



Dhargyey Buddhist Centre

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

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I appeal to you to generate the finest intention to achieve the state of Buddhahood in order to be of service to the number of beings that is as vast as space. For that reason you think to yourself that you will listen to the discourse on the Stages of the Path.

All of us have gathered here and if we think carefully it is a momentous occasion as it is a time when we have been able to do something for a long time in the past, and it is something that will not be easily repeated in the future. However, if we succeed in doing something now then it will make a huge difference. The backdrop for this is that we have had innumerable existences. In fact there is no beginning to our past existences. What were they like? They were no different to what they are now. Our life at the moment although a human life is better off when compared with lower species it is still is fraught with difficulties and problems. Our lives in the past were not different from this. At the moment we have relative degree of comfort and physical and mental well-being, but we find we are fine and nothing wrong with that. But what we have got is not stable. The degree of well-being we have is subject of change in a matter of a few months and years, aging will begin work its way into our life and it will weaken life vitality that we seem to have now. Ultimately this life comes to an end. This is not to make life bleak but to draw the attention to human reality and then see what we can do to address the problem. This on-going human suffering of being born, constant ageing, intermittent sickness and finally meeting with death are unavoidable and inescapable and we simply have to go through them. They cannot be averted through material resources, power and position, youthfulness or through having a wide circle of friends and so on.

Seen from a Buddhist perspective the means which will help address this suffering is only a spiritual one and there are no other means. As for spiritual means there is a range of choices for people to make for there are many spiritual traditions in the world. The one here is a Buddhist one. Buddhism like other traditions has its own unique features. Among the many unique features there is one called four types of reliance.

The Four Reliances:

Buddha said, 'Don't rely on the person, rely on the teaching'. What this means is we should not be influenced by the external appearance of somebody in a position of teaching. We should examine and look for the content and the quality of the discourse he or she presents. It would be wrong to follow someone just because of their name and on the grounds of their name, their extra sensory perception or they are famous in the world. We should not use these as determining factors. Rather we should examine and choose in terms of the quality of the discourse and teaching.

The second type of reliance: Buddha said, 'Don't rely so much on words but on their content and meaning'. It is not so much the words as the contents that really help bring desired outcomes and changes for the better. One should not be so much carried away by the choice of diction, choice of words, manner of delivery and intonation etc. Whilst these are necessary aides but if the message conveyed by this fine diction and so on, ultimately comes to nothing in terms of what you are looking for, then the words have failed us. Therefore don't rely on the words but on the content and their meaning.

As for meaning there are two levels of meaning: interpretative or provisional meaning and ultimate or definite meaning. Buddha said, 'Don't rely on the provisional but the definitive meaning'. How do we determine teachings to have provisional meaning or definitive meaning? Although there are many ways to draw a distinction between the two, the most commonly accepted is this: a teaching is said to be provisional in

meaning or it is said to carry only a provisional interpretative meaning, if that teaching is given for temporal benefit in order to suit the mental makeup of the recipient. It is only tailored temporary to suit the aptitude of the audience. Whereas a teaching is said to have definitive meaning if the content of the teaching marries the ultimate nature of reality. If the teaching given really is in correspondence how things actually are ultimately. Those teachings have definitive meaning.

The fourth reliance is called 'rely not on senses or sense consciousness, but rely on mental consciousness'. That means we as humans, for that matter all sentient beings, use their senses to understand their surroundings and objects. We use our sense consciousnesses to register and to understand what they specifically observe. Then we also use mental consciousness to think about or to consider matters that affect the way we think. Between the two avenues of cognition, objects of sense consciousness are less reliable than objects of mental consciousness.

