

A Talk with ...

KHENTRUL LODRÖ T'HAYÉ

On the Power of the Mind

The title of my book is *The Power of Mind* and this begs the question: what is the mind and what is the power of our mind?

In the West the emphasis of learning is more based and has been focused primarily on external things whereas in the East we have a history of putting the primary emphasis on the mind itself. The mind has essential characteristics that define it as separate from everything else in the universe. It has a specific definition and a function just as everything in the universe. And so, what is our mind? We can define the mind as being conscious, or clear, and aware.

So, our mind is in essence clear consciousness and no other phenomenon in the universe has this attribute. The mind is conscious and its function is to be aware, to know. And how our conscious mind functions is that it is able to know not only any knowable object but also itself. And no other thing in the universe has this attribute which is why this is the single defining attribute of the mind.

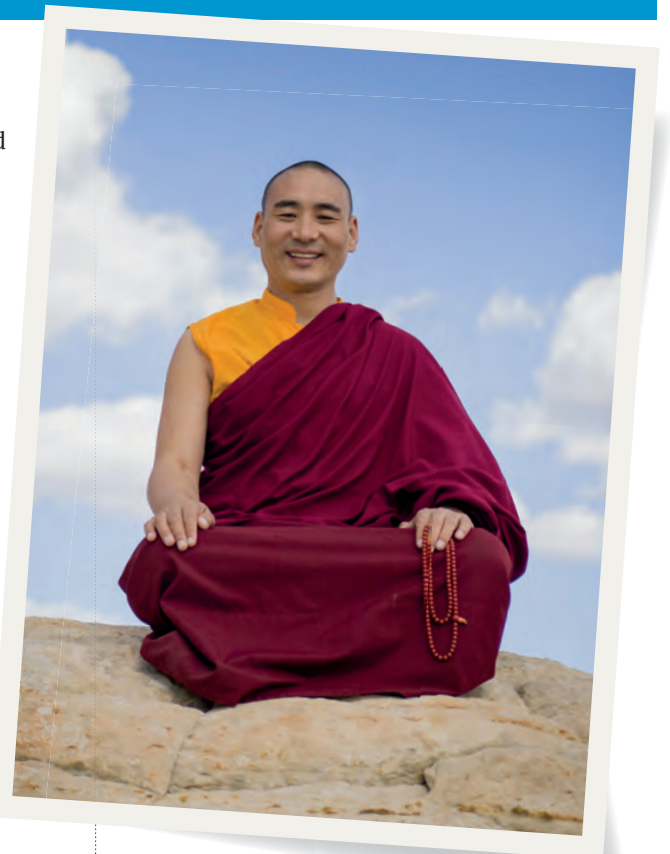
For example, a book is filled with information but it does not think "I have lots of information in me", nor does it think "someone is reading me". Any other thing that we look at, any phenomenon that we examine, be it made of earth, water, wind, fire or other does not have the conscious clarity and awareness that the mind has. It is not able to know itself nor is it able to know other objects.

Of all the things in the universe that are important for us to know, the most important to understand is our own mind, because our mind determines our experience. Our experience is composed

of body, speech and mind and then of all other phenomena and whatever they're composed of and so forth. But nothing else has so much power to affect any given moment of our experience than our mind. And this is because mental well-being or happiness is actually created by the mind and likewise mental suffering, all of our unhappiness and lack of joy and so forth, is also created by the mind. And if we want to be free from that suffering then it is the mind that is able to free us.

Beginning to see the power of our mind and its impact on our experience leads us to the exploration of how we can access that potential of the mind within ourselves. We need tools and the book *The Power of Mind* consists of a series of practices called mind training in which we're working with our mind to change our mind and our experience. Its second chapter in particular provides the main tools for working with our mind and cultivating happiness from within ourselves, mentally creating an environment of well-being while at the same time eliminating suffering within ourselves. And so, the first thing that we need is the knowledge and understanding of what it is that we want to cultivate, what it is that creates greater well-being, and what it is that creates suffering, and how do we find freedom from that.

Therefore, we cultivate the knowledge that clearly sees what it is that will achieve that, that sees the mind's operating system, so to speak,



and how to work with it. This knowledge is what we call *supreme wisdom* which understands through logic and reasoning the true nature of the way things are and how they operate. And once we gain that wisdom or knowledge we can implement it in order to make it our personal experience. And as it becomes our direct experience then our experience changes and is transformed.

So then, what are the beneficial effects or qualities that come through that process? And how do we change our mind? Through the cultivation of wisdom. Through the processes of both cultivating an intellectual understanding and then implementing

it directly into our experience so that we have an experiential knowledge or direct experience of it. Mind Training is the cultivation of *wisdom* or *profound knowledge* which is then accompanied by *great compassion*. These two qualities of great compassion and profound wisdom transform our experience and are our tools for reducing and eliminating suffering while also cultivating the causes and means for greater and greater states of well-being.

