

Neverending Lamp of Liberation: A Modern Lam Rim
July 8, 2025 Review

Listening to Dharma Teachings:

Rinpoche congratulated us for listening to 9 sessions of Lam Rim teachings.

He said, to listen to the Dharma, we need patience and enthusiasm.

Listening to Lam Rim is not like getting a blessing and then we are done. Lam Rim is ongoing.

When we forget things that we've learned, it means we didn't know it.

If we learn how to swim and then forget how to swim, we no longer can say that we know how to swim.

If we know something and then forget it, it's the same as not knowing.

Listening to the teachings again and again reminds us of what we've learned in the past, and makes the teachings handy in our practice.

Thus far, we've covered the small capacity practice here.

The Small capacity practice is learning the foundation, and is something we can share with more people.

The Greater capacity can be shared with fewer people.

Question and Answer:

Q: We can observe new stars and planets through a telescope. Some dying out while some are being newly created. How does that fit in my practice, thinking of life, birth and death?

A: When we look at the stars, we are seeing some stars that are already dead, and we know they aren't there even though we see them.

If we focus on our birth and our life we are aware that death is coming. We can't skip death after we are born.

We don't have a clear explanation of time.

We see a star that is already dead. But we see it and experience it.

Similarly we are born, and at that moment we are seeing what will happen later.

Everything is not there the way we think. Everything is illusional. We think things are permanent but they aren't.

We see some people as bad, and they are not as bad as we think. And we see some people as being like a bodhisattva, but they aren't.

Q: Question about the word Practice. How do you define Dharma Practice? Lam Rim is Handy in our practice, but what's not Dharma Practice?

What is Dharma Practice and what is not Dharma Practice?

A: Practice is taking what we've learned from Dharma books and using it in our daily life. For example, we read, learn and meditate on patience and then use patience when we need to.

We study Lam Rim where it talks about impermanence, and how we shouldn't attach to anything. Then we lose something in our life and forget the practice. Then we suffer because

the practice is not handy for us. That is a general problem among practitioners. We do practice and get initiations but when we need these things, there are obstructions or negative karma that can block us from seeing and using our practice.

Example is someone in our life giving us a hard time. We have two choices. we can have compassion, or we can get angry.

Usually if someone is irritating us, it's because they're unhappy. Instead of getting upset, we can be compassionate, or we can think that now is the best time to use patience.

We use whatever crosses our mind at the moment, and it's usually anger and stress.

If we have the practice handy, and have less obstruction and negativity in our mind, we will probably get compassion over anger.

Handy means we are able to access and use the practice when we need to.

Q: What's the bottom line on renunciation?

A: When we see our own suffering, that should help us to develop renunciation.

When we see other people's suffering it should help us to develop compassion.

We usually suffer because our desires and wishes aren't being fulfilled.

We want to do things like develop renunciation, but can't because of our laziness, lack of focus and sometimes being distracted by our desire.

Our previous life's karma can also have an effect on our negative emotions.

Renunciation is thinking, I will not obey those negative emotions, I will challenge those negative emotions.

There are great meditators living and practicing in caves that appear to have perfect renunciation, but many are not happy because they are still holding negative minds.

Q: Follow-up on renunciation, are we objectifying ourselves when repelling our negative mind?

A: Rinpoche gave brilliant definitions of subject and object, and then stated,

"Don't think that negative mind is you".

Q: The Dalai Lama says that he studies a Nagarjuna text everyday. Should I spend more time studying compassion or wisdom in order to rid my ego grasping and self cherishing?

A: Reading one or two verses of a text everyday can improve our lives so much. Reading two or three verses of a great text a day is better than reading a whole book all at once.

We talk about compassion a lot. The real compassion comes from wisdom. The more wisdom we have will make our compassion profound, perfect and unshakeable.

Renunciation will help us improve our compassion.

Rinpoche told us that when it comes to asking questions, every question is worthy.

He said whenever someone asks a question, he always feels the question is good enough, and that he respects all questions.

Demigod and God Realm:

Rinpoche reminded us that we talked about the problems of human beings last time.

Now we look at heavenly beings.

In the 400 stanzas of Aryadewa says who has the most suffering of the mind?

Some people have everything and are not happy and some people have nothing and have to work hard but are very happy.

Heavenly beings have a lot of mental sufferings.

Heaven is similar to hell because of the lack of opportunity to accumulate merit, plus all good merit is exhausted.

When we think about the 6 realms, we have the two heavenly realms. Demigod realm and the god realm.

In the demigod realm, they are constantly jealous of the beings in the god realm.

This jealousy causes them to always try to compete with god realm beings. It's like a fox trying to fight a cheetah.

Not being able to defeat the gods causes the demigods great suffering.

When it's time for heavenly beings to die, the garland of flowers around their necks start to die. Their clothes which never get dusty gather dust, and their bodies start to sweat and their eyes blink.

Because of their Clairvoyance, they can see what their next life will be. Because they've exhausted their good karma, their next life will be a lower realm birth.

Suffering of Cyclic Existence:

The suffering that beings in all 6 realms experience is the suffering of cyclic existence.

We die without control and are born where our karma throws us.

The advice for lower capacity and greater capacity people is to practice virtue.

According to Dharma, the best realm is the human realm because of the opportunity to practice patience, compassion, generosity and develop spiritually.

Everyone in the human realm has the chance to practice Dharma and develop spiritually, whereas in the heaven realm the opportunity is limited.

Many people pray to be born in a pure land. Which is a specific heaven. We can pray for it, but not many people can get there.

Don't Wait to Practice Dharma:

It's a big mistake to think Dharma is something useful only at the time of death. This is ignorance.

With that mind one will wait until old age to practice Dharma, even though old age may not come.

In the teachings it says the perfect life you want depends on the level of your Dharma practice. If you have a Dharma practice, going to bed is different from people who don't. We go to bed thinking more than just about our daily life.

We think what kind of non virtue can I purify. What can I improve from this day.

If we understand Dharma practice, we understand other people's problems.

If bad things happen in our lives we can justify and talk to ourselves to feel better.

If we suffer, we can use our Dharma practice to make us feel better.

"Don't worry, you are still alive". "You have Dharma, you have a good mind".

When we are suffering, think that we are taking an ocean of suffering from other beings. Think about all of the suffering people in the world. We are only one person, when there are so many other people suffering.

If we have nothing, we don't have to cry or feel bad if we understand Dharma.

When we are happy. So happy that we don't know what to do, we shouldn't celebrate so much. Dedicate our happiness and virtue for all others. "I wish all beings could have the happiness and virtue I'm experiencing".

That way, our Dharma is helping us celebrate.

This is how we enjoy our lives with Dharma.

Bodhisattva's way of life, Chapter 8 verse 32 says:

"We are born alone and we die alone". At the time of death, you cannot give your virtue to others and you cannot take virtue from another person.

Your enemy cannot hurt you and your friend cannot help you.

Rejoice what we have done. Pay attention to what we've meditated.

When negativities are coming, practice patience.

Rinpoche said that people ask him to pray for people that are dying.

If the people aren't familiar with the Dharma or don't have a practice, there isn't much he can do.

His Advice:

Don't think about the past, think about your future life.

Don't worry so much about what you've done in this life.

Do purification.

Don't worry about where your house and possessions will go.

The time of death is not the time to worry about your physical things.

Focus on virtuous things.

The people that know Dharma, know what to do.

These people die happily.