

Live Teaching by Khen Rinpoche Kalsang Nyima
‘The importance and ways of taming our mind (4)’
7:30 p.m., 29 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 (4)’ at the Facebook page of ‘Wake Up with Dharma’ at 7.30 p.m. on 29 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.

The importance and ways of taming the mind (4)

Firstly, Khen Rinpoche would like to greet everyone who listens to the teaching through the network with ‘Tashi Deleg!’

Khen Rinpoche explained some ways of taming our mind a few times earlier.

Our mind is active every moment. It is difficult for it to calm down. It is crazy and manic. Other people and we suffer because the mind is confused and beyond our control.

Even though we have certain materials and wealth, we still hope to get more. We have been greedy and so we suffer. We hope to have a good reputation, great wealth and good position, and meet good friends. However, we rarely rejoice in others. We often are jealous of others and so we suffer again. If our work cannot become successful or our wish cannot come true, then we feel disheartened, discouraged, and unhappy. We therefore suffer again. When we have done something good or have some knowledge, or got some reputation and position, we give rise to pride. This wrong thinking has caused us to become despised and criticized by others. After that, we suffer again.

Even when we stop and are alone relaxing, the mind often still jumps to other places. It thinks about other things, situations, and likes to go to other places and listens to other things. The mind is always crazy and cannot settle. When we arrive at another place, we worry about the local traffic issues, transportation expenses and other situations that we encounter. So, we are in such a state of fear and worry during the whole day. We cannot be happy with this crazy mind. When we arrive in another country or place, we become unhappy because we may not be able to get used to

the climate, food, and accommodation of the new place. We then want to return to the place where we live or to our home. All these thoughts make our mind unhappy and unsettled as well.

In short, no matter if we have something or have nothing, we go to another place or stay in the original place, our crazy mind is still feeling unrest. Our mind can never accept, is dissatisfied, unhappy and restless. It never feels content, that it has sufficient, or it is good enough.

We work very hard the whole day. But our mind is still so crazy. It is always full of different kinds of thoughts.

No matter where we go for meals or back home after work at night, our mind always thinks about the past, future, and present. It is full of many hopes and worries. There is no way for our mind to be at ease.

It is more than that. When we sleep at night, different dreams appear. Our mind cannot relax [at that time] either.

Our crazy mind is full of illusive thoughts like the flags in the mountain. When the wind blows, the flags move. When our mind moves around, our body and speech become restless following our mind.

If we can tame and train this mind, then we will have greater peace and happiness than other people.

Our mind always hopes for good things and worries about bad things. As such, our mind always has many hopes and worries.

Since our mind has so many hopes and worries, we are jealous of others and become proud of our own virtues or knowledge. The root of these great hopes and worries come from our desire and attachment to the external environment.

For example, we worry about losing an object after getting it. If we lose this object, we will become very worried. The root of this worry is our great desire and attachment to this object. We therefore suffer. The root of having such a great desire and attachment is the attachment to perceive things as truly existent.

Clinging to things as truly existent means that we think that everything exists independently. In other words, we think that everything appears on its own. But when we use the analysis of peeling off a cocoon, we will be able to find out that the root of clinging to things as truly existent is self-attachment.

So why is there attachment to self and things as truly existent? It is because we do not understand the truth of all the phenomena or everything. This is also called 'ignorance'.

How can we cut clinging to self and everything as truly existent? We need to give rise to the antidote to ignorance in our own mindstream. In other words, we need to give rise to 'awareness,' which is the opposite of ignorance.

'Awareness' means we understand the world's situation well or can see all the phenomena appearing because of causes and conditions. Or we can say they are given rise by causes and conditions. If one can realize this situation according to the Dharma, then he or she has 'awareness'.

If we use the correct principles and logic to analyze all the phenomena we see in this world, we will find that all the phenomena are merely appearances. They do not truly exist as they appear to be. That means all the phenomena do not exist ultimately.

When we use the correct principles and logic to analyze the essence of the ultimate truth, we will find that all the phenomena do not exist independently and do not solely exist as a separate self-entity. This is called 'selflessness' or 'emptiness'. How can we realize this 'selflessness' or 'emptiness'? It is through attaining wisdom via listening, contemplation, and practice.

