



# Dhargyey Buddhist Centre

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Please listen to the talk with the highest motivation to achieve the state of a Buddha in time in order to help all sentient beings who have been your mothers and to this end think to yourself I will listen to this discourse this morning.

For us we have a given life span of 80 odd years and a body to sustain and these two are our birth rights. In the process of living this life out of carelessness and so on if something goes wrong it is one who suffers the consequences. Equally it is one's own loss if one misses out to achieve greater aims in the pursuit of seeking the small ones. When it comes to living the present life let alone humans, as it has been said before, all living beings including animals are quite smart about what they have to do. We as humans are endowed by our birth right, higher consciousness and thus higher possibilities and attain higher goals. All who are in this room are in their 30s and 40s and so on, so let us cast our view backward to see what we have achieved so far. This could be provisions for the future life and beyond that. We would find it hard to find one solid achievement that we can rely on. Until we wake up to this and get our act together in terms of really making the most of the remaining lifestyle we have, lets re-dedicate our life to get something out of it. Otherwise when we breathe our last, we have nothing to depend now. If we don't achieve something it will be a life like an empty chapter. What is it that we have to do? If the matters concerning this life are not that terribly important what should we do? We have to accomplish things for the next life and the life beyond that because there are so many lives to live. The quality of the subsequent lifetimes is considered a higher importance. The matters that affect the quality of the next lifetimes are things we need to pursue. It is only spiritual means that people have at their disposal that can be a way to achieve something that is good in all subsequent lifetimes.

When it comes to spiritual resources there are a lot in the world to choose from. If one happens to choose Buddhism, what is there? There is freedom to critique Buddhas own words and the teachings. If you find the teachings grounded in your own practical experience and that of others and if they are verified by life experiences then it is good enough to decide to choose Buddhism. First of all the most important is that we don't take things for granted, god has said so you must obey or Buddha has said so you must obey, it is never like that. It is for one to critique everything with all the reasoning power one has got. It is a personal issue and to give top priority to what one can achieve in this life that is considered very rich in potential to achieve any aim. If one does not make the most of it and let the life go by and come to nothing, then it is one's own loss. This loss will have implications with regard to the quality of life in the future. Buddha has given complete freedom for people to critique and then decide whether to embrace the spiritual path he has shown or not. It is this openness that attracts people to Buddhism. For example, in 2002 it is said there were about 400 000 Buddhist in America and in 2006 they are 1 200 000. Why? Maybe it is because people are allowed to use their rational mind and the freedom that Buddha offers. What is important for one is to find a path that is the right one. How do we know? That is for you to decide and to employ your rational mind and healthy criticism. If one does not have a way to rationally asses a path then seek the guidance and advice and expertise of those who know how to critique the path and who have made a choice about the path. From Buddha himself to the present days, people in a position of teaching only teach at the behest of interested groups. Short of that no effort is made to propagate it.

When it comes to examining what do we examine? There are three areas of knowledge that we need to examine. The first area is called obvious phenomena, things that are obvious and manifest. Obvious things that we know to be true or not are things like house, mountains, lakes, human activities of going to work etc., we don't need to know whether they are valid or not. They are too obvious to not have certitude about them.

The second is called hidden or covert phenomena. As they are hidden we cannot access them through our empirical experience or senses. It is harder to understand. What are some topics that come under this? There are a lot of them: past and future lives, four truths and their 16 attributes, impermanence and in particular subtle impermanence.

The third area of knowledge is extremely hidden or covert. Examples of this are the law of cause and effect and in particular extremely subtle law of causation and extremely distant phenomena. To give an example of extremely subtle law of causation using today's experience. We have gathered here today on a sunny day in Dunedin. I was born in Tibet, educated in India and I use my little knowledge to explain Buddhism to you. Likewise you were all born in different place. And today we have gathered and what brought us here? Nothing happens without cause and effect. What is the cause? It is so subtle and maybe the collective karma is so far back in time and so subtle that nobody short of Buddhas themselves can give a clear explanation. Such subtle causes are examples of extremely hidden phenomena.

