



Dhargyey Buddhist Centre

Teacher:- Venerable Geshe Jampa Tenzin
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Title:- Drub.Ta - Established Tenets

Venue: D.B.C. Dunedin

Please participate in this class with the highest motivation. Being the first teaching of the year let me briefly speak about the importance of motivation behind participation here.

Whether something is Buddhist or Mahayana really depends on motivation. Three factors

- 1) Anything based on refuge in Buddha Dharma and Sangha will become a Buddhist practice.
- 2) If it is done with a yearning for permanent cessation and nirvana, it will be a means to those Buddhist ends.
- 3) If it is based on Bodhicitta – universal Altruism, it will become a Mahayana practice.

Why do we need to turn to Three Jewels, why not do it ourselves independently? We need them because ours is a pressing need. Throughout beginningless time we have been afflicted with three forms of suffering. We can't do it independent of some guidance, and for that we need The Three Jewels.

Three Forms of Suffering

Of three sufferings we only manage to identify one, not the other two. All we feel and recognize is actual physical and mental distress – whereas we are not fully aware of suffering of change and insidious all-pervasive suffering.

- Instances of the first suffering are health problems, old age, actual mental and physical suffering, as well as lower realm sufferings; - sufferings of actual pain.
- Suffering of change instances include – states generally held to be pleasurable which, from Buddha's point of view, are nothing but suffering. For example the pleasure we experience when we eat and sleep and all forms of states of pleasure, are suffering in nature, not fully fledged lasting states of happiness. How do we know eating is not real pleasure? If it were, the more you experienced it the better it would get. Whereas the pleasure of eating has marginal utility;- if you continue too long that pleasure will cause you great trouble and pain.

Similarly with sleep;- when fatigued sleep is very relaxing and comfortable; but if it were true happiness the more we did it the better it would be, but after a time you must get up or it will become painful. Then there is a transitional period of relief from the pain of sleep when you get up, but if you continue standing for a long time that becomes painful. However in our casual state of mind what are really states leading to suffering are being pursued. Relaxing sleep is labelled happiness, by social construct, but all these actions aren't inherently or truly states of happiness.

Since we have been confused between these two, we consider what is just a fleeting state of happiness as real, and we pursue them. On attaining them they last only briefly, transitioning into phases of suffering. This covers the first two of three sufferings; mental and physical stresses and change.

- The cause of these two are our afflicted aggregates of body and mind. The nature and functioning of our aggregates is not sublime at all. There comes a time when the youthful body becomes decrepit, and eventually it is discarded at death. There is nothing inherently good about what is constantly changing up to death. Each lifetime we acquire a new body enshrining our consciousness. When death comes we discard our precious body, that we slave to secure the comfort for all our life. When cold we give it heat. When too hot we cool it. By its very nature it is afflicted. It is very fragile and delicate.

Considering how everyone looks after it, shouldn't it get better and better? Ironically it just becomes worse and worse. Something is wrong with this, that we care for but that just deteriorates anyway. There must be something wrong with these aggregates. Yet ordinary beings can't recognize this fact. Only The Buddha sees things as they really are - the afflicted nature of body and mind aggregates. Once you are shown the aggregate's true nature you realize you ought not spend the entire life-time investing in this unreliable body.

Refuge

You want to be free from the vicious cycle of life and death, turning to the way of The Buddha to find a way out of suffering. When Buddha is asked 'What can I do for this problem', he replies that these are results originating from a lack of correct identification of the underlying causes of Samsaric events, including this body and mind. If one then takes on board the message conveyed by Buddha, to help one get out of suffering, addressing mistakes we have made, that would address our problems at the root. Opening one's heart and addressing this message of the causes and symptoms of our problem is called going for refuge in The Dharma. In our bid to embrace the guidance of The Buddha to be free from the three recurring sufferings we need all available support. The best we can get is called The Sangha or members of the spiritual community. If one undertakes Buddhist practice with conviction in The Buddha as someone who shows the way out of suffering, considering the message as the actual saviour, and practicing with the conviction that the members of the spiritual community are support systems, such practice would be Buddhist practice based on refuge.

Wisdom

When Buddha said you are confused with regard to the underlying cause, he meant we have a strong sense of I. A sense of I is not too bad, but ours is just too strong. For the misconception we have about ourselves, that misperceived 'I' we need to know two things; how does it actually exist and how does it appear to mind? There is a gap between these we need to bridge. What is the actual reality of I - its real mode of existence? Despite our strong feeling of it - it can't exist like that. It is merely a label affixed on body and mind. Apart from this affixed label, there is no I, but in our heart of hearts we can't help thinking I exists in and of itself. However the confused, uninformed, uneducated mind believes one's I/person exists inherently and independent from body and mind. A lot of Buddhism is dedicated to educating the mind. It doesn't exist the way you think it does. Many lines of reasoning are employed to demonstrate this. The actual nature of I is a central issue in Buddhism.

There is an I which undergoes pleasure and pain, yet when we undergo this, we think 'I' - an inherent entity - experiences this. Buddha says the way mind leads us to think of I is wrong. I is empty of intrinsic nature. I doesn't exist the way that it appears to exist, we must find the middle way and become grounded in it. There are two perceptions of I. The first experiences pleasure and pain which appears to exist inherently but does not. In the understanding of I there are two, one wrong and one correct.

