



Namgyal Yangzab Buddhist Community of Canada

Essential Points of Buddhadharma

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Genuine Interest in Mindfulness

An edited excerpt of Teachings on The Twelve Examples of Illusions
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*The Path of Liberation is not so much about technique—
although we teach and practice good technique. It is about the
love of Dharmas, the love of how things come into being and
pass away and in the unborn nature.*

Lama Chokyi Gyaltzen

Lama Yongdu Chokyi Gyaltzen

Genuine Interest in Mindfulness

I got asked a question recently, which was one of those simple questions—but a pleading question if you wish—concerning interest: interest, mindfulness and liberation. I made a response, and it got me considering something that I think I would like to repeat. Don't take this as a sermon—since it is Sunday morning ...—but as something so dear to my heart and something that was so precious as an instruction. Although never stated or formulated by Namgyal Rinpoche, it was something about the way that Namgyal Rinpoche trained and taught us that I feel I need to repeat every once in a while.

Here it goes. It is all about “interest”:

There is no real mindfulness and awareness without interest.

I'll sum it up this way, which sounds very cliché, but is absolutely essential for the Path of liberation:

If you are interested in the result, you're done for!

If you are not interested in the result, you're done for!

If you are more interested in the process and you fall in love with the process and less with the result, you are on the right track!

Unless you develop an interest in the process by which things are made, unfold, are created, destroyed, fall apart and are birthed, then you are a technician. You are a ritualizer. You don't gain real—globally felt—insight and wisdom. You gain technique. The Path of Liberation is not so much about technique—although we teach and practice good technique! —it is about the love—by this word, I mean genuine interest in Dharmas—the love of how things come into being and pass away and in the unborn nature.

The trance of chasing or wanting the entrancing object of the mind—the person, the place, the thing—to bring us happiness—because we are very much a happiness culture (I recently saw on CNN some modern Guru, a professor saying, “I have found the one principal of happiness”)—is bewildering and painful.

Those of you who are familiar with the Seven Factors of Enlightenment—the *bojjanga* in Pali—know that “Interest,” “Investigation of the Law,” *dhamma-vicaya*, is the second factor, right after *sati*, usually translated as mindfulness.

Sentient beings throughout history, all sentient beings, want happiness moments, and we will grasp objects of the mind—which are called “experiences”—to be happy. But I come back to a statement of Namgyal Rinpoche, which he did not make every day, but he made often enough (and I repeat this often here in the Gompa), it is, “If you cannot make a cup of tea, you cannot become enlightened.”

What this means is: If you cannot be interested in the entire process of making a cup of tea, you can still make a cup of tea, even a decent tea, but you have not “made a cup of tea.” And even if you put interest in and make a bad cup of tea, Namgyal Rinpoche was ok with a bad cup of tea if you knew it. But if you did not put interest into the cup-of-tea-making, I have a pretty good recollection that he will send you back to do it again. And the reason being is: Chasing after the highs (as I had to remind somebody the other day in retreat), chasing after the orgasm or the moment of fleeting pleasure, which is what so many beings do, is entrancing, but it is *Dukkha* producing. And it means that one actually is not happy, but momentarily high—I mean naturally happy, perhaps better to say, naturally easeful—with what one has or is doing.

If you go to join a monastery, possibly, no matter who you are, it is likely you will end up sweeping the floor or engage in a similar worldly task for a year. If you are a monk or a nun and you enter a monastery, you are going to be put at the end of the row of the seats in the meditation hall where you will serve tea to the other monastics. And you might learn to serve tea for a year. And when the abbot observes that you can serve tea, you might be invited to train in the use of the cymbals. And you make your way up the monastic ladder until you may be the *Umdze*, the Chant Master. And once you are the Chant Master, you may do the Tormas and so on. But if you cannot get interested in the process the entire time you are cleaning the floor, you are waiting to become the Chant Master. And when you are learning to be the Chant Master, you are waiting to be the Lama or whatever it is. Or if you are cooking, you are waiting for the best meal. But the secret is in the cooking, full interest in the whole process; it is in the planting of the garden, the picking or purchase of the food, washing, cutting, choosing which kitchen utensils, how to organize the kitchen activities and of course serving the food ...

