teacher who taught you the alphabet to the teacher who taught you profound things. Right in front of all these, you visualise tantric deities of the highest tantric yoga. In front of these the deities of performance tantra and action tantra. Then these four classes of tantric deities in front of them Buddhas: 35 Confession Buddhas, 8 Medicine Buddhas, all in supreme Nirmanakaya form. These are then surrounded by Bodhisattvas like Maitreya. Then there is the circle of Sharvaga and Pradiakabuddhas and before them are dakas and dakinis. In front of these are spiritual heroes and transcendental Dharma protectors.

What about mundane Dharma protectors? They don't have a seat on the massive throne. What is on top of the massive throne? There are the five thrones, a circle of objects of refuge ranging from the deities of highest yoga tantra to the transcendental Dharma protectors. They are on the massive throne but not on the seats of the Five Gurus. This way we visualise the objects of refuge before one.

We need to turn to them driving by 2 reasons or forces:

1. You develop strong attraction towards these objects of refuge because of your reference, faith and conviction that these objects of refuge have the power to help you out of suffering.
2. You turn to them because of utter realisation of dreadful prospects of mundane existence, fear for the suffering.

With these two in mind you recite the refuge prayer, 'I go for refuge to the guru' 100 times. The first 50 times you imagine you receive light rays and nectar from the Five Gurus on the thrones that help you flush out all obstructive conditions in your body and mind and all detrimental forces removed. When you recite the next 50 times then imagine again light rays and nectar now bring to you the blessings of the Five Gurus so that the blessing and nectar increase your longevity, merit and wisdom and so on. Then you say 'I take refuge in Buddha' and you feel that light rays and nectar come from meditational deities of four classes of tantra up to the 35 Confession Buddhas and 8 Medicine Buddhas and do the same visualisations as above. When you say 'I take refuge in Dharma' you imagine that the spiritual realisations of these objects of refuge before you are manifested in scripture forms that are piled up in front of each object of refuge. From these scriptures embodying real Dharma light rays are received when you recite the line 100 times to purify negative obstructions and receive positive energy. When you recite 'I take refuge in Sangha' you visualise light rays from Bodhisattvas and transcendental Dharma protectors purifying obstructions and receiving positive energy.

Now I would like you to do this visualisation and verbally recite the refuge stanza. Of course you can recite refuge them in a row or one at time 100 times. The second version is easier for visualisation practice. Do practice this on a regular basis so that when the crunch time comes for you, which will come sooner or later, you can draw inner strength and not panic. For that I urge you to take this practice seriously and do it on a regular basis if you can.