

Live Teaching by Khen Rinpoche Kalsang Nyima
‘The importance and ways of taming our mind (6)’
7:30 p.m., 13 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 (6)’ at the Facebook page of ‘Wake Up with Dharma’ at 7.30 p.m. on 13 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 (6)’

Firstly, Khen Rinpoche would like to greet Dharma friends who are listening to the teaching through the network with ‘Tashi Deleg!’

We follow Gautama Buddha and learn and practice his teachings. Buddha turned the amazing Dharma wheels and all his Dharma teachings were given based on Two Truths.

In ultimate truth, Buddha talked about the unborn emptiness that is beyond the fake appearances of all phenomena by using the wisdom of equanimity and discernment to see the nature of everything.

In relative truth, he taught that all phenomena come from causes and conditions.

It is very difficult for us to realize the profound ultimate truth according to the Dharma at the very beginning. Hence, it is important for us to understand that all phenomena in relative truth come from causes and conditions or the law of dependent arising in fortitude first. All phenomena in relative truth do not appear without any causes or conditions, irrelevant or unrelated causes and conditions. They do not come from permanent, unchanging causes that give rise to impermanent results. All phenomena appear from their own and many uncommon direct causes and coemergent conditions (favorable conditions).

For example, different trees have their own different direct causes, i.e. their own seeds. Other than that, they also need a combination of numerous conditions, i.e. favorable conditions such as rich soil, water, nutrients, warmth, and heat to be able to grow gradually.

A tree's mature and growth process comes from the births and deaths in between moments of many causes and conditions. These causes and conditions do not remain unchanged. They continue to change. After the earlier karma finishes, the next karma appears immediately through very refined impermanence and changes. The tree will then grow from very tiny to large and then get old gradually. At last, it will wither.

Our body mainly came from the sperm of our father and blood of our mother and our own consciousness that entered the mother's womb when we were in bardo after death of our last life. It arose from many causes and conditions. There are many conditions affecting whether the body of this life is beautiful or good looking or not. For example, the body conditions of the parents, youth and energy, nutrients, if the consciousness that entered the womb practiced patience, accumulated merit in past lives, etc. Some parents are very healthy and good looking. But their children may not have hands or feet, may be less intelligent or sick. On the one hand, these are related to the health of the parents. But most important is if the consciousness that entered this new life did a lot of negative karma such as killing in the past lives leading to incompleteness in different sensory organs or sickness.

Some mothers had auspicious dreams when they got pregnant. They did not get sick or have any difficulties. After the child was born, their families had many fortunate circumstances. The family business went very well. The family was progressing in a positive direction. It is mainly because the child had done a lot of good karma in the past. The entire family turned out well due to the child's merit.

Some mothers' bodies became unwell when they got pregnant with many sicknesses. They even got into a dangerous situation because of giving birth to their children. After the child was born, the entire family became unfortunate, their business went poor, and there were many difficulties. It is because the child did a lot of negative karma in the past lives. Many problems appeared because of the power of this child's negative karma.

The following historical account that I am going to explain will help you [to understand this situation].

When Buddha was alive in the holy land of India, an arhat experienced the following:

He was born in a poor family. When the mother got pregnant, the family had many unlucky events. After the child was born, he looked ugly with a tiny body and the backbone was bent. In the past, his parents could still make a living by begging. After the child was born, the parents could barely beg for any food and the livelihood became even more difficult. The parents thought of giving up on this child. But since

the child was small and he was their kid, they still raised him for eight years without abandoning him. After eight years, they abandoned the child at last as their life was truly too difficult.

After being abandoned, the child could only obtain a very little amount of food which could barely support his living through begging on his own. He even had to go to different villages, cities and towns.

The child wandered around for many years. One day he reached a place where Buddha stayed and met Buddha and his sangha of arhats. When he met Buddha, he immediately gave rise to faith, cried and asked Buddha for help. Buddha accepted him compassionately and made him become a monk, giving him a lot of teachings.

One day he went to clean Buddha's dining area. When he was cleaning, he saw and took Buddha's leftover food. That was the first time he felt full in his life. After taking the food, he was very happy and then meditated. He attained arhathood in that meditation.

However, as his bad karma that was accumulated in the past lives had not yet been fully purified, he still had some negative karma left. So, when he went to Buddha's dining area in the hope of getting Buddha's leftover the following day, the dining area had already got cleaned and tidied up by other monks, due to which he failed to get any food.

