

Live Teaching by Khen Rinpoche Kalsang Nyima
'The importance and ways of taming our mind (1)'
7:30 p.m., 1 September 2020
English transcript

Dear Dharma brothers and sisters,

Our Venerable Khen Rinpoche Kalsang Nyima gave a live teaching on 'The importance and ways of taming our mind (1)' at the Facebook page of 'Wake Up with Dharma' at 7.30 p.m. on 1 September 2020. The Tibetan teaching was translated into Cantonese by Professor Lozang Hau. The English translation of the Chinese transcript of this online teaching is now available for you to read and share. Thank you.

The importance and ways of taming our mind (1)

First, Khen Rinpoche would like to greet each Dharma friend who is listening to this teaching through the Internet with 'Trashi Deleg!'

Last week, Khen Rinpoche talked about taming our mind as the key for us to have happiness. Since taming our mind is so important, how should we do that? Khen Rinpoche is going to explain this subject today.

There is a need of talking about how the mind works before explaining how to tame our mind.

The mind can be categorized in many ways. One way is to compare the mind with a king and the mental factors [with the king's ministers]. If we discuss the mind from a broader perspective, then we can say that our visual consciousness differentiates visual objects together with our visual faculty. Our auditory consciousness perceives external sounds with the help of our auditory faculty. The olfactory consciousness together with the olfactory faculty senses smells. Our gustatory consciousness works together with our gustatory faculty to sense and feel tastes. The bodily consciousness and our body sense faculty perceive and feel tactile sensations. Lastly, it is our mental consciousness that perceives mental objects with the help of the mental faculty. In short, our main mind includes the visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, bodily, and the mental consciousnesses.

Awareness is the most important factor when we talk about the mind. Awareness can be categorized as feelings, perceptions, and mental formations, etc. with many different categories. As there are different ways of categorizing and defining the

mind, it would become a headache to a beginner and so we are not going to discuss them in detail.

In short, it is our mind that can recall what we did in the past. It is our mind that can do what we need to perform and plan. It is our mind that can sense the pain, happiness, good and bad and know about these feelings. Our mind has the power to understand how the situation is. It is a wisdom that can know and become aware.

The nature of our mind is calm, quiet, luminous, empty, and blissful. In short, the nature of our mind is perfect and is as quiet, peaceful, pleasing, and pure as the ocean. Sometimes, when the wind blows, some waves would appear on the surface of the sea. Our nature of mind is like this analogy. It is quiet, peaceful, and clear. But due to our discursive or delusive thoughts, our mind becomes like the ocean that is stirred up by small waves on its surface.

Although the nature of our mind is quiet, peaceful, empty, and blissful, we fail to maintain that state. We fail to rest in it because we cling to the differences between ourselves and others. These tiny discursive thoughts make us feel lost in phenomena. Thus, our mind becomes agitated like the sea that is stirred up by big waves. It is like some ripples appearing on the surface of the sea due to some wind. As the wind becomes stronger, the waves turn bigger. The sea surface is no longer peaceful, and it becomes choppy.

Similarly, as discursive thoughts of our mind grow stronger, we become attached to myself, my body, my family, my wealth, and my reputation. Our desire towards these persons, objects and notions has become so strong. On the other side, we give rise to anger towards others, people who we dislike or our enemies. Thus, our mind has become like a choppy sea with the waves crashing each other. That is why when our discursive thoughts, desire and anger become stronger, our mind can never stay calm, be happy, and peaceful. Our mind becomes confused.

As the sea becomes rough due to strong wind, these huge waves become very strong. They crash and may even turn into a typhoon causing ships in the ocean to sink and killing people. That would also damage the houses and trees next to the ocean. Thus, the ocean that was once very pleasant, beautiful, and attractive becomes like a demon at that time. It causes damage everywhere and makes people feel utterly horrible.

As our discursive thoughts of attachment, desire and anger and so forth become stronger, we become angry towards enemies who we do not find pleasant, get angry towards people whose ways of working we feel dissatisfied with, or towards those whose actions we feel discontent with. Because of these reasons, we fight with these

people, may even kill or harm them, or would do something very terrible, such as damaging their things and homes.

