

**Live Teaching by Khen Rinpoche Kalsang Nyima**  
**‘The importance and ways of taming our mind (3)’**  
**7:30 p.m., 22 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 (3)’ at the Facebook page of ‘Wake Up with Dharma’ at 7.30 p.m. on 22 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 reading, learning, and sharing. Thank you.

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**The importance and ways of taming the mind (3)**

Firstly, Khen Rinpoche would like to greet all the Dharma friends, brothers, and sisters who are listening to the teaching online and here with ‘Trashi Deleg!’

Last time, Khen Rinpoche talked about the ways of taming our mind.

The nature of our mind is primordially pure without any defilements. If we were able to recognize this pure, stainless nature and remain in it stably, we would then be able to realize Buddhahood. [This] The practice has such an amazing quality.

If we cannot recognize and practice the truth, then we become attached to [our] ego and everything as truly existent. In short, we will be led by [our] ego and everything as truly existent and have to bear countless suffering in boundless samsara. This will become very dangerous and difficult.

Each of us hopes to be happy and so we have been working very hard for happiness. We do not want to suffer and so we try every means in the hope of eliminating or staying away from suffering.

We need material substances, including clothes, food, and properties. But if we think having many material substances can help us stay away from suffering to become happy, this is impossible to realize in this world and will not happen in such a way in the future.

If we can realize the nature of our mind without any mistakes and can eliminate the mind’s mistakes and defilements, then we will be able to uproot suffering and realize supreme peace and happiness forever. If everyone hopes to be happy and does not

want to suffer, then we should focus on the nature of our mind and dedicate ourselves to realizing the nature of our mind. This is very important.

Our teacher, the unsurpassed Buddha Shakyamuni showed his supreme and perfect enlightenment in the holy land of India about 2,600 years ago. He turned the profound and vast Dharma wheel and taught the auspicious Dharma, having set countless disciples on the path of liberation and wisdom of omniscience.

Before Buddha Shakyamuni attained Buddhahood when he was Prince Siddhārtha (Sarvārthasiddha), he ruled the country as the unparalleled King of the Shakya Clan. He had great power and wealth. But he saw that what he had would give him great trouble, pain, suffering, and competition. He then wanted to find out the causes of suffering and ways that can remove suffering. So, he gave up and renounced the rule of the country to become a monk and practiced a lot of austerities.

When Prince Siddhartha left his home, no retinue followed him. He did not have any sponsors for food, and he was not living in the palace. He lived under a tree to practice austerities and meditation. What did Prince Siddhartha realize after many years of practicing austerities? All the suffering comes from our mind's mistakes such as ignorance, desire, attachment, anger, stupidity, jealousy, pride, and confusion. Hence, he understood that we need to stop making these mistakes.

After realizing that suffering originates from our mind's afflictions and wildness, what are the ways in which we can remove the causes of suffering? Prince Siddhartha did a lot of observations, contemplation, and analysis. He realized that our mind becomes afflicted due to a lot of thoughts, which are not part of the truth. These thoughts are not supported by any facts or truths. If we can understand this truth and this actual situation according to Dharma, then we can stop our mind from being afflicted and confused.

We do not need to go to other places or look for other people to help us remove the afflictions and confusions. Our nature of mind primordially has loving, kindness, wisdom, and patience. If we can unleash these qualities slowly, our mind's confusion and all the ego clinging, grasping at external objects as real, desire, anger, stupidity, jealousy, and pride can be reduced accordingly. This is the law that Buddha realized.

When Prince Siddhartha was dedicated to practicing the methods that were just described, he did that for boundless sentient beings who were suffering, not for himself. He understood how important these methods were. He tried all his best to tame his mind day and night and abide in meditation even without any food and clothes.

The qualities of Prince Siddhartha's mind grew continuously under such diligent practice while the mind's mistakes became fewer or less. At last, Prince Siddhartha

realized the nature of his mind correctly under the Bodhi tree in Bodhgaya, the vajra seat. As such, all the qualities of his mind could appear, and all his mind's mistakes or defilements were cleansed. We therefore say that Prince Siddhartha attained perfect enlightenment. At that time, Buddha did not have any pains, suffering and fear. He only had the qualities of peace, joy and perfection.

Our nature of mind is the same as that of the Buddha. The nature of mind of each of us is stainless and primordially has wisdom, compassion, power, and good qualities. All these qualities exist primordially in the nature of the mind. But we are attached to the 'true existence' of self and everything. As a result, we have been led by desire, anger, stupidity, jealousy, and pride - the five afflictions - and our mind has become murky. We have no way of seeing our own nature. This situation is like the sky that should be clear but has become shaded by clouds and fog.

The above situation, i.e. the actual situation or secret of our mind, is what Buddha realized and the truth that Buddha witnessed. How can our nature of mind appear? How can we realize this nature right now in person? How can we remove the mistakes? Buddha turned the amazing Dharma wheel to give all the different, auspicious, rare, and supreme teachings. We still have the opportunity to listen to these teachings and have the chance to practice them. So, we have a great deal of good karma.