We have just heard a piece of Buddha's teaching called four Reliances. What can we infer from the explanation? We can infer that Buddha has given us total freedom to choose or to reject what he teaches. If it does not appeal to your mind and is not grounded in reasoning and fact, even the words of the Buddha can be discarded. Buddha has therefore given the freedom to critique and make an informed decision. What things can we critique and make full use of the freedom given by the Buddha? For Buddhists there are three main areas to critique:

The Three Principle Paths

1. The first principle is the Path of Renunciation

The discourses on this begin with the blanket statement that there is nothing attractive about affairs and things of mundane existence. Everything is hemmed in by suffering. Everything within mundane existence is fraught with suffering. When we hear such a statement, that there is nothing attractive or good but painful and suffering, it hits us and in the beginning we feel uncomfortable with the statement. However, when we do think about our own experiences within a given lifetime for example things make sense.

2. The 2nd principle path is the path of Bodhicitta, universal altruism, to bring the highest good to all sentient beings

The teaching on this calls upon the listeners to become utterly selfless in the pursuit of happiness and to dedicate all their energy in life to pursuing only the good of other people and forget one's own good. This flies in the face of entrenched self-love that we have. It is called enlightened self-interest. However, when we consider Buddha's teaching on this it also begins to make sense.

3. The 3rd principle path is the path of right view

This again makes such a shocking statement: Buddha said, 'There is no self'. When he said that there is no self then we find a loss of one's person and then you critique and you retort saying, 'how can you say that when I experience pain and pleasure, whatever I do there is me doing things'. The statement that there is no self when it is considered what is meant by the self that one does not have and one considers the reasoning that Buddha present to establish that, again then in time the teaching will grow on one.

When we consider Buddha's teaching on the three principles of the path, they present a fresh and new perspective about what we want to get out of life. These present new solutions to age-old problems. If we were to follow suit the status quo and keep repeating all we have done in the past, driven by self-cherishing out of the belief that the self has some kind of intrinsic nature and thinking that the world is beautiful, one will be caught up in the same story and same experience. If you want to break free from the vicious circle of mundane existence there has to be a paradigm shift. Buddha's teachings on the Three Principle Paths present this shift in the paradigm about what is and what is not. As critically discerning person then we need to have an open mind and explore the new perspective and new means that are the solution to the age-old problem and see how far we succeed. It is up to one whether to take recourse to this take advantage and try these or not. If one were to try these and apply them to our experiences and in time they will make – I believe – they will bring lasting change that will have far-reaching implications about our experience and the quality of our experience in many subsequent lifetimes.

If we take advantage of this situations presented here and this discourse presented here and then wake up one's mind from the slumber of ignorance about how things actually are, then things will change for the better. However, if one were to disregard these and rather stick to the old way of praying to some external source and external being and believing that he or she out there, an omnipotent, omniscient external being can solve our ills and suffering then I personally feel that it will not get far in terms of what one is seeking. Relying not on yourself through your own actions and taking personal responsibility but relying on an external source to bring an end to one's predicament is no different from the story I will share with you. There was at one time, famine in Tibet, and a family had nothing to feed the children. A man and woman filled a small bag with sand and tied it to the ceiling and said 'This is our last provision of *tsampa*, or roast barley flour'. The parents keep saying and promising that they will have a good time enjoying the *tsampa* soon but they never gave them any. The children did not die of starvation but by the sheer force of their will that one day they will be able to enjoy it.

Please do not misunderstand me as putting other religious traditions down. I am not doing that. But to be honest with you, personally speaking for me, what appeals to me is – and maybe I am being biased being a Buddhist – for me what appeals to me is the way of happiness taught by the Buddha. On your part, like Buddha said, you could and should critique all things including spiritual areas and spiritual traditions. Then make an informed choice. If you have difficulties having access to the topics then you could try to read works of scholars and practitioners of all the traditions to help you arrive at sound conclusions.