Of three areas or categories of phenomena that we need to investigate it is the second one, the covert phenomena we need to examine. Many phenomena are subsumed by this categories and it has many topics. Of these areas of relevance for our knowledge and the knowledge that has relevance for our practice and evolution it is the 4 Truths and 2 Truths. When we talk about the 4 Truths they come under two sets of cause and effect. The first set explains that the first truth that is called the truth of suffering. It is the result of some past action. As regards to the truth of suffering which are results of past karma and causes there are 3 divisions of suffering. Where do these emerge from? They emerge from the origin of suffering: karma and disturbing emotions or negative thoughts. In the first Truth we have the set of cause and effect, the first Truth is the result the second Truth which is the cause. These first two Truths are areas we want relief from. Is it possible to remove them? Buddha said it is. The method with which we can do so is called the Truth of Path. This is the causal process. When one follows and meditates on the Truth of Path or True Path, then the True Path generates counteracting forces or antidotes which will cure suffering and their underlying causes. When they are severed at the root then the degree of cessation when they are never repeated is achieved. That is the result and outcome that is achieved from the Truth of Path. That result is called true cessation.

The Four Truths constitute the broad framework of Buddhist practice. And they can be examined to see what needs to be done and how to do them. Understanding the Four Truths and in particular the first one is the starting point. The truth of suffering – how many divisions of suffering are there? Buddha said there are three of which we only understand the first which is the actual physical and mental distress and pain. There is suffering of death, failure in life while you seek success in different human areas but things go wrong rather than well. Broken noses and broken teeth – a Tibetan way of saying of facing unbearable pain and these are instances of the truth of suffering. The second type of truth of suffering is suffering of the change of seeming pleasant into unpleasant experiences. It subsumes all human achievements. We seek pleasure in life, warmth, coolness, success – all are derived from different human activities. The initial phase of the seeming pleasure we consider peace and happiness. But it is on its way of turning into unpleasantness. With time what was considered to be a pleasure turns into an unpleasant experience. That suffering of change is real suffering can be understood by considering after having sat in the sun for a time one feels hot. Going into the shade is refreshing and cooling and thus pleasant. If that initial pleasant experience were a real state of well-being it would not change. The more we sit in the shade the better we should feel. But the longer we sit in the shade the colder it gets and that shows that it was not real happiness and not a real pleasant experience. These two divisions of truth of suffering stem from the third truth of suffering which is the truth of pervasive conditioning. This relates to our own physio-psychological aggregates that we have. When you consider the three instances of the truth of suffering and sometime later you understand that the real truth of suffering that particularly refers to the truth of pervasive conditioning it stems of ignorance and delusions. Then it becomes apparent and a very important personal issue to get rid of the third truth of suffering and one does whatever one needs to do aimed at it, then it is quite clear that one has started to lay a sound foundation for one's practice.

The truth of pervasive conditioning has nothing good about it because causally speaking it is based on our body and mind within the domain of mundane existence. It has stemmed from – according to Buddha's perspective – ignorance of true nature of reality, desire and hate. Secondly this truth of suffering stems from afflicted or contaminated actions that have been performed under the sway of ignorance, desire and hate. Causally speaking there is nothing good about the causes that have given rise to our body. If we consider the nature of

our body, while its function makes it precious and functional there is nothing clean and desirable about it. If you peel the skin away is there anything desirable and good and attractive about it? Thirdly when you consider the result it is this aggregate of body and mind which draws pain and suffering like a magnet. We base our action not on wisdom but on ignorance and thus we create causes for future suffering. When we consider the causes and the nature of the aggregates and how they can draw the suffering, it is not shocking that body and mind will experience unpleasantness. It is in this regard the great Katampa lamas said, 'if you live in a place you will die there, there is nothing shocking about it. Same when you get sick. Somebody who was destined to die will die. Those that through their own actions will fall sick have fallen sick. Nothing shocking about this and we need to face this reality.'

