

**2011.3.21**

**Tenets/Drupta**

**Geshe Jampa Tenzin**

**First teaching of the year: an Introduction (This serves as an introduction to Lam Rim as well which at the time Geshela was teaching on another week night)**

As many of you know the motivation with which you do anything is quite important and here one must be motivated by bodhicitta and the right view. Its alright to say that we need to have a positive motivation but before that we need to see for ourselves the pros and cons of embracing a spiritual path and of not having one. If one is fully aware of the tangible outcomes and benefits of a spiritual path without needing to be reminded one will have a positive motivation.

Dharma means to change/amend/correct. First of all let's understand that in terms of our human experience we are all alike basically because day in and day out we have a common instinct/desire to be happy and not to have to confront problems. Whether one is a highly placed individual in society or one is at the bottom, even animals, all have the wish to be happy.

Related with the pursuit of happiness we need to consider our mind. Mind is one of the many phenomena we can see in the world. We can't see the mind but we can feel it. Of all kinds of phenomena mind is crucial for our wellbeing and the pursuit of happiness. What is mind like? Where does it come from and where does it go to? Mind has received until lately, little attention in the western scientific or academic community, but in the east mind has received the utmost attention particularly in ancient India in the tradition of the Nalanda University.

At the moment we are all humans and have lived some portion of our given lifespan. All of us will be gone from this world in a matter of 100 years. What will happen to our mind after this? Do you think it will go on to exist experience various sensations of peace and suffering again or do you think it will cease completely. Whatever is your answer what proof do you have of this? If you put believers into two groups; those who say indeed mind continues to move on after the physical death and those who think mind ceases, which position has more valid reasons to support their position. You will find that there are more valid reasons/logical propositions why the mind does continue to exist. If it does continue what preparation do you have? Are you fully prepared for the mind to go on and to face the consequences? What is absolutely plain at the moment in this life is that we have a strong desire for happiness and freedom from suffering. That is obvious. Why do we have this? Because we have a mind and it is in the innate nature of mind to have these two. That being the case will the future mind be any different in its thinking than it is now? It won't be any different in its wish for freedom from suffering and its wish for happiness.

What proof do we have of mind moving to the next life? Can we find this out in the forest? Of course not. It has to be within our physical and psychological components. For a resultant effect to come about it must have a cause. There must be great correspondence in the likeness of the cause with the effect. The need for this is a crucial factor here. When we consider the likeness between cause and effect in terms of our mind lets talk about the mind of the newly born baby. Where does its consciousness come from? Could it have come from matter like stone, wood and so on? If the mind of a new baby comes from these there is no correspondence between cause and effect. It then means

**2011.3.21**

**Tenets/Drupta**

**Geshe Jampa Tenzin**

that at times even unrelated things like wood and stone could be the cause of a consciousness.

Therefore by implication it follows that even they could be animate at times. There would be that fallacy.

External matter cannot be the appropriating cause which has a strong likeness to the result. So we can rule that out. Is the mind of the child's parents the appropriating cause of the child's mind? If so it would follow that the minds would be the same in every way. If the parents are really clever and intelligent the children are invariably just as clever and intelligent. More often the parents may not have equally intelligent children. This proves that parents are not the appropriating cause of the existence of the mind of the newly born child.

It is seen from the Buddhist perspective that the appropriating cause of a newly born child must be the mind of a baby inside the womb. That is, from its own prior type. If we feel comfortable in concluding this way, what about the mind of a baby about to be born? This baby's mind can only be traced to the mind of an embryo just conceived in the womb. Where could such a mind come from? It couldn't come from any other source but its own type before it was conceived. Let's bypass the intermediate existence, the mind just conceived could only have come from the mind of the person who died a death. In this way, if this is so, the two minds have the same thread/continuum. This is the line of logic pursued by Buddhist logicians/epistemologists to establish former and future lives.

We can keep tracing the mind back into the past. Each time the mind takes a rebirth the innate function of the mind is to seek pleasure, joy and happiness and to avoid pain, suffering. In each lifetime the mind has ceaselessly pursued these. This is how the proof is established. On top of this there are people in the world who have remembered their past lives and who have managed to locate their past life kith and kin. This too is proof of past lives.

In the mundane and the transmundane world various events take place as a result of consciousness/mind. In the world where a lot of troubles take place negative mental factors, themselves expressions of mind, take hold of the primary mind of people motivating them to do all kinds of actions which lead to a great deal of suffering and problems for themselves and others. These are all due to the mind. Positively speaking the mind can be harnessed to grow exponentially for the better and is capable of developing unthinkable qualities which enlightened beings have. From this we know that the mind is the driving force behind all events both positive and negative.

