

SPIRITUAL PROGRAMME

LOSANG DRAGPA BUDDHIST SOCIETY

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Preliminary Practices *Wednesday 17th October 2007*

1. Daily Prayers
1. Taking refuge in the 3 jewels
2. Generating Bodhicitta
3. Prostration practice to purify negative karma
4. Sadhana practices
5. Making Mandala & other Offerings
6. Dedication

Before we start today's session let us come together to recite **Guru Shyaymuni main mantra (Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's name mantra)** and do a simple visualization of the Lord Shakyamuni **Buddha** in front of us, in live form whose aspect is showing so much compassion and he is very delighted that we are here .

Thank You. First of all I would like everyone to be comfortable; you can stretch your legs and help yourself to drinks at the kitchen whenever you need a break. Most importantly you should feel relaxed both mentally and physically, so that whatever discussion we do you will be able to digest it .

Today we will discuss the Preliminary Practices

We can say it's a very basic practice for the Buddhist practitioner but it is the foundation for the other practices and is regarded as the most profound, most extensive, most important practice for the Buddhist Practitioners. It is suitable for all levels of Buddhist practitioners. I shall make it as simple as possible so everyone can understand.

First of all, it is necessary to understand what Buddhism is. I normally expressed it based on how the Dalai Lama introduces it.

1. First of all, it is a religion, a philosophy and also a science. It is so effective for everyone whatever our life style.
2. So from this explanation, we know that Buddha Dharma is not a superstition nor magic nor miracle.

3. Buddha Dharma is dependent arising meaning, that if you create good cause, you will have good result. If you create negative cause than there is negative result.
4. At the same time every living being has the equal potential to become Buddha and has equal potential to obtain everlasting happiness, to obtain omnipresent mind and to obtain the form to be most beneficial to the entire numberless beings. In other words to obtain the state of Buddhahood. All beings whether it is God, human, animals, hell beings and even the smallest insect have the same potential or opportunity to attain Buddhahood.

5. It is dependent on ourselves creating the cause and conditions. The responsibility lies with us. So it is clear that if we wish to obtain happiness even it may be a slight contaminated happiness, it is necessary to accumulate or actualize the cause. If we wish to achieve happiness we have to create the cause and we must live with good ethics. If we wish for suffering then we create the negative cause(s) that harm others and ourselves. So this again confirms that it is entirely up to us. Buddha is not responsible for us. If Buddhism is magic than maybe Buddha can be responsible. If it is miracle than you may not have to depend on creating good causes.

Therefore if we want to be a qualified Buddhist practitioner it is necessary to understand the karmic law of cause and effect.

To build the proper foundation and to be a qualified Buddhist there is a border we have to cross and that border is the REFUGE. From the moment we take Refuge in the Triple Gems, we become qualified to be a Buddhist. If you practice compassion, the Four Noble Truths and any practices but do not take Refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, than you are not considered a Buddhist. Therefore whether you are a Buddhist or not depends on whether you have taken the Refuge vows in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Hence Only by taking Refuge we qualify to be a Buddhist.

Daily practices involve the practice of body, speech and mind. The first practice we have to do is to take Refuge .

1.1 Taking Refuge in the the 3 Jewels

Buddha is the object of our Refuge because he is the Supreme Being and Refuge to all entire beings. Buddha has obtained the entire method and qualities remove

our ignorance and liberate us from our sufferings. Even highly realized bodhisattvas do not have these qualities. Therefore Buddha is the sole refuge to whom we should rely on and to who we should wholeheartedly go for protection.

What should avoid and what we should cultivate when we take Refuge in the Buddha?

We have to avoid praying, taking refuge or making offerings to the worldly Gods e.g. spirits, landlords, nagas, - these worldly gods are spirits who have the power to actualize certain amount of prosperity but they do not have the complete method, antidote or blessings to liberate us from suffering or Samsara. This is because they are still trapped within samsara and suffering due to ignorance, delusion of attachment, hatred and anger. Hence they are not able to fulfill our entire goal which is to liberate us from the entire suffering i.e. to attain everlasting happiness. So there is not much purpose in relying on them because whatever fulfillment they do, any normal human beings can do. Your mother, brother or sister can also do it.