When we gain a good understanding the very basis of our life, body and mind, we understand what has gone into making it and what it does while it is alive. Based on this understanding if you fall sick it won't come as a shock. If you are about breathe your last it would not come as a shock because these inevitable experiences are built into the body. For example when we hear that someone has been sentenced to death and will be killed by the law it is shocking. The second consideration will involve thoughts that the person has murdered someone else. According to the norm of society that have been accepted by all, someone who murders and cuts short someone else's life will meet the same end. If we find out that they were not innocent but had done something very wrong, that will remove the shock. In the same way, when we fall terribly sick we feel it is unjust and shocking. If you take the time to think about this and you think 'why me, why a fatal sickness?' the understanding dawns 'why not?' This life is dependent on the truth of pervasive conditioning. This is causally, resultantly not pleasant, so what else can you expect. Then the initial shock of the news will ease and one can accept them with a calmer mind even in this lifetime.

To free ourselves from the suffering of third conditioning, we need to eradicate the underlying causes, karma and delusions. It is the mainly delusions of which there are many but principally they are the three poisons of mind, desire, ignorance and hate. Hate and desire stem from ignorance which refers to determined adherence to the belief that one as a person exists in an inherent way and that one has an intrinsic truth about one. To eradicate conception of self of person – self here meaning conception of self-existence of a person – we need to identify that it is distorted. If we rely on it the outcome is unpleasant. To free our mind from this we need to do meditation using logic to overcome the distortion. We also need to gather merit and clear obstacles in the mind for the meditation on selflessness of person to be effective. The opposite perspective of ignorant conception of self is the selflessness of person, the wisdom knowledge understanding that the person has not intrinsic self. There are many scriptures dedicated to the second turning of the wheel of Dharma to convey this message of selflessness. Buddhist masters throughout the ages have written a great many works on this. The message in those writings is really liberating for it liberates the mind from the entrenched distortions and it sets the mind free. Once a person has the right knowledge of selflessness and if it is accompanied with compassion for all sentient beings, then that person has developed the two spiritual wings to soar to the state of Buddhahood.

### Mandala offering

We need to gather merits that are positive spiritual energy to aid meditation to be effective. For that there are seven sublime things practiced. The first is paying homage by way of prostrating to sublime beings. The second is making offering and I want to spend some time to explaining Mandala offering. It has three salient features:

1. Done properly you can gather huge stock of merit
2. Mandala offering must be free of material materialism
3. It does not entail too much physical exertion.

You offer the things in the entire desire realm that has in the middle Mount Meru, the four continents, the four sub-continent and whatever is pleasant in the desire realm, from human to god realms. You offer these to the objects of refuge and the objects of merit. Tantra talks of 4 Mandala offerings, outer, inner, secret and suchness. In offering Mandala you feel that you are in front of sublime objects and objects of refuge. You imagine that all the lifetimes you have taken from beginning-less time to the present, the total number of your past existence, in front of each of the sublime objects of refuge. And before each of your past existences there is the presence of the galaxy of world systems with all their beauty and riches. When we offer these world systems they should not be considered as stemming from karma and delusions, with truth of suffering origins. These stem from Buddha's own pure mind and the entire galaxy that each of your past lifetime offers is

nothing but pure and pristine. If you have received Tantra initiations then the entire offering could be considered a reflection of emptiness and bliss as well as the objects to whom one offers, the person – everything has the stamp of emptiness. Everything of the Mandala offering is grounded in emptiness. Why do you offer and go through such lengths and elaborate visualisation? You are driven by Bodhicitta.

Inner offering or offering of the inner starts with considering that your skin that wraps up our body becomes the Vajra ground when it says here is the base. The eyes become the continents etc. and each part of the body become part of the Mandala, all the liquids become lakes etc. The practice of the Mandala was done by the Ever Crying Bodhisattva, and in other Tibetan Buddhist order it is called Kusali tso offering.