Once, when the sangha went out to beg for alms, the sponsors gave out food to each monk. But when it was his turn, all the food had already been distributed. When Ananda saw this situation, he took away the alms bowl of this small monk. He held his own alms bowl with one hand and the small monk's alms bowl with another hand to help this small monk to beg for food. After Ananda begged for the food, he got a full alms bowl to see the small monk. However, many kids were playing when Ananda was on the way to see this small monk. The kids knocked off the alms bowl of this small monk, due to which all the food fell onto the ground. At last, this small monk could not get any food on that day.

The next day, Maudgalyayana took two alms bowls to beg for alms. When he tried to bring the food in the alms bowl to this small monk, many dogs were on the way. They again made the food in the alms bowl fall onto the ground. At last, this small monk could not eat for three or four days.

After that, it was Shariputra who took two alms bowls with him to beg for alms. After Shariputra finished his food, he used his magical power to send the food to the small monk instead of by walk. When Shariputra flew past the sky and reached the small monk's space, he gave an alms bowl that was full of food to the small monk. But at

that time, the small monk dropped the alms bowl to a deep place into the ground. So, Shariputra used his magical power to get the alms bowl from underground and send the food into the small monk's mouth. But then without knowing the reasons, the small monk's mouth suddenly disappeared from his face. So, the small monk could not eat even though the food was sent to the corner of his mouth. After the mealtime, his mouth re-appeared on his face. [At that time,] the small monk had not taken any food for seven days already. When Shariputra asked if the small monk felt hungry, the small monk said his tummy felt like it was being burnt by fire. But since the dining time had passed, Shariputra threw away the food in the alms bowl. After cleaning the bowl, he filled it up with water. When Shariputra sent the water to the small monk, the water turned into ashes like those that have been left-over from a fire due to the small monk's past karma. But since he had not eaten for many days, he still swallowed the ashes into his stomach. At first, the ashes made him lose his voice. At last, he passed away.

Ananda was very shocked with this development. So, he went to ask Buddha about the kind of karma that this small monk had accumulated to get this result.

Buddha said this small monk came from a very wealthy family many lives ago. His family made offerings every day without a break. He was born in that family and grew up there. After his father passed away, his mother continued the family's previous offering practice. At that time, the small monk had grown up and had his own wife, family and children. But he did not feel like the family to be able to continue to make the offerings. Otherwise, it would affect the livelihood of himself, his wife and children. So, he went to speak to his mother.

"We had made offerings for many years. That is already enough. We still need to raise our children and support the living of my life. If we can stop making offerings now, that would be the best."

His mother replied, "that is definitely impossible. The family had not stopped making offerings for two generations since the time of your grandparents and then your parents. This practice cannot end with your generation."

His mother did not listen to the son and continued to make the offerings. The son became very angry. Since there was no way [to stop his mother], he could only get hold of his mother and confined her in the house and locked the door. No matter how loud his mother cried, he just ignored her. He locked her up for seven days. During those seven days, his mother had not got any food. As his mother called out loudly, he found it shameful if others could listen to her cries. So, he came up with the idea of killing his mother. He found some water and put a lot of ashes that were just finished burning into the water. He then took the water to his mother and said, "I was really very wrong in not giving you any food after confining you up for many

days.” He also said many kind words and how he would listen to his mother [but in fact] trying to cheat her. Then he got the water with ashes for his mother to drink. Because his mother had not eaten any food for many years, she just swallowed the ash water. But the ashes blocked her throat and killed her.

Due to the maturity of this karma, the son was reborn in the hell for a few thousand years. But due to some of the good karma he did in the past, he was reborn as a human being in this life. However, because of the effect of the continual maturing of this past negative karma, he looked ugly and brought misfortune to his family even though he was reborn as a human being. He also needed to suffer from hunger all the time. Even though he could attain arhathood, he still needed to die in the same manner as how he killed his mother in the past life as the remaining karma of his last life ripened.

We often have different kinds of problems in our life. Sometimes they are about our family. Sometimes they are about our job. We also have problems with sickness and disharmony with our friends. They do not arise without any causes and conditions. They are very much related to the karma we did in the past. On the other hand, there are times when we have sufficient money and wealth, all the living conditions are favorable, work goes well, some people are willing to coach and help, and with nice opportunities. These are also the results of the good karma we did in the past.

Because each of us wishes to be happy, we must have pure motivation and practice and try our best to accumulate good karma, regardless of time and place. This is the essence of Buddhaharma. Another important point is that we should not feel jealous of many Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, gurus, spiritual advisors and kind persons in this world when they perform a lot of virtuous actions. We should rejoice and admire [them and their actions].

Another important point is that when we face problems and difficulties, we need to feel assured that they were done by our own negative karma in the past and we should not blame the mistakes on others. We need to firmly believe in causes and effects and work hard on purifying our own misdeeds and obscurations. We need to use the four forces to confess all the bad karma anytime anywhere – that which we did in this life and can [still] remember, that which we have forgotten, and a lot of serious bad karma that we can no longer recall that we did in past lives.