Whatever Buddhist practice you undertake at any time is done to overcome distortions in the way mind views mind. All must be dedicated to that. That practice will definitely become a vehicle to attaining nirvana. In the process of understanding the true nature of I, it will come into sharper focus, and on the flip side distortion will become less and less. As wisdom grows, in clarity and strength, there is a corresponding weakness in distortion. At that point the mind has become free; of the true nature of I. With that, the mind has achieved nirvana. Once misconception ends permanently, the resultant symptoms of a) pain, b) change into pain and c) underlying afflicted mental and physical components; all these sufferings would automatically cease. Driven by this motivation, if one undertakes any Buddhist practice, it will become a means to achieving freedom. With these two one will definitely succeed in achieving liberation of mind from distortion. It will be liberated from all negative actions.

Buddhahood

However for complete enlightenment, you need something more. If one doesn't have universal altruism, one may achieve in gaining liberation, but one will still suffer from some weaknesses - unfortunately in one's

heart of hearts one will remain selfish. In other words, one has worked for one's personal liberation and succeeded in that, whilst the vast majority is still in the quagmire. Despite liberation one still suffers from self-cherishing which can only be undone by another antidote. The mindset which cuts through self-centredness even after nirvana is called other-caring universal altruism; a mind which is absolutely selfless, and utterly dedicated to serving other beings; a mind that wishes to achieve that service to others' Buddhahood – 'Bodhicitta'.

It is not just you who needs to get out of the three kinds of suffering, bodhicitta educates the mind to see that all experience that suffering throughout space within the realms of mundane existence. Bodhicitta teachings then further educate: - how can you afford to ignore vast number of suffering sentient beings out there and just achieve cosy nirvana for yourself. Further it educates – just as in this life all your needs are met by other beings, everything which is good, comes from other beings. That has been the pattern throughout all lifetimes. We have lived so many past lives when we have needed like this and when our means of survival have come predominantly from the vast numbers of sentient beings. How many, more are to come before nirvana? It could well be much more in the future than in past. However long, the pattern of dependence on others for means of survival will pervade them all.

In this life, you eat a peach and it is the product of tonnes of effort that many beings are involved in the growth, production, transportation and so on, not just by humans but insects etc as well. Cumulatively the effect gives you the enjoyment of a piece of fruit. Fruit first needs a seed which must be germinated and planted and nurtured. It may be done by someone to earn a living but they still end up providing what you enjoy. Someone has to harvest the fruit, pack it, transport it and then you must pay for it from some monetary source which you are also dependent on others for. A single item really depends on the effort put in by many beings. In non-critical mode we think we are very competent and skilled and we are - after a fashion, but success of your life necessarily comes from other people. The very body we think of as me is heavily dependent on others, we did not bring it from our last life, so we could have it in this one, it comes from egg and sperm of two parents. It is also received from others too. Help of others is not just confined to this life time. Each time anyone exists it is entirely dependent on what they have received from others.

Buddha said we have existed since from beginningless time, so the degree of help from others is simply unimaginable. Buddha goes further by saying we make differentiate strongly between an ant crawling on the ground and someone walking beside you. Buddha says the ant is very close to you. It is not your current mother, but he says given the near-infinite past lives we have lived, the ant has been one's mother so many times, and it has been one's child so many times too. This relation exists between all sentient beings. When we think carefully along these lines, the depth of past existences and depth of future existences, each time we are born from egg or womb, we need a mother. Each time as in this lifetime, they do everything possible for their young. When we consider the magnitude of nurturing relations we have had with mother sentient beings it would be utterly wrong to leave them behind and not show them the way to achieve nirvana.

In helping others overcome their suffering, Buddhas do not pluck their suffering like we pluck a prickle with tweezers, or wash it out of them like ablution cleans the body. When we reach out due to gratitude we can't do that either. The only means available is to share the process that helps overcome suffering. We can do this most effectively when we ourselves are free of these physical and mental constraints of body and mind, of negative thoughts and of negative actions and their predispositions. As long as we have these we will not be effective. We overcome them when we become Buddhas. Only as Buddha are we fully awake from the slumber of ignorance, having broken free of all constraints. The way to achieve this is called Bodhicitta. Driven by this wish, one can be of immense help to all beings, and undertake any Buddhist practice, which will be Mahayana – great vehicle - practice.

Sunday Teachings

Our mind suffers from two severe distortions, that one's I has intrinsic nature in and of itself which Buddha's mind does not see. The second distortion is the self-cherishing thought that one is special. These two crippling distortions can only be overcome by two antidotes – 'Wisdom' and 'Method'. Egotistical self-centredness is addressed by the antidote of method. It has the sense of universal altruism and resourcefulness; wracking the brain – what can I do to alleviate others' suffering? That antidote will be subject of Sunday morning teachings.

Monday and Thursday Teachings

The antidote which helps overcome the severe distortion that believes one's I and all that exists has an intrinsic nature is overcome by a fresh perspective diametrically opposed to the distortion – the wisdom of selflessness – emptiness of intrinsic nature. This antidote is called wisdom, and it addresses this distortion. Monday night focuses on philosophical slants of the various schools and Thursday night is called Mahamudra and they will help address this distortion.

Patience

The Lama says Buddhism is for the long haul. What is embedded deeply in our consciousness can not be undone overnight or even in one lifetime. It is a question of patience. One must be prepared for the long haul as I said yesterday.

A Collective Sigh of Relief

Last year we covered the first two schools of thought and when I left the message was for you to go through the notes and absorb as much as possible. You have one more week as there is no time now to start tonight.