### Long Mandala offering

Geshe-la will demonstrate how to offer a Mandala (video was made of this and is available).

You scoop up grains of rice with your right hand. These can ideally speaking be precious fragments, diamonds, gold etc. or grains like rice, corn, and also sand can be used. You hold the mandala base in your left hand. Then you pour some grains on the middle the base and then wipe outwardly clockwise as many times as you have time. When you do that you are wiping away and cleansing your delusive knowledge obstructions to omniscience. Pour more grains a second time in the middle of the base and then wipe anticlockwise and think now that you are scooping blessing and transforming energy from the objects of refuge.

As you say, OM VAJRA BHUMI AH HUM – OM AH and HUM are contained in this, and they represent Buddha's body, speech and mind respectively. Therefore the three letter recitation blesses and consecrates the golden Mandala base. Vajra refers to diamonds but not the real one, but the object of a Vajra. The definite Varja refers to your wisdom and knowledge of emptiness and that is indestructible. BHUMI means golden base. You pour one scoop in the middle, then you put the outer ring on the base.

Then you say OM VAJRA REKE AH HUM, here is the diamond hard fence. When you say this Mt Meru stands in the centre and you pour a large amount of rice in the middle.

The next scoop is then placed in the east. Where is east? If you offer the Mandala to seek something then east is right in front of you. If you make an offering to the Buddhas then east is opposite to you (furthest away). All further instructions here refer to east closest to one.

We are seeking blessings so the east is right in front of you (6 o'clock) – you say 'in the east the continent Purva Videha' and place some rice at 6 o'clock on the base. The southern continent is poured at 9 o'clock – 'in the south the continent Jampudvipa'. The western continent is at 12 o'clock – 'in the west the continent Aparā Godaniya'. And the northern continent is at 3 o'clock – 'in the north the continent Uttarakuru'. As you pour the rice you recite the names of the continents as above.

Next are the four sub-continent: pour the first two (east): first at 5 then at 7 o'clock – 'in the east the subcontinent Deha and Videha'; the second two (south): 8 and 10 o'clock – 'in the south Camara and Aparā Camara'; the third two (west): 11 and 1 o'clock – 'in the west Satha and Uttara Mantrina'; and the fourth two (north): 2 and 4 o'clock – 'in the north Kurawa and Kaurawa'. (Note that it is going backwards in a way. This is deliberate because from the perspective of Mount Meru in the centre the rice is poured on the right of each continent and then the left.)

Each continent has its own treasure: as you say them you pour a heap on the places where the continents are. 'In the east is the Treasure Mountain, in the south the Wish-granting Tree, in the west the Wish-granting cow and in the north the Unploughed Harvest.'

The next set contains the eight auspicious symbols that include the seven precious royal emblems. There are two ways of offering them:

1. You can either pour in the sequence of east, south, west, north, south-east, south-west, north-west and north-east) like so: 'here is the Precious Wheel (east), the Precious Jewel (south), the Precious Queen

- (west), the Precious Minister (north), the Precious Elephant (south-east), the Precious and Best of Horses (south-west), the Precious General (north-west) and the Great Treasure Vase (north-east).
2. Or you can pour in the sequence of (east, south-east, south, south-west, west, north-west, north, north-east) like so: ‘here is the Precious Wheel (east), the Precious Jewel (south-east), the Precious Queen (south), the Precious Minister (south-west), the Precious Elephant (west), the Precious and Best of Horses (north-west), the Precious General (north) and the Great Treasure Vase (north-east).

Next you place another ring (number two) on your Mandala set.

