

Live Teaching by Khen Rinpoche Kalsang Nyima
‘The importance and ways of taming our mind (5)’
7:30 p.m., 6 October 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 (5)’ at the Facebook page of ‘Wake Up with Dharma’ at 7.30 p.m. on 6. October 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 our mind (5)’

First, we need to think of trying our best to get all living beings in the space to attain the unexcelled true and complete Buddhahood. For this reason, we are listening to the profound Dharma and will practice [the teaching] according to the Dharma. We need to give rise to this pure motivation when listening to the teaching.

Due to the huge merit that we have accumulated in the past, [our] pure aspirations, the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and gurus and virtuous advisors’ compassionate blessings, we are able to obtain this precious human body, which is so difficult to get this time.

Based on this precious human body, we can meet Buddhadharma, which is difficult to meet. We have the chance to meet gurus and virtuous advisors who are difficult to meet. We understand the key points of [the practice of] giving and taking for virtuous and non-virtuous actions. We therefore have a lot of good karma.

At this time, each of us hopes to be happy and the causes of happiness is good karma. We need to practice it in accordance with the Dharma. Each of us does not want suffering and we need to eliminate the causes of suffering, i.e. negative karma. We need to stop ourselves from doing negative karma and accumulate good karma in accordance with the Dharma. This is very important.

However, if we have not observed ourselves according to the Dharma, no matter how hard and diligently we learn and practice Buddhadharma, it can become meaningless, without any benefits, and be a waste eventually.

Why? It is because we have been led by afflictions since beginningless samsara until now. We have become very familiar with afflictions and get lost in them. Sometimes

even though our mind was thinking of doing good karma, our actions became negative eventually. We are facing such a great danger.

For example, when we have the chance to do so, we would serve our master or the Dharma center respectfully due to our faith in Buddhadharma.

Although it is good to make offerings, if we have not observed the Dharma, it can become questionable whether making these offerings is pure or not. Although we have the motivation toward making an offering at first, we also hope to get the reputation or position as the big sponsor through the offering. After making the offering, we may feel proud or think we are different from other sponsors or criticize other sponsors.

When we first make the offering, our motivation is pure for making the offering with bodhichitta without hoping for a reputation, any positions or privileges as a big sponsor and attachment and desire. If we were able to offer delightfully, we can perfect vast merit and purify a lot of bad karma, misdeeds and obstacles.

If we would like to be able to practice like this, then we need to have a foundation of firmly believing in causes and effects. We need to firmly believe that there is great karma and merit for making offerings. Even though nobody would respect or praise us afterwards, we should not feel disappointed or discouraged. Because we firmly believe in causes and effects, the good karma of making the offering will become mature and ripen in ourselves. What others say is not important and will not affect us from doing good karma to focus and concentrate on doing this good karma.

Sometimes other people would speak a lot of nice words to us after we make the offerings. But these praises will be gone after a few days or a week. Those words are changing as well. Then we will think that people speak nicely when we make the offerings, but they no longer talk that much to us now. We will become upset and even regret for making the offering. If the situation becomes such, we will face a great danger.

What is this danger about? If we regret initially making the offerings, thinking we worked very hard to earn the money to make the offerings. Since others do not treat us nicely, we should not have made the offerings and making the offerings is wrong etc. If we are thinking in such way, all the merit that we got earlier due to our offerings will be gone.

Some people like to take photos to promote or announce it on the internet after making an offering. It is the same as people nowadays who like to post things on the internet to promote it everywhere. Some people like to get people to help take photos and videos when they make offerings to a master or offer a mandala during a

big puja. They asked the photographer to start the shooting the moment they were about to make the offering. Then they distributed the photos, wanting everyone to know about their very big offering. They want the whole world to know about it.

Perhaps we very much hope that others will praise and admire us as a great sponsor and think our offering is very good etc. However, according to a saying, if we widely promote our good karma, our merit will actually be reduced.

On the one hand, we are doing good karma. On the other hand, we are reducing our good karma. Isn't that very stupid? In order to accumulate the two types of merit, we make the offerings. However, to widely promote our offerings, we reduce our merit. We are doing this because we do not understand the logic and do not know the real situation.

It is not just about making the offering. If we can try our best to keep whatever good karma we practice in secret, our good karma and its power can grow and that will not bring any obstacles. This is particularly true when we can give rise to bodhichitta as a motivation by thinking about all the living beings in the space. After making the offering, we dedicate the merit to all the living beings in the space. In addition, we are totally not attached to the causes and effects and karmic results of this virtuous act. According to a saying, if we can practice in accordance with what has been mentioned, there will be a tremendous amount of merit.

We should not hope for any rewards or karmic results of whatever virtuous acts we do. That means we should not hope for the rewards that others will treat us kindly after making the offering now. We should not look forward to having better good karma and more wealth and materials in the future. It was taught in the sutras that if we do not hope for any rewards and results, we would have the greatest merit.

