



# Dhargyey Buddhist Centre

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*lam rim*

That was a reminder for motivation to listen to the teaching with the highest motivation of attaining the state of Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings. To that end think to yourself that you listening to the discourse this morning and do you practice.

As a Buddhist what we all need to focus our attention on is the matters of future life and whether the future life exists and if it does exist how will we fare in the next life. A lot of spiritual traditions do believe in lifetimes and therefore future lives but of these Buddhism are unique in that it believes that our actions in one lifetime will affect us in the long term in the future lifetimes. What is more important, matters affecting the current life or those affecting future lives? We can understand the importance of matters pertaining to these if we draw an analogy of 100 feet as a time scale where a fraction of that would be the length of this life time and the remaining 99 feet would be an analogy for the depth of future lives. Given that it is considered a great personal loss of opportunity to focus one's entire human potential, energy, time and resource to fulfilling things aimed at a fraction of time of that distance of lifetimes and not do anything for the future. As a discerning person we consider matters that affect us for all times. Existence of past and future life is not something that can be demonstrated in a concrete, material way. Its existence is to be confirmed and established for one by path of logic and reason. One of the many tools that Buddhists use to establish past and future lifetimes is the continuum of mind. Mind is said to have seamless past, present and future continuum. It exists timelessly and across time then there will be a person designated on a different instance of lifetimes. It is all right from a Buddhist point of view they use mind as a tool to determine past and future lifetimes, but how do we know mind exist in the first place? It is really hard to rule out mind's existence for everyone who lives in the world, animals and humans they are able to know for themselves this is x and this is y. They are able to determine, distinguish and establish different things. On top of that they also experience different sensations of pain and pleasure etc. Only mind experiences this phenomenon of sensation and that clearly shows that mind does exist.

Unfortunately whilst minds' presence is quite strong and palpable its existence cannot be shown concretely. How does mind exist? Since it exists – anything that exists – it does so in relation and as a result of preceding causes and conditions. A phenomenon must have its preceding causes and conditions. When it does it must also have concurrent or corresponding type causes and conditions for only from these a corresponding effect arises. Just as mind comes into existence does by relying on and in dependence to its corresponding type causes or causes that are in the likeness of the effect. If the mind is ever to be severed out of existence it can only happen by a similar cause. Because of mind in each of us, we know that this life exists. There is a person of oneself designated onto the mind in the current state. Everyone can confirm existence of the present life dependent on the mind that one has got now. What about when this life comes to an end? Buddhism says, this life is material life of body and it may come to an end. But life will still go on, mind will go on to exist for there are two reasons: at the time when the life ends there are two factors: presence of the cooperative factor and absence of hindering factor. In what way do we know that the similar type of mind at death will continue in the next life? It will continue because of the given factor that the mind at death is a mind embedded with desire. It arises at a time when one as a dying person feels strongly that this body which is now fatally or terminally ill is not going to be able to support mind. When that becomes quite clear to one then one gives up clinging to this life. However, one develops a desire to go on to exist, a desire for the future. One craves for a future continued existence. When a strong desire, an aspiration to continued existence grows in the mind, then that strong aspiration helps mind to go on to exist and gives rise to the next life. We can know this from an analogy: when you go to sleep tonight and you have to get up at a particular time the next morning, you will yourself to wake

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up at that time, it programmes the mind. When the time comes most people wake up then. It happens because of a strong will generated for the future event to occur. This explains the first of the two strong factors present at the time of death: presence of strong inducement, cooperative factor.

Absence of hindering forces or conditions: when death occurs it does so not because mind comes to an end, but simply because separation occurs between body and mind. As separation of the mind from body occurs while body comes to an end the mind does not come to an end for there is nothing acting on or against mind and there is no adverse condition that can succeed that can put an end to the continued existence of mind. If it did exist it would have to be a factor very similar in nature itself. Since there is a total absence of a factor similar to mind at death how can mind not continue? Mind will indeed move on to exist, Buddhists believe.

We call something death when the cohesive factor between body and mind comes to an end, then that is termed death. What is that cohesive factor? It is subtle wind. When we die coarse consciousnesses and coarse degrees of mental consciousness subside and dissolve into subtle and more subtle level of consciousness. This dissolution were to contribute and are the inducing factor of the consciousness to die then the same thing would happen when a person goes into a coma or into deep meditative stabilisation where the mind is at its most subtle state. In these two instances the person does not die, the mind is still present. This is the general pattern for the mind to operate and to exist from one lifetime to another. Within this mind there is an assortment of types of mind. There could be virtuous or good and non-virtuous or bad mind. Depending on specific functions of mind different experiences ensue. When the mind which operates in the manner just described, negatively and in an unwholesome way inflicting pain on others, the outcome for itself in the long term is unpleasant. When it is positive then the outcome is good temporary for the person with whom the mind has engaged or interacted but it is also positive and wholesome for the person concerned.