'Acquiring wisdom through listening' means we seek teachings in front of the seats of our gurus and virtuous advisors. We request them to give teachings on the sutras that Buddha taught and shastras that other great masters taught afterwards. These sutras and shastras have details of the relative and ultimate truths. Through listening to these sutras and shastras, we can understand the relative and ultimate truths. The wisdom that is generated through this means is referred to as 'acquiring wisdom through listening'.

However, it is difficult to gain the non-inverted, unmistakable understanding of wisdom merely by listening to the Dharma. Why? It is because there are many provisional and definitive, secret and hidden meanings in Buddha's teachings. The sages who were born after Buddha and qualified great masters such as Nagarjuna and Asanga, etc. have written some shastras explaining which Buddha's teachings are provisional and which are definitive. We, therefore, have to learn these shastras as well.

Among Buddha's teachings, those on emptiness are extremely refined and profound. If we have not observed, analyzed, contemplated, and debated through many correct principles and logic, it is very difficult for us to understand or generate the meaning of these profound teachings in our mind.

We study, analyze, and observe if the real situation matches with the sutras and shastras' teachings. At the end, we will find that nothing is higher, more profound, or more secret than the truths that were taught in the sutras and shastras to confirm the truth of the teachings in the sutras and shastras. If we can give rise to such confirmation and understanding through the valid scripture from the sutras and shastras, our own principles and logic, and observations of the actual situation, then this is called 'acquiring wisdom through contemplation'.

So, is it sufficient to just have confirmation and understanding? That is still insufficient. It is because having such confirmation and understanding in our mind can in fact reduce a bit of grasping of ego and everything as truly existent. However, that cannot uproot ego-clinging and attachment to everything as truly existent.

Then what can we do? We will need to 'acquire wisdom through practice' on top of the foundations that were discussed earlier.

What does 'acquiring wisdom through practice' mean? It means that our mind focusses and rests on the basis of having given rise to confirmation and understanding through the correct principles and logical analysis and 'acquiring wisdom through contemplation'.

How can we 'acquire wisdom through practice'? Firstly, if our mind cannot focus one-pointedly, or it cannot rest on an object, then there is no way for us to 'acquire wisdom through practice'. As we discussed, it is very difficult for our mind to abide one-pointedly. It is because of our great desire and attachment to money and assets, etc. of this life. Even though we hope our mind to rest, our mind still gets lost naturally within a second. It would jump to other places without any control. We therefore have to be dedicated to reducing or cutting our mind's attachment to external objects.

How can we cut our mind's attachment? By practicing the four mind-changing thoughts diligently.

In the three existences, we were born countless times and have experienced a lot of suffering. But after having worked hard for a long time, we have not gotten any rewards. It has become meaningless without any benefits. All the efforts we spent were in vain.

Why have we been cycling in samsara for a long time without getting any rewards or bearing any real fruits? It is because we do not know the way of getting the rewards. We are stupid in this respect. Due to stupidity, we do not know how to practice the causes of happiness, i.e. good karma. We hope not to suffer. But we do not know how to cut the causes of suffering, i.e. bad karma. We hope to be happy and hope not to suffer. But everything we have been doing and are doing has become the

causes of bringing suffering and cutting happiness. So, what we hope to get and what we are doing are completely opposite. As a result, we continue to suffer in samsara.

However, due to our accumulation of vast merit in the past, we were able to obtain this human body with the eight pleasures and 10 resources with which we can practice Buddhadharma this time. We therefore can meet Buddhadharma and our gurus and virtuous advisors. They taught us the key points of giving and taking in accordance with the Dharma, allowing us to have the opportunity to understand the causes of happiness and suffering and know how to attain happiness and to abandon suffering.

If we are able to practice diligently in accordance with the Dharma, we will be able to purify a lot of bad karma and do a lot of virtuous practices. This is a very good chance. If we are able to practice with fortitude without any fear after getting such a good opportunity, we can achieve the results as Milarepa, Shepa Dorje (means 'Laughing Varja'). Milarepa could reach the unified state of Vajradhara in a life due to his great diligence. We have such a precious human body as well. Even though we may not be able to practice like Jetsun Milarepa, if we can stop doing bad karma and do virtuous actions, we can be reborn in [one of] the three higher realms again and obtain a human body, or in the Sukhavati (pure land) to continue to practice. We can still attain the achievements or even Buddhahood after several lifetimes.

That is why our human body with 18 pleasures and resources is called a jewel. It is because we have the conditions to get onto the path of liberation and wisdom of omniscience with this human body. That is why it is very important, meaningful, and has great benefits. For this reason, it has an important name of 'jewel'.

