

Songs and Excerpts Offered by Camille in Summer Margha Retreat 2020

“If your target is in the East, it does not help to aim your arrow to the West.”
—Shabkar

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from Tarthang Tulku on Concepts:

“How might the quality of our lives be different if we had no ‘should’ or ‘would’ in our language?”

If we look carefully at our experience, we can see that many things that seem substantial and real are actually notions formed by our minds. Thinking about them and using them daily, we tend to forget that they are mental formulations and relate to them as real. Thus happiness, for example, is not inherent in the objects we desire, but grows out of the way we interpret a certain kind of excitement. However much we value happiness, it too is only a concept, a name that we learn to apply to certain types of situations or feelings.

Without our idea of happiness and the many related notions concerning what makes us happy, would we know if we were happy? Could we be unhappy? Would we have the same feelings if we lacked a word to express them? ...

It is nearly impossible for us to imagine what life would be like without such familiar concepts. We have come to trust our present conceptual patterning as a reasonably reliable reflection of truth, and see no reason to question it. But does our conceptual patterning increase our options for being and acting in the world, or is it too limited to serve our needs? Are our present concepts able to accommodate all the knowledge possible for us to gain, or have they become too rigid to sustain a more comprehensive perspective on knowledge?

If we reflect on the nature of concepts and how uncritically we accept the reality they create, it may seem that we are caught in the midst of some elaborate computer program that is operating without our conscious decision. And yet we tend to feel that we are in charge of our thinking. Are we running the program or is the program running us? Can we separate ourselves from the program and allow our thoughts and actions to be informed by a more comprehensive and trustworthy knowing intrinsic to our own being?

Left to themselves, thoughts tend to carry on to a point where they pause, almost as if they have converged at a black wall. We might have experienced such a pause when rigorously following a particular train of thought or when we found ourselves ‘stuck’ on a problem. At any time the mind may be silent for a moment. If this pause is noted, we usually consider that we have reached the end of a train of thought. If no new thoughts arise to continue it, we turn our attention to another subject.

But that seeming ‘dead end’ where thoughts melt into a single point could also be a gateway to new knowledge. Focusing on this point with a balanced concentration, we might see possibilities for a way of knowing that lies beyond our accustomed pattern of thinking.

The process may occur so fast that we immediately identify thoughts with words or perhaps whole strings of words that begin an inner dialogue. As our interpretations follow,

involving combinations of concepts that evoke strong emotional tones, we may become aware of feeling burdened by a sense of heaviness that appears to be dark and serious. What thoughts contribute to this heaviness? What has happened to the qualities of openness and light with which the process began?

Questioning thoughts in this way, we can relax our fixed hold on the concept of thought and gain new insights into our mental processes. Every thought is an opportunity to observe and learn from our mind. With experience, we can begin to see how thoughts can actually create confusion and prolong unpleasant states of mind. Eventually it will become more obvious how one thought generates another, and how the momentum of thoughts tends to build on itself, cycling and recycling impulses through the mind (mind-body).

Just as a weaver creates a tapestry by establishing the basic threads of a fabric and embellishing it with pattern after pattern, our minds seem to weave thoughts and images in endless replications. When we catch the beginning of a thought, we can observe how it begins with a simple pattern that is open and spacious, growing more dense as images intertwine in ever more complex patterns.

Stimulating memories and associations that evoke universes of feelings and emotions, thoughts lose their openness as they proliferate and intermesh. Simultaneously, we can sense our critical faculties at work, labeling our experience as happiness, depression, ecstasy, boredom, or anger, as noble or blameworthy.

As each experience is sealed and witnessed by the mind, our thoughts about it become more substantial and ‘real’; we then identify with the experience and react to it according to our conditioning.”

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The Trap of Beliefs, Pith Instructions from Longchen Rabjam

There are six ways to be trapped by the beliefs you hold:

*by believing that there is some “thing” that is free of the ordinary mind
and its conceptual elaborations;*

*by believing that there is some “thing” that is a state of primordial unity,
the indivisibility of bliss and emptiness;*

*by believing that there is some “thing” that is totally pure, like space,
with no frame of reference;*

*by believing that there is some “thing” that is emptiness imbued with
the heart of timeless awareness;*

*by believing that there is some “thing” that is awareness contained within
an environment of light;*

*and by believing that there is some “thing” that is naturally occurring
timeless awareness, primordially and timelessly free.*

*Having only a partial grasp of what is ultimately so is like trying
to describe an elephant;*

you remain fixated on the way you characterize things, naively believing in their identity.

