

## **Transcript of teachings by Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi on the Modes of Mind and Mental Factors**

**Lesson No: 23**

**Date: 11<sup>th</sup> September 2012**

**Root text:** *A Necklace for Those of Clear Awareness Clearly Revealing the Modes of Minds and Mental Factors* by Ye-she Gyeltsen, translated by Toh Sze Gee; January 2006 edition. Copyright: Toh Sze Gee & FPMT, Inc. September 2003.

All page references refer to the root text, unless otherwise stated.

### **The Eleven Virtuous Mental Factors**

There are eleven virtuous mental factors:

- (1) faith
- (2) shame
- (3) embarrassment
- (4) non-attachment
- (5) non-hatred
- (6) non-ignorance
- (7) effort (or joyous perseverance)
- (8) pliancy
- (9) conscientiousness
- (10) equanimity
- (11) non-harmfulness (Page 33)

We have completed the first three of these mental factors: faith, shame, and embarrassment.

#### **(1) Faith**

There are three types of faith:

1. clarifying or clear faith
2. faith of conviction
3. wishing or aspiring faith

#### ***Clarifying (or clear) faith***

This is a happy mind and a mind of faith that arises from seeing the qualities of the Three Jewels. In order to generate this clear faith in and the liking for the Three Jewels, it is important to see the qualities of the Three Jewels. To see and to understand the qualities of the Three Jewels, one has to learn about the qualities of the Three Jewels without which it is very difficult to develop such clear faith. In order to see the qualities of the Three Jewels, one has to engage in hearing and reflection. When you see the point of doing this, you will strive in hearing and reflection.

When we manage to develop this clear faith in the Three Jewels, it will clear away the murkiness of the afflictions. It makes the mind suitable for developing the positive qualities.

***Faith of conviction***

The faith of conviction is having conviction in, for example, reincarnation and karma and its effects. In order to develop such conviction, one has to listen to and reflect on all the relevant points, without which conviction will not arise. When one lacks conviction in reincarnation and karma and its effects, real practice becomes very difficult.

***Wishing or aspiring faith***

This faith is explained in relation to the four noble truths. One has to see that true sufferings and true origins are to be abandoned. One also has to see that true paths and true cessations are what one has to actualise and that they can be generated in one's own mind.

Three types of faith are mentioned here. No matter the type of faith, it is clear that generating any of them in one's mind is dependent on hearing and reflection. Without studying, learning, and reflection, it is not possible to develop these three kinds of faith. When we do not develop these three kinds of faith, it is very difficult for us to develop any further qualities because faith is the foundation for good qualities.

**(2) Shame**

Shame is the avoidance of misconduct or misdeeds on account of oneself.

**(3) Embarrassment**

Embarrassment is the avoidance of misdeeds on account of others.

**(4) Non-attachment**

Regarding non-attachment, the *Compendium of Knowledge* says:

QUESTION: What is non-attachment?

RESPONSE: It is a lack of attachment to [cyclic] existence and the articles of [cyclic] existence. It has the function of acting as a support for non-engagement in misconduct.

Just as it has been said above, it is a knower which is disenchanted and lacks attachment (Page 37).

- The objective feature of non-attachment is the object of desire, i.e., the object for which we have developed desire or attachment.
- The aspect of this knower is non-attachment when focussed on the object.
- The function is a support for non-engagement in misconduct.

Non-attachment is the antidote to attachment, miserliness, excitement, distraction, and haughtiness. It is good to know how non-attachment works as an antidote to these various afflictions. It is important to develop faith and belief in and the aspiration for non-attachment.

Non-attachment is an antidote to attachment. In order to develop non-

attachment, one has to reduce one's attachment to those objects that one desires. How do we develop such non-attachment and reduce our attachment for those various objects?

We have the desire for pleasurable feelings. We have to see for ourselves that no matter how much we enjoy or partake of the desired object, it is never satisfying and fulfilling. When we think about samsaric happiness or pleasures, they are never stable. They are in the nature of suffering. By analysing and thinking about this, one will come to reduce one's attachment for them.

There are so many techniques that have been taught for turning away or reducing attachment. E.g., when one has the desire for food, there is the reflection on the drawbacks of having attachment for food. Another example is applying the antidote of ugliness. There are many such advice in the teachings.