From a single dose of act of mind whether positive or negative, a complex web of karmic consequence can arise. This is deduced using the experience in the outer phenomenon which is from a single seed that gives rise to a stately tree that produces fruit year in and out. From single seed such a tree grows and once grown then it gives fruit for a long time. In the same way, the seed of mind in the form of virtue and non-virtue can give rise to an array of complex outcomes because between the mind and matter, mind is said to be even more potent. Mind has a degree weaknesses and downsides and unwholesome traits. The worst one is insidious misconception about one as a person. That is termed ignorance of grasping at self as a person in Buddhism. This means ignorance that believes that one as a person has some kind of intrinsic objective, independent nature or existence. Grasping at self as a person is the worst of all negative traits of mind. There are many lines of reasoning that show what this conception and idea about self as a person apprehends something in one that is absent in one. It believes there is something in one when in fact one does not have. This misconception has far-reaching consequences. As long as this misconception that misguides rather than guides one, lingers in one's consciousness it will always make wrong decisions. It will come to wrong conclusions and decisions will be made based on the wrong conclusions and then what follows from these wrong conclusions and choice is a foregone conclusion. Therefore nothing good will ultimately come from this misconception of self.

For example, if there is a diseased organ or one has a virus in one's system it is not going to do any good, as long as it is in the body it is going to cause trouble. As long as this mental viral factor of this grasping at self of a person, grasping is the an idea or the belief of a person's existence from its own side, as long as we have that then it will always affect one negatively. As long as we have this mind, no matter where we are, one may change physical environment, one may leave this world and go to a Pureland, even if one is lead by hand by Buddha to Buddhaland, as long as this insidious grasping at self which always misguides and influences us in seeing things wrongly, things will not go well.

Here Buddhism and other traditions diverge. Buddhism considers such a mind and awareness and idea that grasp at self of a person as erroneous and distorted and thus leads to suffering. Let alone ordinary people, followers of many religious traditions do not consider this misconception as anything wrong. In fact it is taken as natural about beings. Therefore, they rely on exterior refuge to help them out of suffering. Buddha has said, such an erroneous mind and perspective about self of a person can only be eradicated and addressed by an

opposing perspective. Such a distortion in one cannot be eradicated even by Buddha. One has to develop the right perspective that will directly challenge and prove wrong that misconception. In this connection Buddha has said, 'Buddhas cannot wash sins or negative traits of beings with water. The suffering ensuing from negative mind cannot be plucked and removed like thorns with tweezers, nor can Buddhas transplant their enlightened wisdom into sentient beings. Sentient beings are to be helped by showing the path.'

A great deal of time and effort has been invested in finding a solution, a correct opposing perspective to this dormant, insidious misconception. While Buddha taught for a great number of years, one of his celebrated teachings are called the Teaching on Perfection of Wisdom Gone Beyond or Prajanaparamita. There are 16 volumes that enshrine Buddha's teaching and discourses that shed light on how things are including oneself as a person. Then subsequent to that the great Indian master Nagarjuna wrote his celebrated and famous six works, The Collection of Six Reasonings. Following that the writings of Chandrakirti, another Indian master and disciple of Nagarjuna, and he wrote Clear Word, which is a commentary of Nagarjuna as well as Madiamikavatara. Also Nagarjuna's direct disciple Aryadeva wrote 400 Stanza. In Tibet the 15<sup>th</sup> century master Lama Je Tsong Khapa wrote many works. A lot of those are discourses and fresh perspectives to see selflessness of person.

This mind, this ignorant mind, or the mind with the distorted perspective about self is deeply embedded and entrenched in us. It can only be eradicated if the right antidote to it is cultivated. Because it is so entrenched and embedded in nature it will take a long time to eradicate its wrong perspective. We need to be patient but persistent in what we do. An ignorant and confused mind like that is responsible for desire, hate, and jealousy and so on. Confused we feel desire for things, confused by ignorance we have hate and so on. Propelled by these strong forces inside one we perform actions and they have consequences.

Now I will talk about how we need to purify ourselves of wrong actions that we have performed in the past. Things like anger, desire, jealousy, and miserliness etc. have two aspects: gross and subtle. The subtle nature of anger which is called innate desire and innate anger which are subtle are very hard to eradicate because of their subtlety. They can only be eradicated once you develop what is called yogic direct perception which is an exalted transcended wisdom that understands how things are not what they seem to be for a confused mind. However the coarse aspect of desire can be eradicated through purification activities.