Our purpose is to be free from the entire suffering and contaminated existence i.e. Samsara which is the existence of rebirth by the force of ignorance and karma. So in order to be free from them we need the help from someone like Buddha who has actualized the path to enlightenment.

There are those of you with a background of other religions having all types of deities at home may want to know how do we handle that. My answer is - do not make offerings to them or praise them, but you must respect them. Buddha's dharma teaches us to respect all beings so those worldly Gods can be the object of your generosity, we can offer them water, light, and we can do so with so much respect because Buddha himself stated that if you put your palms together and show so much respect for me, why can you not put your palms together to show the same respect for all mother sentient beings. It is through seeing Buddha and all beings as having equal value that we can achieve Buddhahood. Therefore we should respect all living beings and therefore we can also respect those worldly gods. However we should not take refuge in these worldly Gods or ask for protection from them. They can only be the object of your generosity.

Advise on what to cultivate –

1. One should respect the image of Buddha even if the image is slightly chipped. We should still see, respect it as the real Buddha - a good example is the Tza Tza if a certain part is chipped we still have to regard it as the real image of Buddha. For example, if Buddha were to appear in front of you and

give his nail to you or his tooth or one hand you will say it is precious, it is the precious relics of Buddha. So when we make Tza tza and if a piece is broken since it is part of the image it becomes relic. As long as it is part of Buddha it deserves our respect.

2. It is beneficial to remember to visualize Buddha as beautiful or handsome and we must think of them day and night, before going to sleep or when you wake up. So it is beneficial to have a close up look of the image of Tara or other deities and just remember that image and when you are afraid that image will appear and makes you feel protected and not alone. And if you can see Buddha as real, then you will feel totally safe. If you have enough faith in Buddha, he can help you in your job or business and he will make all the right decisions for you. However the problem is that our faith in Buddha may not be strong enough and may not believe that he can do that.
3. There is a saying that there is not a single atom that is not covered by Buddha because his omniscience mind covers every single atom. Therefore we should remember Buddha at all time. When you wake up in the morning the first thing you see should be Buddha, his compassionate image or part of that image will have a calming effect and give you peace. If your wife should scream at you your mind will have no problem with that because it has been dominated by Buddha. You will smile back at her and that would calm her mind. You can apply this to your parents, your office staff, your business partner whenever they are upset.
4. This is one of the ways that Buddha helps us. If we put effort to meditate in this way we can subdue our anger, jealousy, hatred. You will always be wise and will develop pleasing, pure and wonderful aura and remain charming and nice. And you will surely gain the love and respect of others. Meditating on the Buddha by visualizing on the whole image or by using part of Buddha image is a very effective way to meditate ~~on delusion~~. It is always best to learn to meditate in the peaceful, loving Buddha's image first.

So meditating in Shakyamuni Buddha is the first step. Sometime we say Tantra is so powerful and the Deity Yoga is so powerful that we forget about Shakyamuni. But whatever deity we pray to it is the emanation of Shakyamuni. Tara, Vajrayogini are all emanated from Shakyamuni. He is the root and therefore we must not forget our root.

1. 2 Taking refuge in dharma.

Trusting in Buddha's teaching to end all suffering or samsara.

The object of refuge in Dharma is path and cessation of suffering. Normally when we think of Dharma refuge we think of the scripture, but that is symbolism only. Dharma refuge is actually the realization on emptiness by the Arya beings

or by realizing emptiness directly by the spontaneous realization on renunciation. How do we do that? It is by renouncing our contaminated existence or the suffering of samsara. The Mahayana renunciation is the renunciation of samsara for you and other beings. Because samsara give you so much suffering. So when you have Spontaneous perception from the depth of your heart on dependent arising then you achieve the realization of emptiness directly and that realization is called the path. **Than (Then)** the cessation, which is achieved by negating the defilement is called cessation. So in short the real dharma Refuge is path and cessation. So scripture are the symbolism of the path and cessation so therefore in taking refuge in the Dharma we pay so much respect to the scripture.