In short, we must adjust our motivation whenever we conduct any activities with our body, speech and mind. When we are doing any activities, we need to think a lot about the good and bad, and right and wrong aspects of our behaviour. If we get angry when things fail and give rise to desire and attachment when we become successful, our mind will always be fully taken up by delusive thoughts anytime anywhere.

Even though our body and speech have not engaged in any actions, our mind between every moment can be very crazy, too. It is full of all kinds of hopes, doubts, lust and anger and it continues to think about the past, present and future like a gale. As such, we continue to plant good and bad seeds and imprints in the alaya of our mind every moment. Our alaya is like a farm. When it meets the external conditions, the seeds that we planted earlier will turn mature and show the results. The good seeds will give rise to happiness and the bad seeds will generate suffering. These seeds continue to turn mature together and individually every moment. The new seeds continue to mature ripen and then get destroyed. So, we will have one seed appeared and then disappeared continuously.

If we do not know how to think properly and manage our own mind, we will still continue to think about different things and continue to give rise to attachment, desire and anger even if we lie down at home. This has already created a lot of negative karma. If we know how to change our mind to kindness and wisdom, we can accumulate vast good karma even if we use very relaxing ways spending a very short period of time. Hence, it is very important, as we said before, that we have mindfulness, awareness and non-distraction to manage our own mind anytime anywhere. We need to have fortitude in doing more good karma. We should not allow our mind to follow bad actions, bad karma and cut all the negative karma. If we need to work hard in doing virtuous actions, we do not need to go deep into the mountains, to a monastery or places in a market with many people. If we know how to think properly, we can accumulate a lot of good causes anytime, anywhere.

We must firmly believe in the Buddhas, Dharma, Sangha, Gurus, Yidams, Dakinis and Dharma Protectors, i.e., all the Three Jewels and Three Roots, which are always with us. They are never separated from us. They have all the wisdom and great compassion to look after us. We take refuge in them from the bottom of our heart, visualize that we make offerings to them, confess to them, and rejoice and admire them. We can do all these all the time every day.

Whenever and wherever we go, we always have targets for practicing compassion and bodhichitta. It is because the space is filled with living beings. All the living beings have karma, afflictions and suffering. The space is full of these targets all the time from day to night every day everywhere. There is no difference. This allows us to practice compassion and bodhicitta. We, therefore, always have the chance to practice anytime, anywhere.

Especially we are now in the degeneration time, it is full of all kinds of external, internal and secret obstacles, problems, difficulties and troubles. When we meet these difficulties, problems and suffering, we must fully believe from the bottom of our heart that they are the results of our own past karma.

When we face some pain or difficulties, those are good opportunities for us to practice patience and very good chances for us to practice tong-len in the bodhichitta practice. If we can practice when we suffer and in difficult moments, we can accumulate greater merit than during our usual practice time. That is also a great opportunity to purify a lot of bad karma, misdeeds and obstacles.

In Vajrayana, we need to visualize all the appearances, phenomena, in regardless of whether they are suffering or happiness, good or bad, in the external world as the pure land and deities in our inner mind. We visualize all the sounds as mantras and all the illusive thoughts in our mind in regardless of good or bad as the powerful plays of our Buddha nature. Then we will be able to transform all existing phenomena into Dharma practice, or we can say we will be able to take all current phenomena for Dharma practice.

When we have the precious bodhichitta practice in our mind, enough aspirational bodhichitta, in particular when practicing bodhichitta in actions, we can transform all our own karma into bodhichitta and good karma even though our body and speech may be very loose or we may feel drowsy. Bodhichitta has such auspiciousness and vast effect.

In the teachings given by the great masters in the past, it was said that we need to practice compassion, confidence, devotion, faith, patience, the generation stage and perfection stage. All these practices can be done in our mind. There is no difference in their priorities. We do not need to get any permissions and there is no restriction regarding the person who does the practice, targets of our practice, and the practice time. These practices can be done anytime, anywhere. We can accumulate vast virtues anytime, anywhere.

If we are reborn in a place where it does not have the eight pleasures or all the 10 resources, we will not be able to understand everything that was just talked about. But now we have got the precious human body, met a qualified guru and got the chance to practice and learn [Buddhadharma] according to the Dharma, we should seize these opportunities to accumulate merit and cleanse misdeeds and obscuration. This is the most important point of all.

That is all for today's teaching.

Let us dedicate [the merit of listening to this teaching] and make aspirations for the benefits of others.

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