There is a strong connection between Buddhism and mind. Buddhism has all to do with the mind. It's about tapping into the rich potential of the mind, cultivating the positive propensities and correcting the negative ones.

When you change the mind, according to Buddha's own teaching, you correct the mind with reference to the four truths. It is simply obvious that mind cannot be changed for the better in the way that you can fashion wood into beautiful forms. The ascetic beauty of the mind cannot be achieved in that way. The mind cannot be changed that way.

**2011.3.21**

**Tenets/Drupta**

**Geshe Jampa Tenzin**

The potential of the mind must be harnessed by way of cultivating perspectives of the mind which correspond to the facts on the ground. If the perspectives in the mind do not correspond with the ground reality it causes problems. We fashion the mind by way of eradicating wrong perspectives of the mind and then by letting the mind develop factual perspectives.

It's vital for us to know the ontological status of the object; that is, how it exists. Unless we have precise understanding of how a thing exists, what its ground/innate reality is, then misperception of the object can lead to development of wrong perspective.

Therefore as mentioned before understanding of ground reality is vital.

There are two types of ground reality: conventional and ultimate/definitive.

Understanding how an entity exists in a real way is crucial to development of a positive perspective. The four Buddhist schools have spent a great deal of time in defining what the truths are. Each school has come up with their own definition of what each is.

The explanation of the ontological status of phenomena given by Prasangika/Middle Way/Consequentialist/the highest school is valid, free of any logical fallacies. So for us it is imperative that we try to understand the two truths explained by this school.

As we have seen the mind continues to move on from one lifetime to another. Therefore what the mind experiences is what it gets from the actions performed by the individual who has that mind. In our case we are in our 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s. We have lived a great chunk of our life. How prepared do we feel to meet our next lifetime? If we have been preoccupied with material things thus far then we have missed out on a great opportunity. When it comes to understanding this crucial thing that all sentient beings have, this mind, what our mind is like and how it can be transformed, only humans have the capacity to enquire about the nature of mind and how to transform it. Animals, whilst they have a mind do not have this capacity and yet are very smart about earning a living, finding food, a home and so on. In that regard they are extremely clever. Despite this cleverness they have no way of knowing due to being trapped in that body, of the nature of mind and how to train that mind.

In the same way if we have fared no better than animals in terms of preparing for the next life then it is very unfortunate. When it comes to transforming the mind you need practice. This doesn't simply mean reciting prayers and mantras. These are rituals which can help but they are not the primary purpose of Buddhism which is to look within one's own mind and protect it from negative propensities, to develop strength within the mind itself to withstand negative influences and grow stronger in positive propensities. That process of transformation is true practice, true dharma.

In Tibetan Buddhism there is such a thing called Lam Rim, the Stages of the Path, which is an overview of the process of spiritual growth, from an ordinary state to a very high state. In the beginning the topics are about human life. They talk about the value of this human life saying it is extremely purposeful, meaningful, with great potential. Secondly they say a human life is very rare to achieve, not easily found again and again life after

**2011.3.21**

**Tenets/Drupta**

**Geshe Jampa Tenzin**

lifetime. Thirdly it says it's ephemeral, precious. Human life has the capacity to look within and grow from within.

This was just an introduction. His Holiness gives advice to teachers who go to the west that when they teach the Lam Rim topic of developing a relationship with the spiritual master that they should not dwell on this too much because it may be misinterpreted. He advises them to go straight on to the other topics which could be more useful.

When you talk about Lam Rim, although as I said it covers a raft of topics, all come under three headings. One is renunciation. This is a lingering desire to get out of mundane existence permanently. Why? Because no matter where one is born into samsara its nature is suffering. We need to realize the situation and ask do I like it or do I want to get out of it. If you decide you want to get out then you need to develop a sense of repulsion/disenchantment for this mundane existence.

As I said there is no beginning to our existence. How long will we exist? It depends on how soon we get out of it through spiritual realisation. In all our existence our life has been fraught with the three sufferings, We have experienced actual physical and psychological distress, the change of seeming pleasure into pain, and the afflicted body and mind whose main condition is suffering, which is called the suffering of pervasive conditioning. Tired of the monotony and wanting to get out of the cycle of these three is called renunciation/ngejung.

