



Dhargyey Buddhist Centre

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

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As I have reminded you on previous occasions, please participate in these discourses with the highest motivation of wishing to attain the highest enlightenment and then to help all sentient beings.

We have gathered here and you have given up your Sunday and various things you want to do, and I have come to New Zealand despite lack of language and familiarity with the culture and yet our collective aim is to immerse ourselves in Buddhist teachings and ideas so that we can bring about some inner transformation and seek and achieve lasting happiness. Apart from that we have not come here to entertain ourselves with historical anecdotes and the like.

There are three things that help bring about inner transformation - a sense of strong yearning for the state of permanent cessation from all suffering or wanting to renounce this ongoing suffering. Secondly, universal altruism brings about change that is becoming completely selfless and being all about the happiness of all sentient beings. Right View is the third path. The Three Principle Paths help bring about inner change. Apart from these, what we do is not dissimilar to what you find in other traditions like meditation or praying to a deity. Our aim therefore is to help develop Bodhicitta, the spiritual mind of enlightenment or universal altruism or highest enlightenment or the desire to achieve the state of a Buddha.

This universal altruism necessarily grows from compassion for beings who are caught in suffering and don't know how to get out of suffering. One's heart goes out to them and that is called compassion. This will never arise or take root in one's heart unless one has an understanding of how sickening mundane existence is in any of the 6 mundane tiers of existence. One needs to develop a sense of repulsion for this life and develop a yearning for freedom. We like to think we have this ideal and we are driven to it when we practice. However, we have not really developed fully fledged wish for permanent release. This renunciation is particularly regarding the third suffering of pervasive conditioning. We don't know we have it, but we are badly affected by it. At the moment we are attached to pleasures of life, e.g. the joys of eating or sleeping when in fact these actions of eating and sleeping are deeply conditioned by the 'pervasive conditioning'. In order that we truly understand the third type of suffering, which is dormant and not directly perceptible, we need to understand the second suffering, the change of pleasure to pain which we can understand. To be free of this we need to understand the first type of suffering, the suffering of pain. Physically and mentally all beings in the mundane world suffer this, in the celestial beings and in the hell realms.

Like other religious traditions Buddhism talks about hell, but to talk about the many types of suffering described in scriptures is not that helpful as we cannot see it but we can talk about the suffering of humans and animals. As humans, despite prosperity and success, we have suffering at birth. We experience pain, both mother and child. From then we have never stopped growing old and ageing which is constant. The disintegration of our body and nervous system leads to the accumulated suffering of old age. Suffering of the first type is of physical and mental sickness. The last is death and it can be painful. Hell realms and hungry ghosts are not perceptible empirically and therefore science does not talk about that. When we consider different degrees of the gravity and severity of actions that humans perform, different shades of consequences are to be experience. Based on this we can infer more miserable forms of life like in hell realm.

For example, when we take anger or hate, if you are angry to an animal is there consequence? Yes. It is considered a highly negative attitude, thus it has a ripening effect in the arising species life form in the next life and the next life will be in the animal realm. If one is angry with a human that is more serious. Among humans

our parents are a field of immense kindnesses, so too are our teachers and those who have helped to shape our mind and body. It is extremely unwholesome, extremely detrimental for a person to have anger for a Bodhisattva who is committed to attaining Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings. Thus the consequence will be much more severe. Given the pattern of actions we perform, we need to be careful at this time when we can make a difference. This life is considered extremely conducive to making a difference in one's spiritual journey and so on. If we don't wake up to such realities it could be that we end up facing such consequences.

Beings in the three lower realms are animal, hungry ghost and hell beings and their life is pervaded by the second and third suffering: dominated by tangible excruciating suffering of body and mind. Our life too is basically fraught with problems and suffering. Beings in the celestial realms temporarily, as long as they live, don't experience any physical and mental suffering, but their life too is underpinned by the third suffering of pervasive conditioning. The life of these beings is dominated by suffering.

Here is an example of the third kind of suffering from which the next two sufferings ensue. Two people come together who are through their karma destined to part due to death by poisoning. When they meet is the starting point of the relationship which is like the suffering of pervasive conditioning. They did not dream that one might poison the other. Without knowing the tragedy that will ensue their relationship blossoms and they enjoy each others' company during meals etc. which is like the suffering of change of pleasure into pain. Not only does the experience of good food and good company wane in time but it leads to what will happen in the end. Whatever goes wrong, one becomes bitter and then will invite the friend and then poison the food and kill him. When the victim eats the food he suffers the physical and mental distress which is the first suffering.