What to cultivate

Once we take refuge in the Dharma we have to avoid harming any living beings. As long as they possess mind whether its form, formless, big or small as long as they possess consciousness we should not harm them. We must not even generate the thought of harming them. We should not feel any jealousy, anger, attachment or pride because they harm others. A disturbed mind will harm others.

Buddha practices proper speech, mind and body, **(no need coma here)** when he was an ordinary being that is why he was able to achieve enlightenment. Never have cunning thought, no one will see but Buddha can see. Therefore **In (in)** Buddhism you must discipline yourself, you are your own boss, you are your own slave, you are your own teacher which mean you are responsible for your actions. You cannot harm beings and since you are one of the beings therefore you should not harm yourselves. You need to take care of yourself, exercise regularly, stay healthy. Buddha Dharma is a healthy lifestyle. If a Buddhist practitioner is practicing well, he or she should be able to influence others to be happy, bringing laughter, love and joy. One should Practise when one is happy as well as Practise when one is not happy.

In fact when you get angry easily **than (then)** you should practice even more patience.

I use to say don't take advantage of people with your emotional problem e.g I am very emotional so you must forgive me. Or the husband will say I go out with other women because I have so much attachment, my wife is not understanding, how can my wife blame me for that. That is an excuse. I debated with **him (those people)** and only sent **him (them)** off when **he (they)** loses the debate.

So whoever has more attachment has to practice detachment.

Whoever has more anger must practice patience.

Whoever has more ignorance must practice wisdom.

If you are stingy, you must practice generosity. And you must practice that in your daily life with whatever your lifestyle is. We must be mindful of our body, speech and mind. We must make sure that everyone is happy. After taking the refuge in dharma we should not harm **others (anyone)**. How wonderful if everyone can practice that way. So everyone should rush to take refuge.
(laughter)

We also have to cultivate to give our respect to all Buddha's teachings. As long as it is Buddha's teachings whatever the condition of the scripture we should respect such scriptures by putting it to our head or on the alter.

1.3 Taking Refuge in Sangha

Sangha is referred as Venerable, Aryas beings who has obtained and perceived emptiness (**directly**) for example Arya Realiser, Arya Solitary Realiser, Arya Bodhisatvas, ~~such as~~ Arya Tara, Arya Chenrezig, Arya Shakyamuni. Aryas has 2 categories, one is enlightend, the other categories may not be enlightened **but have to achieve the direct perception on emptiness**. Sangha **who wear saffron robes** are the example of the Arya beings and they devote their time fully to achieve Aryas beings. Sangha **in robes** has taken ordination vows **such as 36 vows and 253 ~~250 or 300~~** vows they are the object of our respect, offerings and praise.

The moment you take refuge the door to hell realm will be closed. Without this vows nothing will reside in you i.e. it's like a container that cannot hold anything. Once you take the refuge the merit is huge, you instantly and simultaneously create merit and purify negative karma. One should take the refuge vows again and again even if you have not broken any vows.

Refuge is taking protection in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. What does it protect? It protect us from falling into the lower realm, **and the seen and unseen, fears, hindrances, and from not achieving realization. (...from not achieving realization, the seen and unseen fears and hindrances.)**

Types of Karma

Indefinite Karma – its due to the influence of environment, prayers will remove the obstacles.

Definite Karma – You need to exhaust the Karma before your karma **improves (ripens)**.

Boudha Stupa – whatever you wish for will be granted. But you should only wish what you can handle. When you pray with sincerity, wholeheartedly, with trust in the Buddha, visualizing that the deity in front of you is real with full faith than your prayers will be answered.