And the reason that this is possible is because of the very nature of mind. What you could call our timeless nature is originally a state of peace and well-being. These qualities already exist within us and are already the natural state of our mind. And all the flaws, the mental afflictions and negative aspects of our mental experience, these are only temporary. Fear, anxiety, anger and all negative thoughts that we have we can be free from because these are not our natural state, they are not the nature of our mind.

And so, by using methods of wisdom and compassion amongst many others we are accessing the natural resource of positive qualities that are already present innately within our mind as we remove the negative factors, the negative thoughts and emotions. And that's what this teaching is about, these two tools of profound wisdom and compassion and the implementation of these qualities within our mind to bring about positive change.

I want to briefly speak about the book's third chapter, *Transforming Adversity: Turning Hardships into Opportunities*, because we find ourselves in such a degenerate time, a time where we experience degeneration even in the form of great natural disasters and so forth, a time where our minds are particularly disturbed.

We have so many mental afflictions: we are overwrought with so much fear, anxiety, anger, pride, selfishness and self-centeredness, and very intense grasping. Internally we have all these mental afflictions and then, of course, this expresses itself externally where we have war and dispute and a lack of harmony, and essentially a lot of hate and anger. We constantly are kind of emphasizing this aspect, this disliking things in our lives and about ourselves and in the world. And in this way, our mind is creating so much additional mental suffering. What we are suffering from mostly is mentally created

suffering which is essentially caused by our way of thinking. Our concepts and ways of thinking are distressing and disturbing for us. And those problems that are created by our mind and by our way of thinking cause all kinds of problems and issues, not only for ourselves but for others as well.

And so then, how do we use these circumstances that we find ourselves in living in such a challenging time and with so many difficulties? How do we use those for transformation? The book has an extensive discussion and teachings on how to do that, but tonight I want to talk about one of the methods that we have available to us for working with our mind right now.

So, the method when we encounter something that we dislike is: don't hate the adverse condition. The thing that you don't like, stop hating it. And then we can take further steps by using the methods that I talked about before, the two principle qualities of cultivating wisdom and great compassion. In that way, unwanted or unfavorable circumstances not only don't cause us harm but we are actually benefiting from them.

Ordinarily our mind often doesn't like things - it doesn't like this person, or this situation, or this food, or this country and so forth. And so, our mind is constantly habituating toward dislike. Imagine, we'd gather a few yak horns and try to put them in a sack. Not many yak horns will fit in the sack. The reason is because they're all slightly crooked and so they don't quite fit well together and you end up with a lot of empty spaces. The horns are just not comfortable, they're not in harmony, they don't get along with each other. Therefore we have an expression in Tibet: "Don't be like yak horns in a sack!" On the other hand, take the example of water. It fits in anything and it fills all the empty spaces and does so very fluidly and easily. Similarly we need to try, especially these days, not to be like yak horns in a sack, not to live like that, but really to look at how we can get along, how all of us can fit together on this earth. It really depends on our mind, our mind's way of thinking. If there is nothing that cannot fit in our mind then whatever it is will be okay. When the mind thinks something is not okay, our mind is the trouble maker and then as much as we dislike is how much we suffer - they are directly equivalent.

The more that we habituate towards disliking things, the more problems

and issues we have. And eventually we constantly dislike and find things that are dislikable and everything in the world is like an adversary to us, becomes our enemy. So basically, our dislike is what makes us vulnerable to harm. The disliking of things is the food for your suffering. We need to starve suffering, we need to stop feeding suffering. And that means: we need to stop hating.

And again, how do we do that? By changing our mind's way of thinking. We need to cultivate tolerance, which means the ability, the forbearance, of not being easily disturbed, easily upset. And basically having the courage to be okay. Because no matter where you go in the world there will never be a place where there are no unfavorable conditions, where there's nothing you don't like. But whether those conditions can actually harm you or not is dependent entirely upon your own mind. It is dependent on your way of thinking. [w](#)

* For a complete video recording of Khenrul Rinpoche's talk see: www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7vkvx8f3-8

* Go to www.watkinsbooks.com/events to see the list of forthcoming events at Watkins Books in London

MEET THE AUTHOR



KHENTRUL LODRÖ T'HAYÉ RINPOCHE is a United States-based Tibetan monk and the director of Katog Choling, a Tibetan Cultural Center. He oversees meditation groups across North America and in Australia and South Africa. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, he traveled year-round teaching seminars and leading retreats, and he now holds online retreats for his students around the globe. He is also the abbot of a monastery in Tibet. Khenrul Rinpoche is one of the only monks in the world with three khenpo degrees - equivalent to three PhDs in Buddhist philosophy. Many of his students have nicknamed him "the mind training Khenpo" for his passion for teaching mind training practices.

Bookshelf

THE POWER OF MIND: A TIBETAN MONK'S GUIDE TO FINDING FREEDOM IN EVERY CHALLENGE BY KHENTRUL LODRÖ T'HAYÉ,

published by Shambhala Publications, Paperback (272 pages)