To do purification we need apply four antidotes:

**1. Antidote of remorse, deep sense of dread for the wrong action.**

It is sense of disgust and feeling really bad about the wrong actions. How can we feel bad about the wrong actions we have done? We do that knowing different types of suffering we have experienced already in this life and we are going to experience when we die and beyond that. All these unpleasant experiences arise because of karma performed under a delusionary mind. Once you know that one has a lot of negative karma the seeds of which are embedded in the consciousness then naturally one does not feel at ease. For example, somebody has lived an unhealthy lifestyle due to which the person is diagnosed as having cancer and the lifestyle has directly contributed to the cancer. The person feels extremely dreadful and regretful and therefore feels really uncomfortable and ill at ease with himself. In the same way when we know that we have a lot of negative karma that needs to be eradicated, if they are not eradicated then they will certainly give rise to all kinds of suffering in this life and in the future. The sense of unease in one's mind is called regret or remorse.

Last week I spent time to explain how each action that we perform, virtuous or non-virtuous, has four consequences unfailingly. When we perform a negative karma depending on the degree of seriousness and gravity there will be a ripening effect: a rebirth in one of the three lower realms.

**2. The antidote of reliance.**

When we perform negativities there are two in relation to whom we perform them. Since there are two groups of beings in relation to whom we perform negative actions, the antidote of reliance is relying on the very victims or objects of our actions for our purification and practically it means deeply

apologising. You apologise to the Three Jewels by going for refuge in them. This helps to address negativities against them. By developing altruistic compassion and love for all beings whom we have wronged through desire, we apologise to them through love and compassion. What is refuge? What is Bodhicitta or universal altruism based on compassion and love? I explained previously so I won't repeat them here.

### 3. **The third is remedial antidote.**

This means antidotes that directly remedy wrong actions. In fact, all virtues can be remedial antidotes but sutras speak of six particular remedies.

1. Relying on sutras
2. Reflecting on the meaning of emptiness
3. Reciting spiritual incantations or mantras
4. Commissioning images of sublime beings such as Buddhas etc.
5. Making offerings to the Three Jewels, Buddhas etc.
6. Reciting the name mantra of the Buddhas and one's spiritual mentors or gurus

Of these six particular remedies past practitioners have relied on recitation of the names of the Tathagatas a great deal. The majority past practitioners have relied on the recitation of the names of the Buddhas: they recite the names of 35 Buddhas who are called the Buddhas of Confession Practice that Buddha taught in a Buddhist scripture called Ratnakutsutra or Jewel Stack Sutra. If you recite these names, although you are doing one of the six but in fact all the remaining five can be incorporated within that:

1. It becomes the first remedy, relying on sutras. The confession sutra itself is a sutra and therefore it meets the first conditions.
2. When you recite these names and you reflect on the meaning on Tathagata – thus gone beyond – you are reflecting on the meaning of emptiness – the second remedial antidote. The name 'thus gone' has three explanations:
  1. The word Tathagata means thus gone and it was taught by Buddha in the discourses.
  2. It is called Tathagata for it is realised directly by the omniscient mind, meaning emptiness. Thus gone means you go to the state of Buddhahood in the same way as everyone does, which is realising emptiness.
  3. It is called Tathagata when Buddha died he did not die an ordinary death. He dissolved his material body and his mind went into the state of emptiness from which everything arises. So he went back into emptiness from where Buddha's arise.

When you recite the word Tathagata the word Tathagata has a strong connotation of emptiness. This particular remedy fulfils doing the second remedial antidote.

3. Relying on spiritual incantations or diranis or mantras like the name mantra of the historical Shakyamuni Buddha (e.g. OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNIYE SVAHA) that is fulfilled in the recitation of the name of the 35 Buddhas because it directly spells out the name Shakyamuni Buddha in a more glorified fashion.
4. How does the practice of the 35 Confession Buddhas practice fulfil the remedial antidote of commissioning physical images of the Buddha? They can be erected in a physical way by having them commissioned and done by an artist for you or you can do it mentally before one's mental eye. You can generate the images of the Buddha or Buddhas. The latter is more significant than the first one.
5. How does it meet the remedial of offering? It does so when you purify your mind of its wrong doing and negative encodings on the mind through reciting Buddha's names, it becomes a quality practice. This is one of the many types of offering, offering of spiritual accomplishment. Of all the offerings to the Buddhas and one's guru this is the best.