That is why being able to realize the nature of our mind is very important. Our mind can watch its own nature, which is called co-emergent awareness. However, we do not understand this truth.

The mind has accumulated different types of habits. Certain phenomena would arise when some causes and conditions are met. But we do not know that these phenomena are our own projections. They are the projections of our mind, yet, due to our delusion, we think that all these phenomena come from elsewhere.

For example, a lady dreams of giving birth to a son. She feels very happy and generates love. Then she dreams that this son passes away. When she thinks of his death, she feels so sad that she cries. In fact, these appearances are the projections of the lady's mind. She has never given birth to any child, nor has any child passed away in reality.

Regarding any happy or painful appearances, we do not know that they are like dreams. All dreams are appearances of our mind. We become attached to them, thinking that they are real. Therefore, we experience great suffering or happiness.

We have accumulated different habits during countless of lives since beginningless time. When these habits meet the right causes and conditions, they become activated and manifest as different appearances. But we do not know that these phenomena are the projections of our own habitual mental tendencies.

We do not know the nature of the mind. We do not understand the secret of the mind. Therefore, we have experienced different kinds of suffering and happiness, we currently experience different pains and joys, and we will continue to feel attached to these feelings. Therefore, we develop new habits [that are stored] in our store consciousness (alaya). Although our past habits got activated and have generated the various kinds of phenomena, we continue to develop new habits which again are stored in the alaya. As such, we will continue to remain deluded and cannot be liberated from delusion.

If we know and understand the nature of our mind, can recognize our primordial nature, and abide in it, then we will be able to pacify the tiny movements of these discursive thoughts. If the tiny movements of these discursive thoughts are gone, then we will no longer have desire, attachment, and hatred. And when desire, attachment and hatred are gone, we will no longer have various difficulties, pain and happenings that we do not wish to face.

We always talk about taming our mind. It means that we need to realize the nature of the mind and be able to abide in it. That is the way or essence of taming the mind. It is very difficult for beginners to understand and practice such refined (subtle) essence of the Dharma. Regarding the coarse mind or discursive thoughts that we experience in our daily life, pride and anger are examples.

First, it is very important to understand how dangerous anger is for others and yourself. Many people do not understand the real situation and think anger brings power. They think anger empowers them to destroy their enemies and thus understand anger to be meritorious.

So how can we recognize the faults of anger?

As ordinary human beings, none of us has never gotten angry, or faced the afflictions (kleshas) of hatred and anger. When we first generated anger and hatred, we felt like being burnt in the fire without any calmness, peace, and happiness. When our anger and hatred got more serious, our face looked like that of a ghost. Other people dared not to look at us, thinking we were utterly terrible. At that time, we said something bad which destroyed the peace and happiness in others' minds.

Some people fight with others or even kill each other after getting very angry. Many people lost their lives because of anger and hatred. Some people face the death penalty in some countries after killing people due to anger and hatred. Some countries sent these people to jail for the rest of their lives. Some people got separated from their family members after becoming angry at each other, leading to fights and arguments within the family. Some couples separated. Some people fought with their colleagues or supervisors and lost their jobs because of being angry at work. They faced a lot of difficulties and suffering.

Thus, when we get angry, we not only destroy our own peace and happiness, but also destroy the peace and happiness of everyone who is related to us.

When we get angry, we cannot eat and sleep well and the wind and channels of our bodies become disturbed. That greatly affects our health leading to high blood pressure and other sicknesses. Our physical energy becomes consumed. Some scientists found in their research that saliva of an angry person can kill a snake. It is because when someone becomes angry, some toxics are generated within his body.

According to some sutras, Lord Buddha taught that if we generate very strong anger, all virtues that we accumulated through the practice of generosity and making offerings over a thousand or a hundred eons (kalpas), can be destroyed. It is as if papers become burnt and destroyed in a strong fire. Moreover, the bad karma of our anger will lead to our rebirth in hell in the next life.