In the *Vinaya*, the code of conduct for the ordained person, there is the advice for practising contentment whereby one keeps only one set of robes and have simple needs with regard to food and the place where one lives. All this advice is for developing contentment.

Non-attachment is a virtuous mind, but we have to identify what exactly non-attachment is. We have to see for ourselves what is in it for us when we have non-attachment. As mentioned earlier, when we have non-attachment, many afflictions are weakened as it acts as an antidote for miserliness, attachment, haughtiness, distraction, and excitement. The purpose of understanding the benefits of having non-attachment is to put this advice into practice and reduce our attachment.

## **(5) Non-hatred**

Regarding non-hatred, the Compendium of Knowledge says:

QUESTION: What is non-hatred?

RESPONSE: It is a lack of malice with regard to sentient beings, suffering and the sources of suffering. It has the function of acting as a support for non-engagement in misconduct.

Just as it has been said above, it is a knower that conquers the generation of hatred within observation of any of the three objects that generate hatred [i.e., sentient beings, suffering and the sources of suffering] and is a lack of malice (Page 37).

What is the benefit of developing non-hatred that is a virtuous mind? Non-hatred is an antidote for belligerence, resentment, spite, jealousy, and harmfulness.

The way to develop non-hatred in the mind is to try to put a stop to belligerence, resentment, spite, and so forth. There are many advices given for developing non-hatred and dealing with anger. When we experience suffering, we are advised to remind ourselves that ultimately, we are responsible for that experience because it is the ripening of our

own non-virtuous karma. By understanding that, we voluntarily accept the suffering. When we manage to do that, it helps us to overcome belligerence, resentment, spite, jealousy, and harmfulness.

The Buddha gave a set of advice on how to deal with anger. The four trainings are:

- Even when derided, do not deride in return.
- Even when someone gets angry at one, do not get angry in return.
- Even when hit, do not hit back.
- Even when one's faults are exposed, do not expose others' faults (Page 49 – 50).

It is important to know how to develop non-hatred. Non-hatred can only arise in us when we work on reducing our belligerence, resentment, spite, jealousy, and harmfulness. It is by reducing these afflictions that we are able to develop non-hatred. When non-hatred arises in the mind, then all these different minds—belligerence, resentment, and so forth—will naturally subside.

**(6) Non-ignorance**

Regarding non-ignorance, the Compendium of Knowledge says:

- QUESTION: What is non-ignorance?
- RESPONSE: It is knowledge [arisen] from fruition, scripture, contemplation or realization, and is a wisdom of individual investigation. It has the function of acting as a support for the non-engagement in misconduct.

Just as it has been said above, it is a wisdom of individual investigation that is able to serve as the antidote to ignorance [arising] from its cause – being either acquired through birth or arisen through application (Pages 37 – 38)

Non-ignorance is the opposite of ignorance. What exactly is ignorance? We dealt with this when we were studying the lam-rim. According to Vasubandhu and Arya Asanga, one way you can look at ignorance is to see it as separate or different from the view of the transitory collection.

- From that perspective, ignorance is merely not knowing something, e.g., not knowing what karma is. This ignorance is an afflicted mind and it is posited to be a mind of not-knowing.
- Non-ignorance is a derivative of wisdom.
- Its aspect is that of non-confusion.
- Its function is to act as a support for non-engagement in misconduct.

We need to compare non-ignorance and the mental factor of wisdom, one of the five object-ascertaining mental factors. It is quite challenging but it is something that we should look at. Are they the same?

	<b>Mental factor of wisdom</b>	<b>Mental factor of non-ignorance</b>
<b>Aspect of the knower</b>	Distinguishing what is to be abandoned and what is to be adopted	Non-confusion
<b>Function</b>	Overcoming doubt	Support for non-engagement in misconduct

According to the *Higher Abhidharma*, ignorance is posited to be confusion, a state of not knowing. If that is posited to be ignorance, then non-ignorance would be non-confusion. Perhaps this is one of the things we can look at to see if there is any difference between these two mental factors. It is not easy because they seem to be talking about the same thing.