*Therefore, free yourself from the trap of such biases and belief in identity,
and come to a decisive experience of the supremely spacious state
free of limitations—
self-knowing awareness, which is free of any bias, any sense of “is” or “is not.”*

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“Whatever conceptual thoughts occur, you do not have to obstruct or grasp them. You do not have to follow or confirm anything. Just let them arise and do not entertain them. Do not devise any means of blocking thoughts, because thoughts in their own nature are without definite character. If you ask, ‘Then what should we do?’ — do this: be aware of thoughts without labeling them.”

—Dudjom Rinpoche

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“If you take a small child into a temple, he or she will observe all the different images and deities in their true form. Without an intellectual grasping, labeling, or identification with those images, the child will perceive everything in brilliant color and full clarity. Like this, let mind perceive both phenomena and whatever arises from phenomena. The point is not to identify with them, but simply to let them all be.”

—Dudjom Rinpoche

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“How do we verify that our natural state is genuine, real, authentic? It must be unmixed with concept. The moment a conceptual attitude is formed, rigpa is polluted, corrupted. Short moments, many times—the length of our recognition at this state probably is only short moments. When we try to stretch out its duration, what we nurture becomes conceptual; it becomes artificial. But, if due to our training the innate nature continues naturally for quite a while, it doesn’t mean that we have to cut it short. That likewise would be conceptual. The point is that we do not have to do anything to it: we do not have to make it short, nor do we have to make last long.”

—Chogyi Nyima Rinpoche

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“There are some meditators who don’t look into the thinker, the mind itself, but who constantly look at the objects of their thoughts, their belongings, utensils, the earth and the rocks. That is not the correct view, it is a dualistic view. Let go into the thinker her/himself and see.”

—Patrul Rinpoche

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“There are some meditators who don’t let their minds rest in the thinking when it is thinking and in non-thought when there is no thinking. They believe that the mind comes from some other place and then search for it here and there. Because of this they don’t recognize their minds. There is no reason to search here and there. Just let the mind rest directly in thought when there is thinking and in non-thought when there is no thinking, and that is exactly it.”

—Patrul Rinpoche

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Consummate Advice, pith instructions from Longchen Rabjam

Six pieces of consummate advice relate to what is ultimate:

*If you wish to realize the view, search for the one who realizes;
you will find no such thing, and so are free of the trap of the four conceptual extremes.*

*If you wish to cultivate meditation absorption, search for the meditator;
you will find no such thing, and so contemplate the fact that mental stirring
has no substantial nature.*

*If you wish to engage in a mode of conduct, search for the one who engages in conduct;
you will find no such thing, and so are free in your natural, undifferentiated state.*

*If you wish to realize the fruition, search for the one who realizes;
you will find no such thing, for the three kayas are perfect within you.*

*If you wish to accomplish enlightened activity, search for the one who accomplishes;
you will find no such thing, for activity is spontaneously accomplished
without having to be deliberately carried out.*

*If you wish to traverse the spiritual paths and levels, search for the one
who makes the journey;
you will find no such thing, so direct yourself to your natural state, the way of abiding.*

*This is my advice concerning the consummate heart essence:
Please understand that everything is the miraculous display of awareness!*

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“By noticing thoughts—which are called ‘scattering and agitation’—they will disappear without a trace, like drops of water falling into water. If awareness arises immediately through being

mindful of fluctuating {thoughts}, which are like down-feathers blown about by the wind, thoughts will not matter.”

—The Ninth Karmapa, Wangchuk Dorje

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“Not to conceptualize any other thing apart from the object of attention, and to settle the mind one pointedly on that itself is shamatha. To fully distinguish the object’s nature and discern it, or else to be convinced about the realization of the object’s very essence does not exist is vipashyana. Merging these two without separation is shamatha and vipashyana united.”

—*The Third Khamtrul Rinpoche,*
from The Royal Seal of Mahamudra

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*When you see a lofty mountain
Be reminded of the inner view:
The view is the teacher’s mind,
Inseparable from the nature of your own.*

*When you see a lovely forest,
Be reminded of experiences and realization:
Have no hopes or doubts about them,
They are all the teacher’s play.*

*When you see a garden of flowers
Be reminded of action, naturally free:
All actions in harmony with Dharma
Are the teacher’s perfect life.*

*However deluded your thoughts may be,
They are but products of your intellect.
If you set your thoughts free
Where nothing arises, remains, or ends,
They will vanish into emptiness.
That naked emptiness is the guru:
Primordial wisdom beyond the intellect.*

—*Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche*

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