### **Visualisation of 35 Confession Buddhas:**

Have we got the 35 Buddhas in the *lam rim* practice? Yes, we have because not long time ago I talked to you about visualisation of field of merit that is a cluster of sublime beings. In that when we talked about Buddhas in one of the tiers of lotus petals. You could use the presence of these Buddhas in the tier of Buddha in the 11

tiered lotus seats. Or you could make a special visualisation of these Buddhas if you want to do a concerted and specialised practice of purification in relation to them: If you recall the centre piece of the assembly of sublime beings is Lama Je Tsong Khapa and Buddha all in one. From the heart of this guru light rays go out and upwards and they support the seats of the first 10 Confession Buddhas. The next light rays go forward and downwards below the centre piece Buddha and there are 10. There are 7 light rays go left and 7 light rays go right – all in all there are 35 Buddhas. With what colour do the 35 Buddhas appear? Except for Shakyamuni Buddha – at the heart of the centre piece guru (Lama Je Tsong Khapa) and one other Buddha the King of Nagas, the remaining 33 Buddhas could be visualised in the colour of five Buddhas of the Mandala or Primordial Buddhas. Shakyamuni Buddha's colour is gold. The King of Nagas is white from crown to the throat and blue in the remaining body. He belongs to the family of Akshobia. Otherwise the remaining 33 can appear in the colour of five primordial Buddhas, which are white, yellow, red, green and blue:

1. The first seven Confession Buddhas can be visualised blue belonging to Akshobia Buddha family.
2. The next 7 Buddhas appear white belonging to Varoshana Buddha family.
3. The next 7 Buddhas appear red belonging to Amithaba Buddha family.
4. The next 7 Buddhas appear green belonging to Amogassidhi – northern quadrant of the mandala.
5. The next 7 Buddhas appear yellow belonging to the family of Ratnasambhava - southern quadrant of the mandala.

All 35 Buddhas of Confession are to be visualised in the similar fashion as Shakyamuni Buddha: supreme Nirmanakaya manifestation in the form of fully ordained monks or Bikshus. All these Buddhas sit on thrones supported by the backs of elephants. From the side of the thrones there are strings of looped pearls. You may wonder why strings of looped pearls, why not diamonds? In Sanskrit pearls are called *putika* – purifier and cleanser – since the name is cleanser and you visualised the thrones decorated and adorned with strings of looped pearls it has that serendipitous significance. Why elephants? They are the strongest in the known animal kingdom therefore if you visualise that it has the significance of cleansing of the most potent, powerful negativities. Also, different animals have different degrees of negative delusions. Elephants are said to have a very strong ignorance. That is not to say they are intelligent but for talking about ignorance of grasping at self, elephants are said to have a very strong sense of that. If you do Yamataka practice or other yoga practices there is the deity with cloak of elephant skin or hides to signify that the deity in question helps and has a special skill in helping rid the mind of this ignorance. When you recite the 35 Confession Buddha practice all the four antidotes are fulfilled.

### **Antidote of remorse**

Once you have finished reciting the names of the 35 Buddhas then the next section you say whatever wrongs you have committed, commissioned to do and you have hidden from disclosure and transparency and so on. These things deal with antidote of remorse and regret and sense of dread.

### **Antidote of reliance**

When you recite the first line you spell out the name of your guru and the Buddha and that fulfils the antidote of reliance. Reciting the name of the Buddhas is not so much that they help rid the negative things rather they are called to the place to witness.

### **Antidote of remedial**

There is one part in the sutra where it says, in this life and in the lives in the past and in the future, virtues I have done through acts of generosity and so on, this part of the sutra fulfils the remedial antidote.

### **Antidote of restraint**

Then there is closing part of the sutra, and it says, 'I hereby resolve to refrain from negativities in the future.' That fulfils the antidote of resolve not to do so again in the future.

There is still a lot to talk about. For example, how do we know that our negativities have been cleansed and so on but I will stop. Whatever form of confession practice one does to undo wrongs one has done the antidote of resolve that one will not do the negative things again is the most important one. However, that will be only genuine if one has a strong sense of regret and contrition. If one feel really strongly bad about the wrongs one

has done, one will feel genuinely bad about wrongs one has done, if one has a heart-felt understanding about karma and how karma works and how it is unsparing in nature no matter who you are.

Let me say briefly: exercising restraint is critical. If you find it to resolve to restrain for a whole life from now on, then don't aim for such a long time. Learn to develop restraint bit by bit. If one has a great problem refraining from desire or a part thing then you say to yourself, if refraining for one month is too much, then resolve to refrain from that for one day. If that is too much then I can refrain from it for one hour I will definitely ensure that I will not do that. If we learn to refrain from a limited time and then increase the duration then it will be more successful.