



Do Ngak Kunphen Ling
Tibetan Buddhist Center
for Universal Peace

Geshe Dhargye's Talk with the First Church of Christ Congregational of Redding, CT on April 3, 2011

My dear friends, Reverend Dr. Dean Ahlberg and Ms. Dinowitz invited me to talk about Buddhist practice. We thank you very much to have this opportunity and time to talk to you all. As you may know I am Geshe Dhargey, and I am a resident teacher at DNKL, which means Tibetan Buddhist Center for Universal Peace, here in Redding on Putnam Park Road.

My lama, Rinpoche Lobsang Jampa, would like to be here but he has a teaching at our center today. Rinpoche would like me to say that he is very happy that you've invited us to come here to speak with you today.

It's very good to communicate at this kind of event, with many different types of religion and people, because we divide many things in

this world, like religions, countries, customs, making things mine and yours, and we forget that we are the same in our basic humanity. We have the same emotions, we wish the same for harmony and peace, these things are the same; so it's good to share our ideas with each other of how to make peace in this world, to have happiness and joy in peoples' lives.

I'm going to talk about seven questions that were suggested to me that you may find helpful. I'll briefly give some answers to each question.

1 "What are the basic affirmations of the Buddhist faith tradition?"

The object of Buddhist faith is refuge in the Three Jewels. One jewel is Buddha; Buddha shows us which way of living is good and which is wrong. The Buddha jewel in its fullest meaning is not an individual person; rather, the Buddha jewel means actual realizations and qualities. Another jewel is Dharma; dharma is the main refuge and protection for us. Dharma refers to the Buddha's teaching, but mainly dharma is protection, path and cessation. The Four Noble Truths are the main dharma. The first two of the Four Nobles Truths are basically suffering and the cause of suffering. The other two Noble truths are basically the cessations of suffering and the antidotes to suffering. The third Jewel is

the Sangha. The Sangha refers ultimately to those people who see reality directly, and refers conventionally to our companions who are able to correctly show us how to do right practice, and traditionally refers to four monks with vows.

The subject of faith is the perceiving mind, and we usually count four different faiths. The first three are longing faith, sincere faith, and faith based on conviction; these three are generally referring to the one capacity of person who immediately trusts and believes. The fourth faith is irreversible faith, and is held by another capacity person who believes after seeing that having faith is reasonable. And we must follow this last irreversible type of faith, it is very important. Sometimes we call this 'faith with the companion of wisdom.'

2 “What differentiates Tibetan Buddhism from other Buddhist expressions?”

The main expressions of Buddhism are Zen, Mahayana, and Theravadists. Tibetan Buddhist is Mahayana, which lineage comes through the Indian Nalanda traditions.

I am not qualified to talk about Zen Buddhist practice. Theravadists and Mahayana Buddhist basic practices are the same, like the Four Noble Truths and the four seals. The four Noble Truths and the four seals contain most of Buddhist doctrine and take time to explain all of them.

The four seals are known as: 1. all products are impermanent; 2. all contaminated things are miserable; 3. all phenomena are empty and selfless; and 4. nirvana is peace.

But Mahayana and Theravada are different based mostly on motivations. The Theravada motivation is achieving nirvana, which means completely eliminating all suffering. The Mahayana motivation is both completely eliminating all suffering as well as achieving enlightenment mind for the benefit of other beings. Mahayana enlightenment mind is based on cherishing others with compassion and loving-kindness.

3 “How do you define ‘universal peace’?”

I think I define universal peace the same as you. Usually the definition of universal peace is to benefit each other, have no fighting, and also not have too many divisions among people, because that brings more fighting now. These days many people try to make universal peace in many different ways. Some think the UN (United Nations) pushes nations to stop fighting and to stop making nuclear weapons. Some people think this will help peace. European nations, Asian nations, the United States- many groups are trying to make good relations with each other. Some people think big countries make divisions. Some people

say when all people have good economic conditions and education there will be peace. There is diversity of opinion.