~~If your prayers are not answered its possible that you have not taken Refuge and you need to make a lot more effort to realize your wishes.~~

Geshe la said to replace this start from Types of Karma

Sometime people has court case, or sometime people has competition problem between company to company. Of course you come to say “I am right.” But in case if you are wrong but you still want to win, even how many mantra you chant, whatever practice you do, it doesn’t help. Because it will not give the blessing.

If you are right but there is some negative condition make you lose, then the puja, practice, anything can work, it will be very effective. Puja and mantra is unbelievable effective, just a mantra can be so effective to dispel the problem so efficient. But the object have to be pure.

If somebody bully you or cheat your money, or if somebody stolen your money, you are so innocent and pure, and you come to ask me what puja can do to get back, if I arrange puja, sure can get it. But if you didn’t be careful, you are being so careless and do all sort of thing, and lose everything, then you come to ask for puja, even how many pujas done in how many days, it will not help, it can’t help.

So whether puja works or not it depends on circumstances. If it is pure, then can help, such as sicknesses. That’s why we say we check whether it is **definite karma** or **indefinite karma**. If it is **indefinite karma**, puja will definitely cure, even cancer, or any kind of serious sicknesses – AIDS, if it is indefinite karma due to influence of environment, or you haven’t accumulate the complete cause, but due to the inner and outer pollution, circumstances make you to suffer, you do puja or chant mantra, it will be so powerful, it can works.

But if it is **definite karma**, you created the complete cause, you created so negative cause until so complete that you have to experience the complete result, then how much puja you do, it can’t help. How much puja you do, you accumulate merit in another way by doing virtue deed, but that doesn’t become the antidote for the problem or sicknesses to dispel it. That’s why we have to be

very careful, when we pray we have to be very sincere, we should know what we are praying.

In Nepal, there is one stupa called Wish Fulfilling Stupa – Boudath Stupa. In my life, whatever I can, I pray, and it happened. It happened to many people too. But if you think “since you are Wish Fulfilling Jewel, now I asked everything - whole world come to me. But it didn’t come.” It is because you cannot handle so you better don’t ask. No need whole world, even whole Nepal come to you, you cannot handle. So I just have to ask in limit in whatever I can handle. When I asked that, it comes. In my own capability, whatever prayer I makes, it comes, it happens.

2. Generating Bodhichitta

Generating Bodhichitta – ability to feel the suffering of beings in samsara and the wish to end this suffering for you and other beings. To do this you must have 2 aspirations:

1. To liberate all beings until they achieve the state of enlightenment
2. For that purpose I must achieve enlightenment.

You must wish to liberate all beings from the sufferings of samsara. May I achieve enlightenment in order to liberate all beings.

It is practicing true love without expecting return. If you practice Bodhichitta you will be like honey is to ants.

Some people are so worried they cannot get girlfriend or boyfriend but if you generate this true love you will have hundreds of girlfriends and hundreds of boyfriends.

Honey has a natural sweetness no matter how much you chase away the ants they will still come, even if there is water there and its so dangerous they will still try to come. From inside, very dedicated, full of respect, wishing the other party to have the greatest of happiness. Sometime its also your Karma, if in your pass life you always reject your girlfriends, you always fool around so now if you live a wonderful celibacy life (Laughter) but not necessary to become a monk, but more merits if you become a monk, so much merit, you will be surrounded by more friends and everybody is pure, universal love, very good. Happy! Sometime people get so worried they have no partner but you look at the other side those who have a partner has more suffering (laughter), more difficulty, more problem, more misunderstanding, more conflict and friction that its very tiring, one after one, one after one, so tiring there is no meaning, you think there is happiness but end up with so much suffering, than you have another one and you thought there is so much happiness and you end with suffering again, than again you think there is somebody else, but there is nobody else, your desire make you see there is so many others.

Every single type of life style has 100 reasons to be happy, whether you are married, not married, whether you are old, young. Every life style has so much reason for happiness, to be grateful for, so much meaning in life for that you have to practice dharma, if you do not practice Dharma than there is no meaning in life.