If we are reborn in the hell, it is difficult to count (the time that we will spend there) based on the lifespan of the human realm. One may need to suffer in the hell for more than billions of years. The cause that leads to our rebirth in the hell is anger. So, when we are born in the hell or a place called Samjīva (the reviving hell), living beings there will hate each other, take each other as enemies and even kill each other. But these living beings will not die. They will kill each other over and over again, reviving after each time. The same cycle and suffering repeats itself. If a person is not reborn in hell but is reborn as a human being, his or her life will be short, such as passing away when one is still a baby. In brief, that person's life will be short with many diseases.

When there are seeds of anger in our mind, it means that our mind is familiar with anger and that we have built this as a habit. Even when we are reborn as human beings, we will become very angry all the time or will lose our temper due to small issues.

Nowadays, many people are used to dislike each other and discuss others' mistakes non-stop. When someone says something bad against us, we will turn angry. When someone does not respect us, or is impolite to us, then we will become angry. If someone takes away some money, we will get agitated. In short, we get very angry because of some small issues.

When others say something to us, their talks, in fact, are just some sounds. These sounds will not make us sick or impact us in any way. But if we become angry, then we will not only lose our peace and happiness, but also create the causes for being reborn in the hell. It will destroy all our virtues that we have accumulated.

If we - despite the fact that people whom we dislike, such as our enemies, do not kill us or harm us in any way - nevertheless become angry with them, it is due to our anger that we will fall into the hell, where we have to face fighting and killing, and become cut into small pieces. Our body will be burnt in the lava or torn apart due to the coldness in the glacier of the cold hell. As anger is so dangerous, we therefore need to strive to manage our mind and anger well.

Because anger is very dangerous and can cause great harm to our and others' existing and future lives, Lord Buddha said that among all the types of bad karma, nothing is more serious than anger.

Given anger is so dangerous, are there any means to eradicate it? In this context, Lord Buddha taught the practice of forbearance.

How should we practice forbearance?

Some people think that the practice of forbearance means to suppress one's suffering. That is to say that when one becomes angry, one should force the emotion to stay in one's mind and not show it to others. Some people understand forbearance in this manner.

But actually, this is not what forbearance means.

So, what is forbearance? How should we practice it?

Forbearance means that we need to understand the drawbacks and mistakes of being angry. We should be aware of the fact that anger causes us many problems regardless of time and place. It is like seeing a poisonous snake, while being aware that we might die after being bitten by it. So, when we see a poisonous snake, we will move away from it immediately and are not willing to spend any moment near it. Thus, when we understand the drawbacks and dangers of anger, we will stop anger naturally and easily. This can be compared to being pleased to see a stick with which we can send a snake away immediately once we encounter it. We will not feel scared about picking up the stick. Similarly, when we know how dangerous anger is, we can stay away from it by means of learning and practicing forbearance. When we understand this truth, we will be pleased with forbearance and become interested in learning and practicing it.

How can we practice forbearance? Lord Buddha has taught many methods.

In this life, sometimes good things happen, we meet good friends, we are happy, and things are going perfectly well. All these good things come from the good karma that we practiced in our past and existing lives.

Similarly, we sometimes face pain, meet bad friends, have friends becoming enemies, get sick, lose our job, work does not go well, and we are being criticized or despised by others. What gives rise to these painful and difficult situations? It is because of the ripening of the fruits of the bad karma that we did in the past or existing lives.

If we understand the details of the law of karma well, we will not think of others as bad people, enemies, dislike others, or think of destroying them.

Why do we meet bad people? Why do we come across bad things done by others? It is not just the mistakes of others. It is due to the bad karma that we have accumulated in the past. We need to bear the bad karma that we have committed. If we become angry at others, it is unreasonable.

There are other ways to practice forbearance. For example, I just explained about the big mistakes of being angry. When we think that we have generated anger towards others in the past which caused them to get angry at us, we would only plant further habits of anger in our store consciousness (alaya) if we become angry at others once more in return. If we accumulate this negative karma, it will lead to our own rebirth in the hell. In fact, our enemies can never drag us into the hell. But anger can do so. When we think about the downfalls of anger, we will recognize that our anger is more dangerous than our enemies. If we think in this way, we will be able to practice forbearance and our anger will dissipate.

Anger is such a great wrongdoing. But on the contrary, forbearance has a lot of merits. Lord Buddha said that compared to the accumulation of virtues when we feel happy and peaceful at ordinary times during many years, no other practices create more merits than practicing forbearance and not getting angry when facing trouble and difficult times.