This morning, I like to go back to what we were talking about last Sunday and that is Bodhicitta, *bodhi* means enlightenment or awakening, *citta* means desire or aspiration to full awakening or which has been called in this context universal altruism. Bodhicitta is extremely profound and extensive and for a lot of us it could be the first time you hear this word. The areas of the practice of Bodhicitta are quite complex as well. It is even much harder to let your heart or your mind take on the tone of Bodhicitta itself so that when you think of it and you hear discourses on it, something happens to your heart and you are positively and emotionally moved from within. To arrive at that degree of experience it takes a very long time. Still harder is to develop spontaneous Bodhicitta. Here His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said of himself in the past, 'When it comes to thinking about one of the Three Principle Path called the right view, it is called the profound. Indeed initially the right view is difficult to understand but he became more and more convinced with the passage of time that he could develop the right view, reflecting on the reasons that go into establishing the right view.' But he said he found Bodhicitta utterly daunting and challenging that one has to become utterly selfless for the sake of all sentient beings. Even the Dalai Lama who is considered the emanation of the Buddha of Compassion in human form, even he makes such statements about it. Now recently he has said, 'Although in the beginning I had great difficulties accepting Bodhicitta or believing that I could develop it, but I have never given up and I have received teachings of the Buddhist sources, particularly teachings of the Buddha and the writing of Shantideva's *The Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life*. Once he has had teachings on these sources and from these sources his perspectives about this and his abilities changed. He has said recently if only he had time to meditate on the teaching and after so many years, now I feel I could develop Bodhicitta. For Tibetan people the Dalai Lama is universally taken as their spiritual mentor, the Buddha of Compassion in human form. Yet he has made such statements about the difficulties of developing Bodhicitta in the light of practical difficulties that people find it.

What is Bodhicitta? Bodhicitta is a primary mind conjoined or linked with twin aspirations: The first aspiration is to be of service to others, to serve and work for the highest good of all sentient beings throughout space. The second aspiration is aspiration to full awakening. For one to be able to tirelessly work to bring the highest good to all sentient beings one needs to be in apposition of ability and competence. For that one needs to awaken from the slumber of ignorance and desire and so on. That is the meaning of Bodhicitta. We need to think about whether one as a person can take on board and cope with the enormity of the scope of this mind. In time if Bodhicitta grows on you or takes root in your heart, then as a serious practitioner one needs to approach a Buddhist teacher and in their presence you take an oath or pledge that you will never forsake this mind. This is called taking Wishing Bodhicitta through oath. It is all right to take a pledge and promise that you will uphold this precious mind, but you need to ensure that you retain this. For that there are things you can do in this life and there are things that you could do to meet with the same mind in the subsequent lifetimes. There are four things that you can do to ensure retention of Bodhicitta in this lifetime, and four in next lifetimes, I talked about these in previous teachings.

Doing these two sets of four things you will ensure to retain and uphold this mind. By simply upholding this mind without doing anything but one does not get far. Actions lead to actual progress, not so much just an attitude. Once you have promised to uphold this you take the next step which is another promise. You will engage and apply yourself to practicing Bodhisattva deeds, and these are actually liberating and enlightening in nature.

Bodhisattva deeds or ideals are subsumed under three types of Bodhisattva ethics. You need to know what these are before you take an oath so that you can make again informed choices whether to take these vows or not. After considering what these three types of Bodhisattva vows are, when you think you may be able to keep these vows because you want to move on and advance, then you take the pledge that you will practice the Bodhisattva ideals and therefore it is called Engaging Bodhicitta vows. What is engaging Bodhicitta vow? Although there are some that think that vows are some kind of physical expression, vow is basically is a mental thing. Engaging Bodhicitta vow is a mental factor which is determined to take on the three types of Bodhisattva vows. Once you take Engaging Bodhicitta vow then you need to protect it against 18 root transgressions and 46 minor transgressions. Last Sunday I went through the 18 transgressions as well as the four criteria or conditions needed to make them a full transgression. If one of them is present and not the other three then an action on one's part does not become a root transgression.

46 Minor Transgression of Bodhisattva vows

This morning I want to talk about the 46 minor transgressions only in names.