Although we have the chance to meet such precious, rare teachings, if we do not pay attention to or become interested in these teachings and instead place more emphasis on the materials and wealth in this life, then we will continue to run after wealth and assets in this life or become confused or stuck in these external materials.

So, what are the ways that we can eliminate our mind's afflictions? Many different causes and conditions give rise to an affliction. For example, the anger in our mind comes from many causes and conditions. We have been giving rise to anger since beginningless samsara so many times, thus the seed of anger planted the habit in our ground consciousness [alaya]. We always have this seed and so it is very difficult for us to eliminate anger immediately.

Those people who make us angry are our [so-called] enemies whom we dislike. No matter where we go, these people will still be there. The conditions or causes and conditions that make us angry always exist. When we feel that these unpleasant people have done some actions that we find unpleasant, we will start thinking how bad, truly terrible, or awful he or she is to us. We will have many thoughts that should not appear according to Dharma. As we have been accumulating the seeds of anger since beginningless samsara, coupled with the conditions of having an external enemy and our non-Dharmic thoughts, we then become angry when these three causes and conditions are present at the same time.

It is like growing a flower. We first need to have the flower's seed, the soil that allows the seed to grow and then water, fertilizer, and nutrients. A flower can grow from a seed only when all these things [all the conditions are ready] are being put together. If we just have the flower's seed, but the soil for planting is very dry and poor, a flower cannot be grown from the seed no matter how perfect this seed is after putting it into the soil. We also need to pour water and spread the fertilizer to allow the seed to grow and give rise to a flower.

Like this flower seed, our mind has seeds of afflictions. These seeds cannot be removed right away. No matter where we go, we can always find bad, terrible people, people who treat us badly and are jealous of us. We simply cannot eliminate these people entirely.

Then what can we do? We can eliminate those non-Dharmic thoughts, i.e., thinking how terrible and bad others are and their mistakes. If we are willing to work hard at this, this is doable.

If we were able to stop non-Dharmic thoughts, even though we have the seed of anger and are surrounded by enemies and people whom we dislike, we will still be able to stop ourselves from getting angry. It is like putting a seed into poor soil so that the seed cannot germinate. The logic is the same.

Some people think, 'He is bad. She is bad, too. This is bad. That is not good. I hope to be able to find a place where there are no conditions for me to give rise to the afflictions.' In fact, this is impossible.

Right now, because we do not have enough [Dharma] practice, we fail to eliminate all the coarse afflictions and small, weak seeds. We will therefore always give rise to desire for and attachment to some subjects that we find pleasant. That is because of our non-Dharmic thinking. Similarly, we will become jealous of people whom we find unpleasant. That is also due to our non-Dharmic thinking. Therefore, our key focus and the area in which we should work hard should be the elimination of these non-Dharmic thoughts.

At the beginning, we need to contemplate how a mind that is full of afflictions, and likewise how afflictions or thoughts, can make ourselves and others suffer endlessly. This is how we can understand the pitfalls of having afflictions. This is a very important point. We need to understand that if we can cultivate the qualities in our nature of mind, such as wisdom, compassion, and patience, we will be able to make ourselves and others happy and be at great peace. We need to think about the good qualities of our mind. This will help us to have more interest in doing the practice.

Now we mainly need to eliminate all non-Dharmic, illusive thoughts. One of the ways is about the key points of letting go. We need to be able to always remember and practice [this] again and again. This is very important. We also need to observe and reflect on our own body, speech, and mind again and again. This observation is called awareness. It is extremely important for us to continue to observe our 'three gates' through staying fully aware.

It is very important that we always guard our mind with mindfulness and awareness. We need to understand that once we lose mindfulness and awareness and follow the afflictions, we will make very bad karma and may cause others to suffer. This will be very dangerous to both us and others. If we understand this logic, then we will always remain cautious no matter where we go and where we are. This is like a person taking a very narrow path along the cliff. Each step has to be taken very carefully. It is because the person knows that once a wrong step is made, they will fall off the cliff and lose their life. As such, we need to have this cautious and vigilant attitude. Being able to do so is called non-distraction.

If we can always maintain mindfulness, awareness, and non-distraction without forgetting about all three of them, then it will be easy for us to eliminate our mind's mistakes as well as afflictions, and it will be very easy for us to eliminate non-Dharmic, contrived thoughts.

If we forget mindfulness, awareness, and non-distraction, even if we have done a lot of virtuous actions such as prostrations, circumambulating the temple and stupa, or making offerings with our body, we will still accumulate a lot of bad karma because our mind keeps following the afflictions.

In short, taming our mind is very important. The main way of taming our mind is to eliminate non-Dharmic, contrived thinking. And to eliminate non-Dharmic, contrived thinking, it is very important for us to stay mindful, aware, and not to be distracted over and over again.

Mindfulness, awareness, and non-distraction are very important. In fact, it is not easy for us to stay mindful, aware, and not to get distracted right away. We need to cultivate that. Beginners need to find a quiet place to meditate first. If they were in a noisy, crowded place, it would be a bit difficult for their mind to relax and to be able to stay focused.