For example, we usually need to work hard for many months in order to earn our salaries. However, if we can do a job that allows us to receive the equivalent amount just by working for one night, then we will work tirelessly without sleep during the night in order to finish it. It is because it is very worthwhile to only work for a night to get a much higher pay that we usually would get only after several months.

Like in this analogy, virtues, and merits that we accumulate during our usual practice are incomparable to the virtues and merits we accumulate when we practice forbearance during difficult times. When we understand this, we will be able to take our enemies and suffering as our kind masters. We will see them as friends in connection with our forbearance practice and will be pleased to accept these enemies and sufferings.

Another way of practicing forbearance is to contemplate others' situations.

For example, we usually love and take care of our dear ones and our parents. Yet, when we become angry or affected by the afflictions (kleshas), we may also lose temper regarding our dear ones or parents and scold them. However, when our anger is gone, we ask ourselves what happened to us, why we became so infuriated and treated the other in this way, feeling ashamed. We often face such situations in our lives.

In similar situations, others will harm us involuntarily when they are overpowered by afflictions (kleshas) which they have been habituated to since beginningless time. It is like any time when wind blows strongly and blows papers here and there. The papers do not have any control over themselves at all. Similarly, enemies are being

controlled by their afflictions (kleshas), which cause them to criticize us or do something terribly bad against us.

Those who ill-treat us also wish to be happy and do not want to suffer. Yet, since we all have been habituated to the afflictions (kleshas), such as attachment, the self-cherishing attitude jealousy and so forth, people harm others like mad men. If we can think in this way, we will be able to practice forbearance naturally and generate compassion towards those who harm us.

For example, if one day someone attacks us and hits us on our head in the street, we will become very angry at that moment. However, if others tell you that the person who attacked us is a mad man, one would no longer be able to remain angry. Similarly, others who hurt us are like mad men.

Another way to engage in the practice of forbearance is to contemplate that all our enemies were our parents and relatives in our past lives, i.e., during the time that we have been revolving around samsara since beginningless time. Yet, when they were our parents and relatives in the past and we got into arguments and fights with them, a karmic debt was left. Thus, they return in the form of enemies in this life. If we can think that they have all been our parents and relatives at some point in time, it will be easier for anger to disappear naturally.

Everything that has happened to us since our birth until now has disappeared and become only a memory. Similarly, bad things that our enemies did to us only occurred for a few minutes or hours. Then the matter passed and disappeared like a dream. In fact, all phenomena are like dreams and illusions. If we can contemplate in this manner, it will help us to practice forbearance.

Earlier, we talked about the visual forms that we can see and the sounds that we can hear and so forth. All these appearances arise due to our habitual tendencies, i.e., the karma that we have created. Thus, it is due to our habitual tendencies that appearances in our mind arise and according to which we regard someone as our enemy or a family member etc. If we understand this, we will not get angry.

To understand that the nature of all phenomena is emptiness and to meditate on it accordingly, is the most auspicious way to practice forbearance.

Thus, it is important for us to understand the drawbacks of getting angry. Anger will bring damages to ourselves and others. Anger is our biggest enemy that will send us to hell. If we understand this, it will become easy for us to cut off anger and is very beneficial for our practice of forbearance.

In short, if we understand the qualities and the nature of our mind, taming our mind will become easier.

Today we mentioned some examples mainly to illustrate the problems of anger and learning the practice of forbearance.

If we ourselves wish to be happy and at peace, then we need to cut off anger. The best way to eradicate our anger is to learn and practice forbearance. There are different ways to do so.

If we do not wish to be reborn in the hell, then we need to eradicate our anger and learn to practice forbearance.

If we do not wish to lose or waste the virtues of this and future lives, then we need to cut off our anger.

Having a nice body and appearance in this life is due to the practice of forbearance in past lives. Thus, if we wish to have a nice-looking body, a beautiful face and so forth again in future lives, then we need to continue to practice forbearance.

If we wish to accumulate vast merits within a short period of time, then we need to practice forbearance.

So, this is the end of Khen Rinpoche's teaching for this evening.

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