Let’s use a metaphor from gem cutting. Now, gems are very enticing! They are beautiful; they are shiny, they are colourful. But if you are not interested in the searching, finding, the selection, the purchase, the observation deciding how to cut the gemstone to get the maximum beauty or quality out of it, if you are not interested in the cutting process, in the grinding, in the sanding and then more sanding ..., and the pre-polish and more pre-polish ... and then comes the polishing and the removing of the stone, the sanding, pre-polish and polishing of the other side, then, all you have is the quick pleasure of the mental concept of the finished gem. A fleeting experience. But if you learn to make—both in retreat and in life—every second of life as an interesting, fascinating mode of discovery, then you will approach liberation in the same way. Which is not this

statement: “I do a practice, and I get a result, Lama, right?” “I get like this cool experience, right?” If you do that, you are setting yourself up for deep suffering. But if you actually are in there, in retreat or in the process of life, which is to make discoveries and learn all the time, you have the tools for liberation and joy.

When we learned to make cups of tea with Namgyal Rinpoche, we would make cups of tea, but we learnt to analyze it. We would be sent back, and we would have our watches timing the tea, measuring the temperature, feeling the pot, and often we would be cross-examined every stage of the way; what we did, how we did it, how much tea we used. And you think, “Isn’t that boring?” No, because it is not really about making the best cup of tea. It is about falling in love—interest—with the process by which you unfold a cup of tea.

So, if you cannot fall in love with the process of liberation, you are waiting for an experience to hit you on the head and wake you up, whereas actually, the Path wakes you up; your interest wakes you up. Mind is always fully interested and attentive. Why not you?

Mindfulness without interest, without love, without discovery, is boring. It is absolutely robotic. And you see people in retreat walking like zombies and robots, trying to be mindful. We wish you to fall in love with pure attentiveness: the joy of being fully attentive.

Just like gem cutting: sometimes the stone comes out lumpy, chipped or not very good. But actually, the process was an utter delight, and you learnt lots about it. Because guess what? Not every piece of rough turns out perfectly smooth, sparkling and perfect. That’s not the point. The point is the process, the joy of learning and how a gem is properly cut even when the rough does not have that potential. It has other potential.

So, as I said this morning, to qualify my previous points about the process, no matter how good your ability is with roasting coffee and with making coffee, if you don’t actually have good coffee beans, you cannot make a good roast. You may never know that if you don’t understand coffee. But our pure awareness is different. We all have unbroken primordial awareness, utterly pure and awake. Therefore, with the right view and application, we can be united with this natural state.

So, this has everything to do with illusion¹ because it is the foundation by which one makes the discovery of the illusory nature of phenomena. Of course, I am using gem cutting as a metaphor. But it could be making art; it could be chopping wood, it could

¹ The main topic of this series of lectures was “The Twelve Examples of Illusions”

be cooking, it could be about relationships, in fact, any facet of life. This is crucial. Otherwise, you are looking for the big high. And the next one, the next one ... the bucket list of the spiritual Path.

I hope all of you have a good meditation teacher, a good master, that at some point is going to drive the clinging of wanting the highs, of the incredible meditative experiences, out of you. Because in the end, liberation dawns as a continuum, which in *Mahamudra*, it is called the “discovery of the ordinary mind,” not the extraordinary mind. Liberation is discovering what is always there. The discovery is not even “present,” but what’s always there—Suchness! But if you are chasing after an extraordinary experience, then you are attached to that experience, but not to the “Even Ground of Mind.”

In other words, we have to fall in love with purified awareness, not the objects of awareness, not even a pure state. There is an infinite number of beautiful, entrancing, hypnotic objects and states in the universe. I guarantee it! I cannot prove it to you, but maybe mathematically, somebody can. A mathematician hearing this class today may be able to prove to you that there is an infinite number of beautiful, enticing, wonderful objects out there for your enjoyment. This is the bewilderment, the entrancing illusion of chasing after objects that will give momentary satisfaction as opposed to the unbroken, unborn nature of mind, which is ultimately satisfying because it liberates! It is freedom. It is ultimately compassionate because when liberation contacts another mind-stream, awakeness is brought forth.

Unless you discover an unbroken natural freshness, spontaneous awake experience, then one is looking for the high. We are in pursuit for an orgasmic experience which is the fantastic presentation of the food, but not the extraordinary rich process of the entire creation of the food, whether it is creating the lovemaking, the text or the writing, whatever activity it is. And this new attitude will change a life!

There are these old stories from ancient India with these great Gurus. I have told this a number of times ...