After we have found a quiet place, if we do not know some key practice points for our body and mind, it will be very easy for our mind to become distracted and difficult to stay focused on the practice.

If possible, we should sit in the vajra posture. If we cannot do so, we can put our legs in the bodhisattva posture and then set our spine straight. We put two hands in the

meditation mudra. Otherwise, we can put two hands on top of our two knees. We should not lift the head upward but instead hold it slightly downward. We do not open our mouth yet do not have it entirely closed. We keep our mouth naturally opened. The best is for our tongue to touch the tip of our palate. Beginners often get lost in the external environment. If they meditate with their eyes closed, then the effect may be better. If they open their eyes, then they should look straight at a distance, which should be about an arm's length.

We need to relax our entire body and breathe lightly. Our mind needs to relax as well. If our body becomes too tight, our mind cannot abide calmly either. It is difficult for beginners to calm down their mind without a focal point when meditating. It is very important for them to inhale and exhale slowly and let the mind focus calmly on their own breaths.

If we wish to be able to focus our mind further, then we can start to count our breaths. If we do not count the breaths, our mind may get distracted without noticing after observing our breaths two or three times when we meditate. If we meditate while counting the breath, then our focus can last longer. We count the inhale and exhale as one and another inhale and exhale as two. At first, we may only be able to count until six or seven. After getting familiar with the practice, we can count more. We can take a break after counting to 21 and then continue to practice.

Beginners should meditate for a short time but more frequently. If beginners try to lengthen their meditation time, there may be different hazards, including finding meditation boring or the possibility of feeling tired or losing interest in meditation. So, it is very important for beginners to meditate for a short time with more practice sessions.

When we meditate, our mind should not be too tight or too loose. It has to be set just right. According to a saying, it is like how a skillful shepherd herds his sheep. If the shepherd is not skillful enough, he will beat the sheep once they become slightly distant from the original path when he herds them in a mountain. When the sheep go the wrong way, he will beat them again. After that, the shepherd will get tired. The sheep will become tired as well without being able to eat any grass. Without any energy, the sheep will find it very tough.

Similarly, if a meditator, from the beginning, hopes that their mind relaxes and then drags the mind back whatever thoughts arise in the mind or movements that the mind makes, then this would create increasingly more delusional thoughts. The mind will feel very tired and can no longer meditate properly.

If a shepherd is too relaxed and just focuses on having fun on his own without taking care of the sheep, he will become completely unaware of the fact that the sheep have left and got eaten up by other beasts. After merely playing on his own and

having fun, the shepherd realizes that all the sheep is gone and has been eaten up by beasts. This situation is very terrible as well.

Some meditators may take a too relaxed attitude. They think anything can happen and that this does not matter at all. They therefore become led by their desire, anger and afflictions, and finally forget their practice. This way, they accumulate a lot of bad karma. This is very dangerous.

If a shepherd is skillful, he will bring the sheep to a place where he can see the entire area easily and can continue to look at the sheep's activities in a relaxed manner. Sometimes, when the sheep gets into a slightly faraway place, he will try to send the sheep back. If not, he will leave the sheep moving around freely. While he looks and takes care of the sheep, he will ensure they are not eaten by the beasts. If the shepherd uses this approach, herding should not become very tough for him.

Similarly, when we meditate, our mind may get distracted by other delusional thoughts when we focus on a target. We should not think of destroying these illusive thoughts once they appear. We just need to know these thoughts appear and be aware of them in a relaxed manner while continuously staying focused. If we can do that, our mind can focus and relax easily.

Sometimes, our mind may have very strong desire or anger that stops us from meditating. We then think about the precious human body, death and impermanence, causes, effects, and karma to help ourselves not to be carried away by the afflictions. Sometimes, it is helpful for us to leave the place where we meditate and go out to another place for a walk or sightseeing.

It is very important for us to find a quiet place to learn and cultivate our mindfulness and awareness. It is not easy for our mind to abide naturally. Our mind cannot abide naturally and easily because our mind gives rise to desire and attachment to many of the desire-stimulating environments we face in this life. We, therefore, become always lost in these places.

To resolve this situation, it is very important to contemplate the four thoughts that turn the mind towards the Dharma. They are the precious human body; death and impermanence; and karma - causes and their effects, etc. Even though we may hope that our mind becomes calm right away, without getting familiar with these four mind-turning thoughts, this is very difficult. If our mind cannot stay focused, then it is very hard to realize selflessness or emptiness. If our mindstream cannot generate the wisdom [prajna] of selflessness and emptiness, then we have no way of cutting the root of the afflictions. If we cannot eliminate our afflictions, then we will continue to cycle in the three realms of samsara and have to endure endless pain.

If we wish to meditate well, being able to learn and practice the preliminaries will then become very important. These include the common preliminaries, i.e. four mind-changing thoughts and the uncommon preliminaries that consist of taking refuge and prostrations, the Vajrasattva practice, mandala offering, and guru yoga. Without the foundation of learning and practicing these preliminaries, meditation can only help your mind become a bit quieter. It cannot bring huge benefits.

That's all for Khen Rinpoche's teaching for tonight.

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