If we do not make good use of this precious human body to truly learn and practice the Buddhadharma, it will be very difficult to obtain another human body in the next life after our death. If we can think about this point again and again, it can give us very strong power to cut our attachment and desire in this life.

It is uncertain when one will die. Some people passed away when they were small. Some have died when they were teenagers. Some died when they got older. Anyway, the order of death is uncertain. Many people were healthy last year and became very sick this year. There are many uncertainties. We also have people who were healthy yesterday and passed away today. There are people passing away due to an unhealthy diet, too. Others died because of running here and there incorrectly as well.

We are still alive now because our heart is still working and pumping blood. But we cannot guarantee when it will stop. That is why our life is like a water bubble. It can be destroyed quickly after being formed. Or we can say it is like an oil lamp in the wind. Once the wind blows over, the lamp can go off anytime.

We need to be able to practice and think about impermanence and contemplate the uncertainty of our death. When we die, other than Buddhadharmā, we cannot take anything with us to help us. If we are able to think in this way, it can help us change our mind and thus, we need to learn and practice Buddhadharmā now.

Some people think that death is not important and think that death is like having a long, happy, and peaceful sleep. One will not be aware of anything and will not be able to feel anything at all after death. When we die, although our breaths will stop and all the phenomena or appearances in this life will disappear as well, the flow of our mind's consciousness will continue. All the pain, happiness and fear that we feel now can still be felt at that time when the good and bad habits in our mind appear. Because everything comes from causes and conditions, it changes as the causes and conditions turn good or bad and so do the results. This is the law of nature.

When we die, our consciousness will continue to flow. All the good and bad habits and power that we have accumulated before death will ripen in the next life or other future lives.

To illustrate the so-called mind's habits: When your friend asks you to try some unfamiliar food, you will find it quite difficult to eat at first. But after eating it many times, you will find it tasty and cannot stop eating it. This is how a new habit is formed.

For example, you had a car crash while driving. Even though this accident happened 10 years ago, you will still feel scared when other cars get very close to your car when you drive 10 years later. This is because the imprint of the car crash was planted in your mind 10 years ago. Even though there is no car accident, if other cars get close to your car, the imprint of the car accident would reappear, making you feel scared.

Although our body will die and change and we will not use the same body [continuously], our mind will continue to move on. When some conditions are present, the good and bad habits that have been accumulated in our mind will reappear. It is like a car driving situation. As long as other cars get close to ours, that fear will reappear.

It is uncertain as to where we will be reborn - in the hell, hungry ghost or animal realm, i.e., any of the three lower realms, or the god, human, or the demi-god realm, i.e., one of the three upper realms, after our death. If we have not done any good deeds but created a lot of misdeeds while we were alive, it is very easy to be reborn in the hell, hungry ghost, or animal realm, i.e., the three lower realms, where there is immeasurable suffering and pain.

If we are reborn in the hell realm, we will experience pain of extreme coldness or heat. How painful is that? The penalties that we get in jail in the human realm are very light. There is no way for those to be compared with the hell's suffering. We can never compare, imagine, and bear such pain. This is what Buddha said.

If we plunge into the hungry ghost realm, we cannot eat and drink anything for thousands of years and will have to bear the suffering of intense hunger and thirst.

But we cannot see the hell and hungry ghost realms. We can only see the animals. We just need to think a bit and then know about the suffering of the animal realm. It is because we see animals bear huge, intense, pain, such as the larger animals eating the smaller ones. Many animals are killed by human beings to become food, having their skin cut or ripped off for making clothes, or their teeth are extracted to make medicines and decorations. In short, animals are slaughtered and killed by human beings for food, clothes and decorative reasons. Animal's suffering is unbelievable.

So, we have this chance of having gotten this precious human body without knowing when we will die. Our consciousness will continue after our death. Since causes and effects are unfailing, we will have to bear our karmic results. If we are to be reborn in the hell, hungry ghost, or animal realm, the pain and suffering would be unbearable. If we are able to contemplate like this, it is totally unacceptable that we remain distracted by attachments and desire without learning and practicing Buddhadharma. If we are able to change the thoughts in our own mind, then it is easier for our mind to calm down and focus on learning and practicing Buddhadharma. Our interest in practicing and learning Buddhadharma would be keener, too.

We will think that we need to be freed from samsara. If we cannot be liberated, then we will not have peace and happiness. So, we will think about the ways of liberation and how to learn and practice [the Dharma].