Of the 46 there are 7 minor transgressions that work against the practice generosity.

1. Failure to make offerings to the Three Jewels 6 times a day.
2. Frantic pursuit of material gain from others without being content and simple living.
3. Not respecting senior Bodhisattvas.
4. Not giving appropriate answer to particular questions asked by others, about teaching, or not giving right information.
5. To turn down invitation from people who willingly invite you because they like your company. Out of some kind of grudge or resentment you would have hurt their feelings and so it amounts to a minor transgression.
6. Not accepting offerings such as gold, silver etc. that others willingly want to give to you and you remain aloof and you turn down their offering. This will also hurt their feelings. There wouldn't be many people who do not accept gold offering. However, for ordained monks and nuns it is against their vows of their ordination to touch precious metals out of attachment. If you are ordained person with Bodhisattva vows and someone offers you gold and 'on the grounds that I have ordination, I shall not take that and accept that' it may be true but you have hurt someone's genuine feeling of generosity and therefore it goes against the vows.
7. Not giving teaching to those who seek teachings.

There are 9 minor transgressions that are opposed to the Perfection of Ethics.

8. The first one is to reject people who have lost their vows or committed serious crimes. One needs to accept them and bring them into your care, not reject them out of a superiority feeling that they are worthless people. To reject those people goes against the Bodhisattva ideals.
9. The second is not to be serious in the safe-guarding the vows of ordination and so on, in order to inspire others. To be very strict with your vows of ordination so that you set a good examples to others and you are a role model.
10. The third is a minor transgression, not to work for the benefit and good for others when you can in order to keep your vows of ordination purely. If you give greater importance to your ordination vows and not help others when you could, even if it means you break your vows, then it is considered a transgression. When it comes to helping others then you could break your vows of ordination.
11. It is a minor Bodhisattva transgression not to engage in seven of the 10 negative actions if performing any of these serves a greater good for the largest number of sentient beings. Normally speaking we will not kill, steal, lie, harsh, divisive, idyll gossip and sexual misconduct, normally these are things to be avoided. However, when it comes to serving and working for sentient beings if the performance some

of these fulfils the greater good of sentient beings one needs to do these. However, if one did not do this to protect these 7 things, then you would have rejected the cause of sentient beings.

12. The 5th one is to engage flippant laughter and games and so on out of attachment.
13. The 6th is not to abandon five wrong means of livelihood and not to give them up. These are hypocrisy, flattery, seeking offering, abuse of power to extract gains from others, and insinuation.
14. The 7th is not clearing baseless personal disrepute. Clearing this is important because if you want to be of service to others you need to have some moral integrity in yourself and in the public eye.
15. The 8th is if beings can't be helped through loving, caring manner then they need to be looked after through wrathful means.
16. The 9th one is to cast aspersion on Bodhisattvas saying that they have no sense of disenchantment to mundane existence and imply that they like *samsara* because they keep coming back and they have no aversion when in fact they have a far greater disenchantment. While they do come back their disenchantment is far greater than that of Hinayana practitioners.

There are four discordant actions to the Perfection of Patience.

17. The 1st one is not embracing four practices of virtuous trainees. A virtuous trainee is required not to get angry when others are angry with them, not to insult somebody who insults them, not to hit back, not to find fault in others even if others try to dig up your past and try to find faults.
18. The 2nd is not entering into a dialogue with someone who has got angry with you. You go to the person and clarify your position and let them do the same so that animosity is removed. If one does not do that then it is a minor transgression.
19. The 3rd is if you don't accept others' explanation to clear up the air.
20. The 4th is not pacifying, reducing the intensity of your anger towards someone. You need to put an end to your anger and hate for someone. If you let it brew or brew over it then it is against the vow.

There are three discordant activities of Perfection of Enthusiastic Perseverance.