Non-ignorance is posited to be of two types:

1. non-ignorance that is acquired through birth
2. non-ignorance arisen through application

We can posit this illustration for the non-ignorance that is acquired through birth: someone who is born with a clear intellect. That does not happen without a cause. That is why it is called a fruition. It is the fruition of past endeavours, arising from past actions in past lives.

An illustration for non-ignorance through application would be this: in this life, through hearing, reflection, and meditation, one generates the wisdoms arising from hearing, reflection, and meditation. That would be a case of non-ignorance that arises in this life. It is the non-ignorance that arose through application.

Therefore, seek much hearing on the three baskets as well as their commentaries – the basis upon which one engages in hearing, analyze again and again the meaning of what has been heard with the four types of reasoning, and generate an ascertaining consciousness. Put the entire path into practice by way of analytical and stabilizing meditation upon that very meaning which the wisdom arisen from contemplation has gained ascertainment of.

These are the assertions of the Great Trailblazers.

Hence, those who are intelligent should engage in such a mode of path that pleases the Conquerors. If you discard much hearing, the excellent cause of wisdom of individual investigation, follow fools stupidly like a sheep, dwell in a relaxed and idle manner without contemplating anything whatsoever, and yet wallow in the conceit of being good-hearted, practicing Dharma, engaging in practice, and so forth, then you will waste your excellent support with its leisures, ruin others who are equal in fortune, and even become a serious condition contributing to the degeneration of the teachings. Therefore, those of you who wish to do yourselves good should generate belief from your hearts regarding the modes of the wisdom of individual investigation as explained above (Page 40).

This advice once again emphasises how extremely important hearing, reflection, and meditation are for the development of wisdom. In order to develop wisdom, one has to engage in hearing, reflection, and meditation, without which, there is no wisdom. Without wisdom, one would not be able to achieve anything significant. Hearing, reflecting, and meditating on the teachings is also a condition for upholding the teachings of the Buddha. You have to see the point behind hearing, reflection, and meditation.

In this vein, the *Verse Summary of the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines (Ratnagunasancayagatha)* says:

How can millions and millions of blind men, without a guide,  
Enter the city without even knowing the path?  
Without wisdom, the five perfections are without sight;  
Without a guide, they cannot contact enlightenment.

At such a time that they are strongly conjoined with wisdom,  
Then eyes are acquired and this name is attained.

The Venerable Maitreya also says [in his *Sublime Continuum of the Great Vehicle (Uttaratantra)*](stanza 5.14-15):

Conceptualizing the three spheres [of agent, action, and object]  
Is asserted to be a knowledge obscuration.  
Conceptualizations such as miserliness  
Are asserted to be afflictive obscurations.

Apart from wisdom,  
None other is a cause for abandoning these.  
Therefore, wisdom is supreme. Its foundation is hearing.  
Thus, hearing is supreme.

And Acharya Aryasura says [in his *Compendium of the Perfections (Paramitasamasa)*]:

The blind ones of little hearing do not know the modes of meditation.  
Lacking that, what are they to contemplate?  
Therefore, you should put effort in hearing. Due to that cause,  
Contemplate and meditate, whereby vast wisdom will arise.

The supreme scholar Vasubandhu also says [in his *Treasury of Knowledge*] (stanza 6.5ab):

By abiding in ethics, possessing hearing and contemplation,  
There is strong application in meditation (Pages 40 – 41).

- In order to develop non-ignorance, we need wisdom.
  - In order to develop wisdom, we need to engage in the three-fold activities of hearing, reflection, and meditation.
- We have to compare non-ignorance and wisdom. Sometimes it seems like we are talking about the same thing.

## (7) Effort<sup>1</sup>

Regarding effort, the Compendium of Knowledge says:

QUESTION: What is effort?

RESPONSE: It is a mind that is enthusiastic in regard to armoring, application, non-inferiority, irreversibility, and non-complacency. It has the function of fulfilling and accomplishing the class of virtue.

Just as it has been said above, the mind that is enthusiastic about virtue is effort. Thus the Acharya Vasubandhu says [in his *A Discussion of the Five Aggregates*]:

QUESTION: What is effort?

RESPONSE: It is the antidote for laziness and a mind that is enthusiastic about virtue (Page 41).