The next set contains the eight Goddesses, each placed in the four directions and sub-directions – the same two options as above (first the main four continents then the sub-continent or alternatively continents and sub-continent in sequence clockwise):

1. ‘Here is the Goddess of Beauty (east), the Goddess Garlands (south), the Goddess of Song (west), the Goddess of Dance (north), the Goddess of Flowers (south-east), the Goddess of Incense (south-west), the Goddess of Light (north-west) the Goddess of Perfume (north-east).
2. ‘Here is the Goddess of Beauty (east), the Goddess Garlands (south-east), the Goddess of Song (south), the Goddess of Dance (south-west), the Goddess of Flowers (west), the Goddess of Incense (north-west), the Goddess of Light (north) the Goddess of Perfume (north-east).

Next you place another ring (number three) on your Mandala set.

The next offerings are the sun, moon, Umbrella and Victory Banner. Again there are two ways of doing this:

1. You offer the sun (east) and the moon (west) – ‘here is the sun and here is the moon.’ Then you offer: ‘here is the Umbrella of All that is Precious (south) and here is the Banner of Victory in All the Directions (north).’
2. Or you offer the sun (south), moon (west), Umbrella of all the is Precious (north) and the Banner of Victory in All Directions (east). This option is used for reasons of serendipity and fortuitous occasion as it will create the cause for you to be able to uphold the Banner of Victory of Dharma.

At the very end you say ‘IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAMYAMI’ which means ‘I send forth this jewelled Mandala to my precious teacher and you lift the Mandala up. When you have finish the Mandala offering you pour everything towards yourself into your lap in the manner of seeking and having received what you have been seeking.

### Short Mandala offering

At times we skip the long Mandala and we do only the short Mandala. Everything I have just built in three or four tiers is contained in the first line – ‘This ground anointed with scented water and strewn with flowers, adorned with Mount Meru, the four continents, the sun and the moon’.

At the end of this, it is crucially important that you think the sublime objects before who all your past lives have made this Mandala offering have accepted them. They don’t need such precious items but they have accepted them to create an opportunity for you and your past life persons to gather merits. They have accepted the offering happily with and with delight in order to help you gather merit. Because they have accepted it now in return imagine or feel they send forth a stream of nectar that enters you by way of your crown aperture and then the nectar flushes out all unpleasantness, delusions, sickness from your mind and body.

### Seven-heap Mandala:

Buddhist practitioners do Mandala offering 100 000 times. They do not do the detailed version all the time. At the start of each session they do the long version. If you collect many Mandalas you do the Seven-heap Mandala:

Holding the Mandala base in your left hand, you scoop up a handful of rice in your right hand. As you wipe your wrist clockwise three times around the base recite the first two lines of the refuge prayer – ‘I go for refuge until I am enlightened to the Buddhas, the Dharma and the Highest Assembly.’

As you wipe your wrist anti-clockwise three times around the base recite the third and fourth line of the refuge prayer – ‘From the virtuous merits that I collect by practicing giving and the other perfections, may I attain the state of Buddha to be able to benefit all sentient beings.’

Then you place a handful of rice on the centre of your base for Mount Meru, some rice on the places of the four continents (east, south, west and north – as above), then some rice east for the sun and some rice west for the moon while reciting ‘This ground anointed with scented water and strewn with flowers, adorned with Mount Meru, the four continents, the sun and the moon: by offering this to the assembly of Buddhas may all migrating beings enjoy the pure realm.’

Next you lift it up reciting ‘IDAM GURU RATNA MANDALAKAM NIRYATAMYAMI’ which means ‘I send forth this jewelled Mandala to my precious teacher.’ Next pour everything towards you into your lap. And then you start again – 100 000 times!

How can this be possible? Like the world systems of Mars etc. are brought to us on TV, you believe things you see are happening on TV and you react with human emotions in response. In the same way, you offer the entirety of world system to the entire galaxy of sublime objects like Buddhas and gurus, from entire existences one has ever had. Here, too you need a make-believe conviction that this is really happening although everything is a construct of mind. If there is a willingness to make it real, it goes a long way to gathering necessary merits.