If you practice dharma you are taking care of the happiness of this lifetime as well as happiness in the next life. So whether you are single or you are married you have good karma, so why don't you appreciate what you have, if you are married never think you want to lead a celibacy life, want to become a monk or nun.

The mind that cherish others from the slightest suffering is compassion. When you are sick you are irritated but if you are to fall to the lower realm it would be unbearable therefore you should not create any negative Karma. We do not know how much negative karmas we have created in the pass and therefore we must have purification practices and the best practice is generating bodhichitta, better than Vajrasattva and Medicine Buddha practices.

Daily Practices – its purpose is to accumulate merits and purify negative karma. Taking Refuge and generating bodhichitta is also for the same purpose. For specific purification we can do prostration, practice Vajrasattva, or fasting retreat such as Nyunay.

3. Prostration

It is to purify or clean the Inner and Outer dirt so to speak or our negative karmas.

Outer dirt or outer negative karmas, this include sickness, negative environment, caused by the collective (**karma**) which result in polluted element such as wind, water, fire.

Inner dirt or inner negative karmas are created by the individual and are caused by the defilement of ignorant, hatred, anger and the grasping mind.

When you do prostration the inner and outer dirt are purified or cleansed.

After your mind is clean it is like a clean and pure container which can hold the pure energy from the environment e.g. trees, rocks, element, everything has energy. We can also extract energy from :

Physical Prostration by making certain physical gesture.

Verbal Prostration by reciting holy mantras and praises or prayers.

Mental Prostration by having devotion and respect in your heart and mind.

There are 6 types of prostration under physical prostration.

1. Long prostration which is the most extensive.
2. Short prostration or bending prostration.
3. Prostration in sitting posture.
4. Prostration in standing posture.
5. By putting both your palms on any of this position, forehead, throat, or heart.
6. By using one hand only, lifting the palm up, and bowing.

Normally we will start our prostration by putting our palm together on the crown of our head, our forehead, throat and heart.

Benefits of these Hands Gestures.

1. Palms together on the crown – accumulate the merit to obtain Buddha’s crown.
2. Palms together at the forehead – accumulate the merits to obtain Buddha’s holy body.
3. Palms together at the throat- accumulate the merits to obtain Buddha’s holy speech.
4. Palms together at the heart – accumulate the merits to obtain Buddha’s holy mind.

When you put your palms together you should tuck your thumbs to signify the offering of jewels because you don’t normally show your respect empty handed. If you look at the compassionate Buddha you will see that he carries something in his hand.

During long and short prostration it is important at one point for the 5 limbs, forehead, 2 palm, 2 knees to touch the ground.

During meditation or prayers if you are inspired by the qualities of the Buddha you may show it by using prostration no. 6 i.e. lifting one hand. Elderly person can use this form of prostration, it can be done easily, an easy way to accumulate merit and purify negative karmas.

If you do it with devotion and respect you will receive lots of blessings. The Benefit is equal to the number of atoms covered by our body. The negative karmas you purify will be equal to the number of atoms covered by your body during prostrate. You will also receive great wealth and become wheel turning King (the great beings that help the spread of Dharma)

Any Mantras, or chanting of holy names or holy words are also considered a prostration, after knowing this I hope it will inspire many people. So even by saying the words such as I prostrate to the Buddha of Lapis Lazuli is also considered a prostration.

There is a Mantra, and by chanting this mantra and praise it has the power to multiply the number of prostrations you do. The Mantra is :

OM NAMO MANJUSHRIYE NAMAH SUSHRIYE NAMA UTTAMA
SHIRYE SVAHA

Translation

(Om Homage to the glorious lovely one; homage to the very glorious; homage to the most glorious SVAHA)

4. Sadhana Practices

Sadhana – whatever is your daily practice is called Sadhana.

During Chenrezig Sadhana for example - you can chant Om Mani PadMe hum , generating refuge and compassion and this constitute your Sadhana.

So Sadhana are steps in your practice.

The complete lesson on Sadhana will be in lesson 3 on the 31st October.