- The object of joyous perseverance is virtuous activity.
- Its subjective aspect is enthusiasm.
- Its function is to accomplish virtue.

The *Compendium of Knowledge* teaches five types:

- (1) effort of armoring
- (2) effort of application
- (3) effort of non-inferiority
- (4) effort of irreversibility

---

<sup>1</sup> Note: Ven. Gyurme prefers to translate effort (*brtson 'grus*) as joyous perseverance.

(5) effort of non-complacency (Page 42)

### **(1) Effort of armouring**

(1) The effort of armoring is the donning of the great armor of preceding attitude, a mental enthusiasm prior to embarking on a virtuous activity (Page 42).

What is armour-like joyous perseverance? It is when just *prior* to engaging in a virtuous activity, there is strong enthusiasm for that activity. That is armour-like joyous perseverance.

### **(2) Effort of application**

(2) The effort of application is a mind that is enthusiastic when engaging in practice through application. It is of two types: constant application and respectful application (Page 42).

As the name implies, the joyous perseverance of application happens when one is applying oneself to a virtuous activity with an enthusiastic mind. There are two types of the joyous perseverance of application (1) constant application and (2) respectful application.

*Khen Rinpoche: I think I explained how these two applications are different a long time ago. I had forgotten them myself. Does anyone remember? I did explain them some time ago, but I don't remember now how these two are different. I saw it in one of the texts but I couldn't find it anymore. I think it is in the footnotes of a text, but I don't know which one. If I remember then I will explain these two. I don't remember now.*

(3) The effort of non-inferiority is a generation of enthusiasm when engaging in virtue without the mind being discouraged, thinking, "How could one such as I do this?"

(4) The effort of irreversibility is an accomplished mental enthusiasm such that one cannot be diverted by other circumstances at the time of engaging in virtuous activities (Pages 42 – 43).

The joyous perseverance of non-inferiority and irreversibility occur when one is engaged in the actual practice. It is a mind that is not discouraged when engaging in the actual practice. Therefore one will never turn away from the practice.

(5) The effort of non-complacency is exertion that does not just rest complacent with some trifling virtue, but seeks higher qualities (Page 43).

The joyous perseverance of non-complacency occurs *after* a virtuous activity. It refers to a mind that is not complacent or satisfied with having achieved something, "I have done it. That's it." It is a mind that aims to achieve more qualities.

- Prior to engaging in a virtuous activity, we need joyous perseverance, an enthusiastic mind.
- When we start with the chosen virtuous activity, we also have to start that activity with a mind of enthusiasm. When engaged in a virtuous activity, it is important not to get discouraged and to stop that activity.
- Once the activity is accomplished, one should not be satisfied with that

and think, “That it is enough.” Rather one should strive to do better and gain more qualities.

The main factor that is incompatible with joyous perseverance is laziness. Laziness is the basis for afflictions to arise and deprives us of our virtue. When we are deprived of virtue, this life degenerates and our future lives will also degenerate. In one sutra, Buddha said that laziness is the basis for all the afflictions. Having laziness in the mind is like having nothing good at all in the mind.

There are three kinds of laziness:

1. the laziness of procrastination
2. the laziness ignoble activities
3. the laziness of discouragement

Many techniques and advice are given in the lam-rim to overcome the **laziness of procrastination**. We can overcome this laziness by reflecting on the following topics:

- the human life of freedoms and endowments
- death and impermanence
- the sufferings of the lower realms

The reflections that are mentioned in the section on the path that is shared with the persons of medium capacity, such as the reflection on the faults of cyclic existence, can also help us to overcome the laziness of procrastination. This topic also helps us overcome the **laziness of ignoble activities**.

What about stopping the **laziness of discouragement** or self-contempt? One can do this by understanding the presentation of mind, e.g., how it is the nature of the mind that when it is trained, change is definitely possible. As mentioned in *Engaging in the Bodhisattvas Deeds*, “There is nothing whatsoever/ That is not made easier through acquaintance.”<sup>2</sup> So by understanding the presentation of mind, in particular, how it is the nature of the mind to change when your mind is familiar with the process, you stop this discouragement.

It is said that joyous perseverance is very important because, with joyous perseverance, we are able to develop qualities that we have not yet developed. Laziness is what stops us from developing any new qualities. So it is important to apply ourselves to developing joyous perseverance.