For example, some smart people in this world used to have very little money at first. But because they are smart and know how to make money with their mind, they were able to make a lot of money and contribute a lot to society. For example, Hong Kong has a very big Avalokitesvara statue. Khen Rinpoche said he knows the sponsor of this big Avalokitesvara came from the mainland. This person had no money when he first arrived in Hong Kong. He just did some plastic flower trades at first. But the business got bigger eventually and has enabled him to make a lot of money. At the end, he has donated to build this magnificent statue.

Similarly, as long as our motivation and practice are pure, even though we have not offered something physically such as a flower, using this skillful means, we can still accumulate vast merit.

On the other hand, some people may have parents who set up factories, run a very big business and own many factories. Each factory hires a few thousand workers. At last, the parents have their children to succeed their money, assets and factories. But after taking over the ownership, the children think that they need to spend a lot of money to hire many workers to operate many factories. To save these costs, they have decided to shut down these factories without thinking about the difficult livelihood of these workers without the factories. Then they gamble after receiving a large amount of money. These children became penniless in just a few years' time after becoming very rich [at first].

Similarly, some people worked very hard to earn a lot of money. They could have used the money as a very good opportunity for perfecting their merit. But due to their incorrect, non-dharmic motivations, they got the big sponsor reputation temporarily or made the offering to get people's admiration. Once people do not show respect to them after making the offerings, they would feel regret with the offerings. Even though they have spent a lot of money, it has become the cause of giving rise to pride in the end.

Let us cite a very small example to illustrate this point.

When Lord Buddha was in the holy land of India, a king had great confidence in Buddha. He invited Buddha and a few hundred arhats and his retinue to the palace to receive his offerings. Being able to offer Buddha and a few hundred arhat-disciples of Buddha required a very huge expense. If one is not rich, it is possible to do that at all.

Many beggars expected to have a lot of leftovers after Buddha and his disciples came to receive the offerings. They waited near the palace in the hope of getting those leftovers.

At that time, an old lady had huge confidence in Buddha and highly admired the king's offering to Buddha and his disciples. She did not have any jealousy or sense of competition in her mind at all. She felt delighted and admired them with a pure attitude. Buddha made the dedication and aspiration after receiving the offerings. Buddha used to announce the name of the sponsor who accumulated the greatest merit in that offering. So, in the past, Buddha always announced the king's name after the king made the offering. But this time Buddha first said the name of this old lady instead.

After praying, the king asked Buddha the reason of announcing the lady's name, instead of the sponsor, i.e., his name. Buddha said, it is true that the king was the sponsor on the day and had created lots of merit. But compared with the king, the lady's merit was greater. Why? It is because even though the king was the sponsor, he was thinking of himself as the sponsor of the day and had given rise to pride. His

merit was stained by these defilements. However, the lady rejoiced in the offering with a pure and happy mind. It was not stained with any pride. That is why the merit of her pure mind of rejoicing in the offering was greater than the merit of the actual offerings that the king made.

That is why we always need to observe ourselves with mindfulness, awareness and non-distraction. If we do not often contemplate if virtuous conducts done by our body and speech are pure and reflect if our mind has been carried away by afflictions, we are actually creating bad karma even the external appearances are about doing kind actions and making offerings.

This is just a very small example.

In fact, we serve our gurus when we listen to the teachings and receive the pith instructions that they confer on top of making the offerings. When doing so, we must perform with a pure mind and firmly believe in causes and effects. The service should not be mixed with ego and pride.

It is because our mind has already built bad habits. No matter when and where, we always hope others will praise us. When others criticize us, say bad words to us, we would lose our temper and become angry right away. Therefore, if we just follow our feelings and habits, we will become controlled by afflictions and become their slaves.

In short, once we become led and controlled by afflictions, bad karma would become the ultimate result even though our body and speech are making prostrations, offerings or serving our guru. It will not be good karma.

In the *Calling Guru from Afar* prayer written by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye Rinpoche, it was mentioned that if our mind is being carried away by desire, anger and stupidity, even though our external appearances are about making prostrations and offerings, we are actually not practicing Buddhadharma too. We just look like practitioners.

So, have we been following afflictions? It is difficult to see from the activities of our body and speech. Only we know the best about our own mind. Therefore, we must be our own witness and observe our own mindstream. If we do not think according to Dharma, our pride would grow even more when others praise us since we always feel proud of ourselves. At that time, we would think that it is natural for others to praise us and feel ourselves as wonderful, unusual and different from others.

Very often, our pride can only be reduced when other people and many others criticize us. It is because we would feel disappointed and disheartened when others say we are bad. We would then feel that samsara is meaningless and start to think of

learning and practicing Buddhadharma. The original purpose of entering the gate of Buddhadharma is to learn and practice it to reduce our own afflictions. We can only renounce our life a little bit after feeling disheartened and thinking samsara is meaningless when others criticize us. But we usually feel uncomfortable with others' criticisms. When they criticize, we lose our temper.