Also especially here, in Tibetan Buddhism, universal peace means we are talking more on the mind, and mental peace. How do we solve the fighting, and how do we benefit each other? It starts with subduing our own mind; there is not another cause of fighting or of benefitting other people, other than our own mind. Therefore, we start from our own mind, and then we can have 2 people, then 3 people, then expanding outward to many more people subduing their own minds; that's universal peace. We cannot create universal peace in one day, all at the same time. We can create universal peace by starting with one single being.

Also, I think parents and teachers have a big responsibility to teach their children how to subdue their negative emotions, and to teach them compassion and loving-kindness. But even if the parents taught their children, still there would be things in the environment that are bad that would need to change.

Similarly, people working in the parts of the culture relating to business, arts and science could change their motivations and this may create more peace. For example, some movies show how to take revenge and gambling, and this influences young people to just follow the movie, because they don't think independently about whether the movie is right or wrong.

So we try to start from one single being, starting firstly with ourselves, and subduing our own negative emotions, then sharing with others how to subdue negative emotions. Learning this technique of subduing negative emotions is best taught to young minds; it gets harder as we get older. Also they get older.

4 “Share with us your spiritual practices.”

When I was looking at First Church of Christ Congregational websites, I found one in Glastonbury with the very nice, good words which are ‘love, joy, peace, kindness, faithfulness, generosity, patience, self-control, and gentleness.’ They are teaching this on April 3rd. Seems like we don’t know exactly that they are teaching these ideas today, but it’s showing us that really we are all working together to create peace in this world.

These ideas of love, joy, peace, kindness, faithfulness, generosity, patience, self-control, and gentleness are our practice also, but I think there are different explanations on how to accomplish these goals in our faith tradition, and we also talk about ‘awakened mind.’ Our faith uses both practice of virtues and meditations. For example, we try to practice the virtues of abandoning acts of harming others and not using harsh words. An example of meditation would be analytical meditations on patience. One analytical meditation on patience might be exploring the ideas that anger is the enemy of patience, the harms to others from

anger, that patience is the antidote (or cure) for anger, and the benefits of patience. This type of analytical meditation is very important to re-habituate our minds away from anger and towards more patience in our real daily lives, after meditation is over.

Many people are thinking that Buddhist meditation and practice is for easing and overcoming stress. Buddhist practice does lessen our stress, but more importantly our spiritual practice uses virtue practice and analytical meditation as ways to have self-control throughout our day, so we can be peaceful, joyful, generous, and loving towards others, no matter what happens. The ultimate purpose of practicing Dharma is to achieve Buddhahood.

5 & 6 “What is the mission of your retreat center in Redding?” and “How does it contribute to peace in our hearts and world?”

Our mission is to help others in the ways I described above. We can create universal peace by starting with one single being, by learning to subdue negative emotions and actions through loving kindness and compassion meditation and also through virtue practice. We focus more on how to solve problems in people’s lives; we’re not focused so much

on religious rituals and traditions if they are not useful to solving people's problems.

We also have helped build a dormitory for poor monks in Sera, South India. We have held other events to pray and raise funds for the people of Haiti and the earthquake victims in Tibet and Japan, and we will continue to hold these prayers and fundraising efforts as often as we can.

7 “Who, typically, are the folks who avail themselves of the retreat center?”

All different kinds of people come to our center. We are open to everyone, of all faith traditions, and people with no real religious background at all. People come who are non-Buddhist, some people come who have already studied Buddhism, and some people come who are very new to Buddhism.

Many of our regular members come from the local areas of Redding, Bethel, Brookfield, Danbury and other surrounding towns in Connecticut. Other students occasionally come from New York and New Jersey. We've also begun a teaching relationship with Western Connecticut and some of their university students.

Our center offers weekly ongoing classes and one-time special classes. Retreats for in-depth deep spiritual reflection and learning are offered a few a times a year for individual students and groups of students who have studied a certain topic.

(Please see our online website for more details, www.dnkldharma.org).