5. Mandala Offering

Mandala Offering uses the body, speech and mind to create extensive merits and the benefit is not less than doing the Dzambalas practice to enhance your wealth. Offerings Mandala by using the hand mudra is not as effective as using the Mandala set. Using the base from the Mandala set, after it is blessed, makes it possible to offer generosity to the 10 directions Buddhas and to all living beings, the whole universe .Buddha will transform these offerings to nectar and enjoy it with their 5 senses. You create huge merits!

Apart from enhancing your wealth offering Mandala can improve your spiritual realization. It has been proven by many great **Mahasiddha** that they need extensive merits generated by Mandala offerings in order to obtain realization.

When offering Mandala with your hand mudra offer mala or a flower or any offerings at the palm of your hands. The centre of your hands represent Mount Meru and the 4 corners of the hands represent the 4 continent.

Recite the following verses when offering Mandala:

This ground. Anointed with perfume, strewn with flowers,

Sa zhi po kyi jug shing me tog tram

Adorned with Mount Meru, four continent, the sun and the moon.

Ri rab ling zhi nyi da gyan pa di

I imagine this as a Buddha-field and offer it.

Sang gya zhing du mig te ul wa yi

May all living beings enjoy this pure land!

Dro un nam dag zhing la cho par shog

Then dedicate with the purpose of offering the Mnadal, during certain pujas such as the Tara puja we may include dedication for the long life of our Guru or to purify our body speech and mind

6. Dedication

You must dedicate to bodhichitta so that whatever practice you do become infinite, become very vast, very profound and it become the Mahayanic Practice, the Bodhisattva Practice, become Buddha's Practice and motivate by bodhichitta

.

You can start your dedication by saying that whatever merits accumulated directly or indirectly by all the merits of all the past Buddha, Bodhisattvas, Venerable or beings, they may be ordinary beings but they constantly create lots of merits, and the merits of those who only occasionally create merits and by every single virtue of the body, speech and mind, may they be the complete cause for the liberation of the entire numberless beings full enlightenment. It is important to stress the "complete cause" because only "complete cause" can create complete result. So whenever you make an offering of a candle or a single flower, a Mandala, a loving compassion in your heart, you may dedicate the merits to bodhichitta .

Therefore you should start your day with Refuge and bodhichitta motivation and end you day with bodhichitta dedication so that each day of your life become meaningful.

Thank you very much for coming and you should rejoice that you are here tonight and you have spend many hours learning about dharma. When you think of the merits you have created you should feel so happy and thinking about it should make you happier, for that you will create more merits and you should feel happier still. For this reason many great practitioners look very peaceful and contented because they are rejoicing all the time.

Prayers of Dedication

Due to the merits of these virtuous actions
Ge wa di yi nyur du dag
May I quickly attain the state of a guru-buddha
La ma sang gya drub gyur na
And lead all living beings, without exception,
Dro wa chig kyang ma lu pa
Into that enlightened state.
De yi sa la go par shog

May the supreme jewel bodhichitta
Jang chuhub sem chhog rin po che
That has not arisen, arise and grow;
Ma kye pa nam kye gyur chig
And may that which has arisen not diminish
Kye wa nyam pa me pa yang
But increase more and more.
Gong na gong du phel war shog

Just as the brave Manjushri, and Samantabhadra too,
Jam Pal pa wo ji tar khyen pa dang
Realized things as they are,
Kun tu zang po de yang de zhin te
Also I dedicate all these merits in the best way,
De dag kun gyi je dag lob chhir
That I may follow their perfect example.
Ge wa di dag tham cha rab tu ngo

I dedicate all these roots of virtue
Du sum sheg pai gyal wa tham cha kyi
With the dedication praised as the best
Ngo wa gang la chhog tu ngag pa de
By the victorious ones thus-gone of the three times,
Dag gi ge wai tsa wa di kun kyang
So that I might perform the noble Bodhisattvas' deeds.
Zang po cho chhir rab yu ngo war gyi