To learn and practice Buddhadharma according to the Dharma and understand the meaning of Dharma, we must follow a guru. The responsibility of a guru is to tame or change a student's mindstream by giving teaching. There is a traditional saying that the most auspicious guru is the one who can point out a student's mistake directly. This traditional saying also noted that the most auspicious pith instruction is to be able to point out a student's mistakes and their biggest weakness. That also means that the teachings that a guru must be able to let the student know about the mistakes he has, and those mistakes had been with the student for a long time. It is only through the master's teachings that the student can discover and understand these mistakes.

In the *Calling Guru from Afar* prayer of Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye Rinpoche, it also says that our faith in following our guru may diminish over time. We think when the guru can meet our expectations, then he is a good master. If our guru cannot meet our desire, then he is a terrible master. We then say the master is bad and defame him. We will doubt the actions of this master and may give rise to wrong views. Therefore, our faith of following a master can reduce over time.

There are different coarse and refined afflictions in a student's mindstream. Talking about some very coarse, rough, and obvious afflictions, a master may be able to help correct a student's afflictions by saying some kind, nice words in a pleasant and cheerful way. But for some thick, heavy, and deep habits and tiny afflictions, a master has to use all kinds of skillful means. Sometimes he may show himself scolding and criticizing the mistakes to guide and warn a student to know about his mistakes and then have them corrected. If not, it is very difficult for a student to know about those afflictions and mistakes merely by using peaceful and calm ways. It would also become difficult for a student to know how to eliminate those afflictions and mistakes.

But nowadays masters have to say something nice pleasantly and cheerfully, so that people would find the masters to have great kindness towards the students and that the masters are truly auspicious. We can only feel delighted and confident in our gurus when they do so. But if the gurus scold or criticize the students for taming or correcting their afflictions, the students would often think the gurus are bad, lose confidence towards them or even defame the gurus after giving rise to wrong views. There are so many situations such as these nowadays.

For example, some parents would reward, buy gifts for their kids when they are doing great. When the children make mistakes, parents would scold them. Because the parents have been teaching the children properly, the children have always been following their parents' words very well. When the children are asked to walk, they would walk. When they are asked to stand, they would stand. If they need to sit well, they can sit down properly. Then when the children get older and work and serve in the community, they would know how to respect others, do their own responsibilities, know how to respect the elderly and help and protect people who may be inferior to them wherever they go. Being able to become such a successful person is because their parents have been using different peaceful and wrathful means to educate them since they were small. When the children get older, they have the ability to work, to be nice to their parents, and help their brothers and sisters. These people will be able to work on significant projects and become reputable people.

Similarly, a guru uses many different peaceful and powerful skillful means to teach his disciples. If a student can continue to have confidence and devotion towards his guru, then his mind can be corrected soon without taking a long time. The student has never known and understood his mistakes for many years. But through the guru's teachings, he then understands his mistakes and corrects them. Eventually, this student will have the ability to benefit other living beings and Buddhism.

But some parents have been spoiling their kids. The parents just provide whatever the kids wish to eat, wear and need and all the good things. They dare not scold them. Many children have been treated like this since they were small. Very often, they cannot study well either. Even after graduation from school and going to work, they often would say their jobs are bad after working in a company for a day or two and then quit the job. Finally, they stay at home all the time and the parents need to continue to raise and look after them. These children cannot work successfully and make their parents' life difficult, too.

Similarly, when some gurus only say some good words to the students to preserve their pride or take the pride of the students into consideration, they give whatever things that the students ask for, then the mindstreams of these students cannot be tamed at all. They will continue to feel proud of themselves. At the end, both the gurus and students cannot benefit each other.

In short, when we follow our guru to learn [Dharma], we need to believe and understand whatever peaceful or wrathful guidance that our guru gives are his pith instructions to tame our mindstreams. We need to take the guru's teachings as the most auspicious. This is very important. It is a mistake to use merely our own view and desire to follow a guru.

In conclusion, when we follow our master to learn and practice or make offering and practice whatever virtuous conducts that are related to the learning and practice of Buddhahood, our motivation and thinking should not be mistaken. We must firmly believe in causes and effects. If we can do it in this manner, our thinking, speech and actions will not be mistaken either. Then our dedication and hard work will naturally become fruitful, meaningful and beneficial.

If we do not understand these practices, even if we work extremely hard, we will feel disappointed, disheartened and even defame [others] and give rise to wrong views when our desire cannot be met. Our dedication and hard work can become meaningless without any benefits at all. Even if we are able to do very few virtuous actions, they will be wasted, or we will be doing negative karma. This would be a great pity. We do not have much time. We make an offering by using the money that we earn from our hard work. But if the result is meaningless without any benefits, this is something that we should feel sorry about. So, it is very important that we pay attention to our motivation and practice, these two aspects, at the beginning.

At last, we will dedicate the merit of giving and listening to tonight's teaching to all living beings in the space to realize the unexcelled supreme and perfect Buddhahood.

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