After contemplating the four thoughts that change the mind towards the Dharma, we will then need to learn and practice the 100,000 preliminaries. Among the 100,000 preliminaries, the first set is refuge and prostrations.

So, who do we take refuge in? It means we rely on Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, the Three Jewels. Who follows the Three Jewels? We ourselves follow the Three Jewels. Why do we have to follow the Three Jewels? It is because we are afraid of the pain and suffering in samsara and the three lower realms. We hope to gain freedom from it.

How to take refuge? We need to firmly believe that if we are able to learn and practice refuge correctly, the practice can eliminate all the bad karma and defilements because of which we can attain Buddhahood. When we take refuge in

the Dharma, we need to firmly believe in the Dharma and regard it as our path. Sangha members are those who practice in accordance with the Dharma independently. They are the Bodhisattvas, masters, and virtuous advisors who have reached the bodhisattva grounds or bhumis. We follow these virtuous teachers and advisors who are excellent and helpful and can assist us in learning and practicing Buddhadharma unmistakably and in accordance with the Dharma.

We have accumulated a lot of bad karma, obscurations and obstacles for many lives since beginningless time in samsara. These bad karmic actions, obscurations, and obstacles have prevented us from learning and practicing Buddhadharma and from realizing the truth in accordance with the Dharma. In order to remove these misdeeds and obstacles, we must practice Vajrasattva.

We also need to accumulate merit through mandala offerings on top of these foundations. We need to rely on merit for even doing small mundane actions such as business in this world. Without having merit, one will find it difficult to do business. So, for doing important and great matters like learning and practicing Buddhadharma for liberation and wisdom, having merit is even more pivotal if we wish to be able to do it in accordance with the Dharma. Offering mandala is an auspicious means for us to perfect the accumulation of the merit swiftly.

After that, there is the practice of guru yoga. We must receive the blessings of our root guru in order to realize the nature of our mind or give rise to a genuine Mahamudra realization in our mindstream. Otherwise, it is impossible to gain realizations in accordance with the Dharma. We therefore must be certain that our guru is the real Buddha. If we use this approach to practice guru yoga diligently, our guru's blessings can enter our mindstream.

Firstly, we need to get familiar with the four thoughts that turn our mind towards the Dharma. Next, we need to set a solid foundation through the preliminary practices. After that, we practice shamatha [/samatha] and vipassana meditation on this basis and will then have the chance to gain realizations in our mindstream. If we do not have these foundations and just meditate a bit, it is difficult for the practice to be of huge benefit other than being able to calm our mind down.

Obstacles, pain and suffering from different sicknesses in this world are enormously huge. The political disagreements among and between countries have created a lot of problems. Business and economies are getting poorer and facing many difficulties. Our body is affected by many sicknesses. Family members and friends are not in harmony. All our common obstacles or our own difficulties do not happen without any causes and conditions. Overall speaking, bad karma is the cause of the countries' or our own difficulties. Our accumulated common karma has led to a country's overall difficult situation. Each of us accumulates our own bad karma, which results in each of our own difficulties.

If we wish to pacify these overall and individual difficulties, then we need to be diligent in cleansing the bad karma. If we wish to perfect all sorts of wonderful and good things, then we need to perfect the accumulation of merit and wisdom.

[No longer applicable: Hong Kong will be in public holidays from 1 to 4 October [2020]. Taking this opportunity, Khen Rinpoche would like to have a Vajrasattva retreat to cleanse our pain, suffering, and difficulties.]

During this retreat, we will take the sojong vows in the morning. If the conditions allow, we will practice together. If the conditions do not allow, we will practice Vajrasattva at home on our own. We have got this precious human body. Very often we become distracted because of this life's affairs. That is why Khen Rinpoche believes that there will be huge meaning and benefits if we can practice Vajrasattva diligently. This is a golden chance. Khen Rinpoche believes that if we can practice properly during the holidays, the practice would be very important especially for cleansing the bad karma. If Dharma friends from China or other countries can practice Vajrasattva at home on their own, that would be very good.]

In this life, we have created a lot of bad karma and downfalls. We have even accumulated countless misdeeds in many past lives that we cannot remember. Masters in the past taught that bad karma does not have any benefits. The only benefit is to be able to confess and purify it. Before we pass away, if we do not cleanse our bad karma and obstacles quickly, they can become a very heavy burden when we die, giving us great pain.

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

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