Typically a young man (it could be a woman too!) comes to the monastery, the retreat or a hermitage where the Guru resides. The young man would say, “I love this woman! I want her as my bride. But she is a princess, and I don’t have the money or the dowery for this beautiful woman. And I’m from the wrong caste to marry her. But I want this beautiful woman! Guru, could you help me? Give me the psychic power to be able to marry this woman, this princess!” And, of course, the Guru, out of kindness, says, “But of course, I will help you. I will get this woman for you. I will give you the mantra and meditation that will work”

So, the student replies, “What is the mantra? What is the meditation I need to do to have my bride.” Of course, the Guru says, “Just a second! What you need to do first is

to sweep the floor over here!” “I do?” says the young man. “Yes, you need to sweep the floor.” “Ok, I will sweep the floor.” In ancient India and Tibet, the aspirants trusted what the Guru says, even if it sounded ridiculous. So, he sweeps the floor for a few months. But the young man often comes to the Guru, saying, “What, what’s the secret mantra?” and the Guru says, “Patience! Patience, patience!” All of you know how this works!

Of course, this illusion would not work in this day and age; we are far too sophisticated! Two or three years later, after sweeping the floor and washing the dishes, cooking and so on, eventually, when the young person softens and grows in awareness—if they get it—they forget to ask the teacher for the secret mantra for how to obtain the princess, how to get a pile of wealth or whatever it is they are seeking. They become interested in awakening, what the Guru is embodying. They get interested in mind’s expansive and rich nature.

So, when we discover the gem of awareness—not ordinary awareness, but the pristine freedom of awareness—then we have the “Wishful filling Gem,” the *citta mani* in Sanskrit. Or we have the “Wish-fulfilling Tree,” which is called *Yongdu* in Tibetan; the tree that bears the fruits of insight, of wisdom. Then we have made a great discovery! Otherwise, what we do is chase after gemstones as our principal pleasure object, thinking that this is life! But these objects of sensing pleasure are infinite; we will be chasing after them for the rest of our lives. However, in fact, we can have both. We can make good things, beautiful objects and enjoy pleasure, but simultaneously we also know what is ultimately bliss-freedom, the nature of our minds: natural blissful awareness. It needs no object, neither pleasurable, un-pleasurable or neutral.

So, I bring this introduction to you. Make sure that your experience of liberation is not robotic but is actually a study of what you need to put into place. Just like gem cutting, art or tea making. As a general question, ask, “What do I need to put into place that leads to excellent results?”

It’s like making a checklist. How does a checklist work? Well, it is like a checklist of gem cutting: Is the stone cracked? Does it have a big crack through where I want to cut it? Do I have the right equipment? And so on.

So too, in the spiritual life: Are the ethics there? Is the virtue there? Do I have the supporting milieu and the conditions for liberation? Is the food I eat and the people I hang out with supportive for liberation? Ask about what one reads and takes in on the Internet. Is it nurturing calm and insightful? Are the *parami* strong enough? Is there enough generosity, is there enough ethics, is there enough energy, is there enough patience, is there enough tranquillity, clarity and peacefulness to bring about insight and wisdom? And, of course, compassion? Therefore, we come to understand that the checklists, such as the Thirty-seven Factors of Enlightenment, are part of the path and can’t be

ignored. Great masters of Dharma worked out the essential conditions centuries ago. And we can rely on their experience.

Today, to begin this talk, I wanted to bring you these essential points regarding interest and mindfulness. If you would like to realize *Maha Ati*, *Dzogchen* or *Mahamudra*, one needs to bring not only the completion stage to you—the far-out dissolving into rainbow light—but also the generation stage; the bringing out both the finest and transcendent of human qualities. And studying how you do that. One has to enjoy the generation stage so that we eventually bring the generation stage into union with the completion stage, rainbow light and dissolution, together with the finest qualities of the awake mind. Then we have the process unified with the result: Dzogchen.

This approach is called “fruition in the cause.” It is a very profound approach of some of the traditions of Tibetan Buddhism: “Unifying the Path with the Result.”

So, when we come to what is called *Buddhist Tantra*, *Mantrayana*, secret *Mantrayana* or secret *Tantrayana*, we practice by unifying the result—called Buddha Nature or complete freedom—with the Path. Not a path separated from the View or the Freedom! A cup of tea is the whole process, not just the tasting at the end.

So, I wanted to make sure that this is understood.

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May any errors 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!

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