



Namgyal Yangzab Buddhist Community of Canada

Essential Points of Buddhadharma

Excerpts from “Covid-19-Online-Teachings 2020”
by Lama Chokyi Gyaltsen (Lama Mark Webber)

*“For the body to be radiant, even when it is full of worms and bacteria
and virally infected and wracked with pain, it is still a holy temple.”
Lama Chokyi Gyaltsen*

Saturday, June 27, 2020 - Excerpt of a Dharma Teaching by Zoom-meeting

Lama Chokyi Gyaltsen

On Meditation in Difficult Times of Life

Question

There is a question here about chronic illness (as a relative state) and how that might impact one’s ability to generate the deity in the *sadhana*-practice. Something like, when I feel good and whole with my body, I connect easily with the Buddha within. And when I feel sick, there is no Buddha—not quite that extreme, but hopefully, you can understand the extent of this question.

Answer

I think that’s a very deep question and a question that has been asked by many people. I have certainly heard it lots.

When we feel good, physically and mentally good, we find that *sadhana* practice or any meditation can flow easier, because we are in a good physiological state, and the conditions certainly can appear to be good for practice.

However, from the standpoint of the view, from the standpoint of **minds nature**—and this must be grasped, must be experienced—no matter what the sensations in the body are (and this is the hard part!), because of the outer grasping and the inner grasping to sensations as good or bad, as wrong and right, as healthy and non-healthy, we consider that if we cannot have a good feeling in the body then we cannot have a good feeling in the mind.

But no matter what the sensation is in our body, no matter what the sensation is in our mind—and again, this is the hard part; this is where we really have to meditate, do the retreats, do the practice. We cannot get this from a book; we cannot even really grasp this by a Dharma talk... well, we might, because it may dawn!—to be able to experience the freedom of the mind, the natural freedom of the mind—Great Love—that actually does not attach to anything at all, that’s the meditation! That’s the mind of the Guru.

And to be able to speak in pain, even in mental pain, this is the speech of the *Yidam*. And for the body to be radiant, even when it is full of worms and bacteria and virally infected and wracked with pain, it’s still a holy temple.

You can take a cathedral or a Tibetan temple, and you can paint it from the inside, white-wash it or black-wash it, whatever you like to do, but the temple is still there, the stained glass is still there. So, it is very important that we practice until we come to a surety that, no matter what our physiology is doing, the actual basis of our mind has not changed, is still free.

In that sense, in that way, the challenges that we have in life give us great opportunity to not just dwell in calm and in a stable mind of tranquility and happiness but actually to cut through to something that transcends that. That is called “*vipassana*” or “penetrative *vipassana*.”

So, the Buddha within—you have to gain confidence in this—the Buddha within never goes away! It’s always there in sentient beings. It’s in sentient beings whether they are sick, it’s in sentient beings whether they are terrified, it’s in sentient beings whether they are happy, it’s in sentient beings whether they are fantastic meditators, it’s in sentient beings whether they are Buddhas or in sentient beings if they are mass murderers. It’s the same mind’s nature. Therefore, that really is the perspective of *sadhana*, that no matter what happens, we generate the *sadhana*. Because no matter what state we are in, it’s actually there, it’s unfolding. We have to grasp that.

So, some of us may have noticed that some of our best meditations ever, even in retreat—in meditations in terms of understanding—were actually born out of a lot of pain and suffering.

I can certainly say that from my point of view, some of the best *Dharma* classes that I have ever given on meditation have been when I have been quite sick. (*Lama Mark laughs...*) I get very essential when I am very sick and giving a class! I remember at one time coming back from New Zealand after a long *Mahamudra*-retreat and been asked to give some classes in Victoria, and I just had a tooth transplant operation. My mouth was full of blood when I was teaching, and I was in extreme pain and on drugs. I think that was probably one of the better classes that I have ever given. I actually had to take a cloth and patch up the blood during the talk...

This challenges us to deeper and deeper realization, whether we are sick or not. That’s not so easy to do. So, I am not saying that this is easy. But we need to make sure that we are meditating, and that we are practicing *sadhana* and generating *Bodhicitta* and all these things

whether we are sick or not; not just in the good times. And also, don't call upon the Lama only when things get really bad! In both ways, we practice, no matter what. We try as hard as we can to practice all through that.

So, I will come back to this theme, because that's only one way, and that's a very high way. That's a very elevated way of practice, and I would like to speak about some other things that we can do when we are sick.

Edited August 28, 2020, by the NYBCC Editing Team

May any errors and omissions do not obscure the essence, and may they be forgiven.

May these teachings, so generously offered, help lead to the cessation of suffering and the full awakening of all beings!