The fact that we have come in contact with our afflicted physical and mental components, is like this meeting between the victim and the future killer yet as with them we don't know that. From this we can see the fact of having these afflicted aggregates is the reason why all future problems will arise. When we want to be free it is from this suffering of pervasive conditioning. For us to develop a strong yearning for this we need to understand what brings this suffering into existence. From Buddha's omniscient point of view, what brings beings into contact with this type of suffering is a basic misconception of the basic reality of mind - this is grasping at a sense of 'I' - an independent sense of 'I'. For us to be free from this suffering we need to free the mind from this misconception about ourselves, about who we really are. We must overcome this misconceived grasping at the perception of self.

We can overcome this. We need information and there are many scriptures that are readily available. The Stages of the Path or *lam rim* gradually leads us through the information that will help dispel this ignorant grasping at self of person. To talk about this I laid four major sections. The first is the greatness and brilliance of the author of the *lam rim* text in order to establish the authenticity of the text. I talked about that last week. Now we talk about the greatness and significance of *lam rim* teaching itself so that we develop interest in the teaching. The *lam rim* teaching, unlike other teachings, has four salient features that stand out:

1. They help us see that all the teaching of the Buddha is cohesive and non-contradictory body of teaching.
2. They help us see that Buddha's teachings are instructions to the state of Buddha.
3. They help us understand the final thought of the Buddha about various subject matters of the teachings. We are able to get to the intended meaning behind the teaching.
4. *Lam rim* teachings help to put an end to our mental and physical weaknesses, our downfalls.

With *lam rim* you are able to see the entire teaching of the Buddha from A to Z as a cohesive, well integrated spiritual mechanism that helps us on the path. It forms a spiritual vehicle on the path to Buddhahood. For example, the car has many parts and a trained experience mechanic can put the parts together to make it go. Each part plays a vital role in the smooth operation of the car. In the same way, *lam rim* and particularly the one who teaches it, tells us how all the parts of the teaching of the Buddha are necessary components which form a cohesive body for the spiritual mechanism on the path to Buddhahood. Unless we meet *lam rim* the teaching may appear haphazard but with *lam rim* it all comes together and there are no contradictions among the paths.

The *lam rim* helps us understand that the entire teaching of the Buddha, whether spiritual realizations or teachings in the scriptures are indispensable and necessary for our spiritual growth and contain vital information. *Lam rim* helps us realize the thought of the Buddhas which are subsumed in the Three Principle Paths of Renunciation, Bodhicitta and Right View. These are difficult to understand and even more difficult to have within oneself. *Lam rim* makes these accessible and easier for us to handle and develop. *Lam Rim* teachings on the stages of the path make these accessible in simple terms. This simplicity helps us understand and develop these three paths. Fourthly, *lam rim* puts an end to unwholesome behaviour. Serious unwholesome behaviour includes giving up Dharma and developing anger or hate towards a spiritual mentor. These are very serious with very serious consequences. *Lam Rim* helps us rid ourselves of all unwholesome behaviour ranging from the very serious to minor ones.

I will talk about the next section next time. For today when we practice *lam rim* we need to practice both forms of meditation, single-pointed and scanning meditation. The latter is more important and more needed. For us to gain perfect understanding and to make our mind compassion itself, to make our heart compassionate, we need to do a lot of thinking and reflecting, on the reasons for compassion, and the means for developing and maintaining compassion. This can only be done by this step by step analytical meditation. When is stabilized, single-pointed meditation crucial? It is crucial after one has developed Calm Abiding, a stage of single-pointed meditation. This concentration meditation is vital after one has achieved Calm Abiding and after one has reached a high stage of deity yoga meditation in tantra. In these two forms, the purpose of meditation is to channel all the energy or subtle wind into one vital spot in the body and then experience various realizations. As well as that once you have developed peaceful serene Calm Abiding – single-pointedly on one object, this helps to develop Vipashana.

Analytical awareness leads to single-pointed concentration. These are different devices used much later. Finally I would like to appeal to you all not to give up. When you do this or any Buddhist practice it takes a long time, especially *lam rim* as you go through the topics one by one, we need to spend time to reflect on these and make them part of our thinking, attitude and wisdom. Just as in the past, meditators on *lam rim* did not spend just a few weeks or months, but years and years reflecting on the topics until they become an integral part of their attitude to life and people. For example, to develop a rapport with a spiritual mentor, some meditators are said to have spent as many as 12 years on this topic. It is considered crucial to developing realizations on the subsequent topics.

Please be patient, it isn't going to happen overnight, but if we give it time they will percolate into our consciousness.