21. The 1st one is not trying to minimise the love of sleep and unproductive activities.
22. The 2nd is gathering a wider circle of friends out of apathy in practice. Rather than applying yourself to serious meditation and reflection on meaningful topics if one becomes a socialite and gather people around and gossip this is against meaningful enthusiastic perseverance
23. The 3rd one is cultivating of fondness of a good gossip.

There are three discordant activities of the perfection of concentration.

24. The 1st is not seeking teaching instruction and teaching on Samadhi or concentration.
25. The 2nd is not curbing or minimising attachment to objects and so on.
26. The 3rd one is attachment to the blissful experience of concentration. While you need to develop concentration it would be wrong to cultivate concentration because of attachment to the blissful experience after you have developed it.

There are four discordant activities with regard to the Perfection of Wisdom.

27. The 1st is to reject Hinayana out of disrespect for them.
28. The 2nd is that it is minor transgression of a budding Bodhisattva to reject Mahayana teaching and practices and to seek proactively only Hinayana practices.
29. The 3rd is to reject Mahayana discourses and practice and cultivate the practice of Tirthikas, Outsiders or non-Buddhist.
30. The 4th one is to develop interest and liking for the treatises of the outsiders although you do practice Mahayana.
31. The 5th is to abandon or forsake a section of Mahayana practice although you practice the majority you think 'this part is not relevant to me' and then discard this – it is a minor transgression.
32. The 6th one is to praise self and put others down mildly coming under the influence of anger or hatred.
33. The 7th is not to listen to a teaching given accordingly by someone out of anger to that person. For example, you are angry and you don't listen to the teaching given methodically that is against Bodhisattva vow. It is a minor transgression not to listen to teaching when you become angry.
34. The 8th one is to denigrate the manner of delivery and verbal expression of a Buddhist preacher, e.g. a Mahayana preacher.

All these minor transgression counteract or undermine the second of the three broad Bodhisattva ethics. The second of the three is called the ethics of incorporating virtues. If you commit these transgressions you are not incorporating virtues. We are left with 12 more. These undermine the third of the three broad ethics which is called the ethics of working for sentient beings.

35. The 1st one is not receiving the invited guests properly.
36. The 2nd one is not nursing the sick.
37. The 3rd is not eradicating sicknesses.
38. The 4th one is not teaching the ways of the Dharma and the ways of civilised norms to those who are confused about them and not to educate them.
39. The 5th one not giving material resources to those who need and want them.
40. The 6th is not repaying kindnesses of those who have been kind to one.
41. The 7th is not eliminating or alleviating agony or grief of others.
42. The 8th is not looking after people under your care through Dharma by teaching and giving basic necessities.
43. The 9th is not acknowledging others' qualities and goodness appropriately and in a fitting manner.
44. The 10th is doing things not according to others' feeling rather than imposing your way although you are meaning to do it for others you need to do it in a sensitive way taking into considering how others feel and how things need to be done.
45. The 11th one is not bringing to task appropriately those who are unruly. That means the unruly should be made not unruly or tame. Not dealing with the unruly behaviour appropriately.
46. The 12th one is not to make use of your extra-sensory perception and psychic ability or feat when it comes to working for others.

Last week we covered 18 root transgressions and this morning we covered the 46 minor transgressions. These call for a great deal of sensitivity to others' feelings, protecting their feelings, promoting their feeling above your own. These 46 boil down to the essence that others matter more than self. We need to become familiar with what these are and then be very careful, circumspect and sensitive in our social interaction with other people. Whichever of these transgressions one is most susceptible to committing, I would pencil in with red ink so that you would make special effort to see that those are dealt with first. No matter whether it is the practice of sutra, tantra or Bodhisattva vow there is nothing as important as becoming conversant with the three Bodhisattva ethics and their finer divisions. There is nothing as important or as liberating as these. If you take delight in the fact that you got some information about Bodhisattva vows then this will change a long way in changing one's attitude and behaviour with regard to other people and that in itself is a Bodhisattva ideal.