The second main topic of Lam Rim is bodhicitta. We want to develop it but to do so we need to become selfless, selflessly altruistic, going out of ones way to help others. In doing this we are held back by a lopsided self love which is actually self cherishing/self centeredness. Anything done out of self centeredness ends up causing suffering/long term problems. Therefore we need to wake up to this, open our heart and include others in the search for our own happiness.

If self centeredness is the right way it is high time that we had real positive benefits out of it because self centeredness has been our companion throughout beginningless time. If it is such a perfect antidote let us see some positive outcome. Since we have more self-centeredness than Buddhas shouldn't we have better outcomes than them if it is such a good thing to have? We are far worse off than Buddhas. We don't have the fraction of the positive qualities that they have. Buddhas have no self-centeredness but are more developed than us. This proves self-centeredness is not the antidote we require.

Bodhicitta is the only way to change the trend. When you have bodhicitta you consider others' happiness far more important than your own. To forgo self and to embrace the happiness of others may seem inconceivable at this stage of our growth. It may seem impossible but one thing about the mind is that it can be bent when pressure is exerted. The mind can be moved away from self-centeredness and toward bodhicitta. Although it may be hard at the beginning that is no excuse not to start.

Why do we gradually become more community spirited/altruistic? Seen from an enlightened perspective one and all living beings throughout space are closely related. All have been ones closest relations. Nothing can be closer than the kind mother. Seen from

**2011.3.21**

**Tenets/Drupta**

**Geshe Jampa Tenzin**

Buddhist perspective all beings have been ones mother. If you feel indebted to your mother your heart will warm up to your mother.

We have been affected by our self-centeredness throughout the annals of our beginningless existence. It has not been the right approach. Self-centeredness may look attractive but it deceives us. The only thing that can challenge it is bodhicitta. Therefore bodhicitta is vital. It is worth pursuing in that if you have it nothing becomes a problem. Your heart becomes expansive, not myopic, not so narrow, not just for one person. In that expansive heart you think of the greatest happiness for the vastest number of beings. When you have such a heart you are willing to go to any lengths, even to the bottom of hell, and remain there for someone's happiness, you will be happy to do that.

All major and minor Mahayana spiritual realisations invariably come from bodhicitta. Without that gold elixir-like bodhicitta no matter how long you meditate or which meditation you do nothing will come off. All Mahayana realisations are necessarily grounded in bodhicitta. With an altruistic motivation, a social conscience you will be at ease regardless of problems around you.

What is bodhicitta, what is its object, what is the object of meditation of bodhicitta, and what cognitive form does mind take when it becomes bodhicitta, what are its benefits and functions and so on are the raft of topics we will come to. For now we need its important to remember the crucial importance of bodhicitta for the happiness of self and others. Therefore how nice it would be if we at all times were motivated by bodhicitta day and night. Everything will be beneficial.

The third major topic of Lam Rim is the right view.

It is crucial because it is due to misunderstanding of the ground reality and from wrong perspective that one develops prejudices for and against. To cut through these we need to understand the true nature of reality. For a Mahayanist there are two things to overcome; selfcenteredness and self grasping. Self centeredness as we said before is the wrong approach. Grasping is the misunderstanding of the ontological status of phenomena. Whilst things (animate or inanimate) do not exist objectively, independently, intrinsically from their own side we are misled by our confusion into believing that they do exist in and of themselves. That is called self grasping.

The two are like the bad king and the influential minister. All of our efforts must be geared towards tackling these two. The antidote to self grasping is the wisdom of emptiness of intrinsic existence. The antidote to self centeredness is bodhicitta. Bohi means enlightened, citta means mind. Whatever we do in our practice we need to be motivated by bodhicitta and educated by the wisdom understanding the true nature of reality.

All these three major spiritual realisations are called the Three Principle Paths; renunciation, a lingering sickening attitude/disillusionment with mundane existence,

bodhicitta, the altruistic intention to achieve enlightenment for the sake of others, and the right view which realizes emptiness of self and phenomena.

**2011.3.21**

**Tenets/Drupta**

**Geshe Jampa Tenzin**

These are possible because we have a mind full of potential and it is malleable. It can be fashioned so that the mind becomes bodhicitta endowed with knowledge about reality and motivated by disillusionment with ordinary existence. These three are vital and they need to come from within our mind. Therefore the mind is crucial for practice.

For me nothing is as important as getting to know who you are in terms of your mind by looking into it, seeing what it is like and then changing it for the better. That is the most important task. If everyone could realise this the world would be a much better place.

In the beginning I said before we do anything we need to have the right motivation. I've explained that with reference to the importance of mind and how it can be changed for the better by practicing the Three Principle Paths.