## (8) Pliancy

Regarding pliancy, the *Compendium of Knowledge* says:

QUESTION: What is pliancy?

---

<sup>2</sup> Verse 14, Chapter 6.



RESPONSE: It is a serviceability of body and mind due to severing the continuum of unfavorable states of body and mind. It has the function of eliminating all obscurations.

Just as it has been said above, it is a knower that deposits an imprint so that the mind can be applied, however one wishes, to a virtuous object of observation, and that severs the continuum of unfavorable states of body and mind. When divided, pliancy is of two types:

- (1) physical pliancy
- (2) mental pliancy (Page 45)

- Pliancy focuses on a virtuous object.
- The subjective aspect of this mind is that you are able to use your body and mind in whatever way you wish, i.e., the body and mind are serviceable.
- Its function is to eliminate all obscurations.

There are five obscurations;

1. aspiration for a desire object
2. malice
3. sleep and lethargy
4. excitement and regret
5. doubt

When there is pliancy, these five obscurations can be removed.

There are two kinds of pliancy: (1) physical pliancy and (2) mental pliancy. Pliancy here has to be a consciousness. In this case, it is the primary mental pliancy because physical pliancy is posited as a special form of tangible object. It is mentioned in the lam-rim that mental pliancy is achieved before physical pliancy.

- First comes mental pliancy.
- Then you achieve physical pliancy.
- This is followed by achieving the bliss of physical pliancy.
- You then achieve the bliss of mental pliancy.

This is the order: mental pliancy → physical pliancy → bliss of physical pliancy → bliss of mental pliancy.

In order to achieve calm-abiding, it is necessary for one to achieve the bliss of pliancy, not simply pliancy alone. On top of pliancy, you must have achieved the bliss of pliancy before that realisation is considered the realisation of calm-abiding. There are nine mental states in the process of developing calm-abiding. The ninth mental state is said to be the single-pointedness of the mind of the desire realm. But that is not calm-abiding yet. One must have developed the bliss of pliancy before that mind can be called the mind of calm-abiding. When you achieve the mind of calm-abiding, you achieve the mind of the higher realm, i.e. the realm that is higher than the desire realm.

*Question:* On page 38 of the root text, non-ignorance is said to have the “function of acting as a support for the non-engagement in misconduct.” What is the meaning of “misconduct” here? Does it simply mean avoiding negative karma or does it mean having a mind that is separated from wisdom?

*Answer:* An example would be because of not knowing what is karma and its effects, it is possible to generate a wrong view about karma. There are many kinds of misconduct.

*Question:* Can the comparison between non-ignorance and wisdom be understood in terms of the various possibilities? Non-ignorance seemed to be at a lower level than wisdom.

*Khen Rinpoche:* It is something for you to think about.

*Question:* How do we relate non-attachment with renunciation? Are they the same?

*Answer:* I don't think they are the same. Renunciation is probably stronger. Non-attachment is just a lack of attachment. That is its subjective aspect. Renunciation is a mind that wishes to turn away from cyclic existence. So renunciation is not just non-attachment. It is something stronger than that.

*Question:* On page 34 of the root text, it is mentioned that liking and respect are separate mental factors. Is respect a derivative of faith or one of the 51 mental factors?

*Answer:* Faith and respect are not the same. As said in the lam-rim, one develops faith through remembering the qualities and one develops respect through remembering the kindness. So respect is induced by faith.

As for whether respect is a derivative of one of the 51 mental factors, in the first place, the 51 mental factors are not exhaustive. I don't think there are only 51 mental factors. Where do you put respect? Can you include it under faith? You have to think about it. We cannot decisively say so because when you look at all the available texts, no one has said anything about this one way or the other.

Read the rest on your own. We will look at conscientiousness, equanimity, no-harmfulness, and the six root afflictions. These are also the 20 secondary afflictions. At least now you have a rough idea of each of these mental factors. When we talk about them, you have a rough idea of what is non-attachment, non-hatred, non-ignorance, and so forth.

Translated by Ven. Tenzin Gyurme

Transcribed by Phuah Soon Ek, Vivien Ng, and Patricia Lee

Edited by Cecilia Tsong