

KHENPO'S
TALKS

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

MEDITATION *- IN* ACTION



KHENPO
SODARGYE

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Meditation in Action

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Khenpo Sodargye

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MEDITATION IN ACTION



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PROFESSOR SAM BLAY

Welcome to UTS. My name is Sam Blay, and I am a Professor of Law here at the university. It is my distinct pleasure and privilege to welcome Khenpo Sodargye Rinpoche to our campus. As many of you know, Khenpo Sodargye is one of the most renowned and widely respected Tibetan Buddhist teachers in China today. We are truly privileged to have him with us here at UTS.

You join us at a particularly important moment, as the topic of today's talk, "Meditation in Action," could not be more timely. In a world facing numerous crises, this subject is especially relevant. For many here, Khenpo Sodargye may need little introduction. However, with your permission, I would like to share a few words for those who may be less familiar with his remarkable background.

As you may have seen from the information displayed earlier, Khenpo Sodargye was born in 1962, on the fourth day of the sixth month according to the Tibetan calendar. He began his Buddhist studies in 1985 at the Serta Larung Gar Five Sciences Buddhist Academy, where he was mentored by His

Holiness Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche. Between 1990 and 1999, he traveled extensively with his teacher, visiting countries including Canada, Germany, Malaysia, Singapore, and Nepal, among others. This broad international experience makes his presence with us today all the more meaningful.

As part of his academic work, Khenpo Sodargye has made remarkable contributions through both his original publications and his translations of Tibetan texts into Chinese. One of his most significant achievements has been to make the disciplines of Tibetan Buddhism more accessible to Chinese readers. To date, he has translated over one hundred works, enabling countless individuals to study, understand, and practice these profound teachings.

Equally noteworthy are his contributions to charitable endeavors. He founded the Shanghai Kindness & Wisdom Foundation, where he currently serves as Honorary Chair. Through this foundation, his compassionate vision has been translated into meaningful social action. It is also important to highlight the core lessons he consistently emphasizes in his teachings. On many occasions, he has expressed the principle that whenever we can benefit sentient beings, we should be willing to dedicate

ourselves—serving as long as necessary—even if our efforts inspire only a single virtuous thought in one person.

More importantly, and especially relevant to today’s discussion, he has also said: “I do not know how long I shall live. But as long as I live and can breathe, even if there is only one listener, I will do my utmost to bring benefit to that person through the dharma.”

Ladies and gentlemen, although Khenpo Sodargye has humbly said that he does not know how long he will live, we sincerely hope he will be with us for many, many years to come. He has also expressed that even if there were only one listener, that would be enough. Today, as you can see, he has far more than one listener—he has all of us gathered here.

Here at UTS, Khenpo Sodargye, you are warmly welcomed among friends, admirers, and followers. You are speaking at a truly multicultural institution, with over 27,000 students from diverse parts of the world, representing many cultures and faiths, yet united as one humanity. This is what makes your message on meditation so meaningful and timely for all of us. Welcome once again to UTS, and welcome to the company of your friends and well-wishers.

Host

Thank you, Professor Blay. It is a great honor for us to welcome Khenpo Sodargye to our Buddhist Meditation Center. On behalf of both the Center and the Organizing Committee, I would like to extend our warmest greetings and heartfelt welcome to him.

The topic Rinpoche will explore today, “Meditation in Action,” is as vibrant and dynamic as this young university itself. As the Buddha taught, we should neither dwell on the past nor chase after the future, but instead focus our minds fully on the present moment. I believe this is the very foundation of meditation. While many of us may be familiar with sitting meditation, today Rinpoche will guide us in discovering how meditation can be seamlessly integrated into our daily lives and actions.

Without further ado, please join me in inviting Khenpo Sodargye to the podium to share his insights on “Meditation in Action.”

KHENPO SODARGYE RINPOCHE

BRINGING MINDFULNESS INTO DAILY LIFE

Today, I would like to talk with you about “Meditation in Action.” When you first hear this phrase, it may sound somewhat unfamiliar, since most of us tend to associate meditation with sitting still, observing the mind, or focusing on a specific object. In the Buddhist tradition, for example, meditation is often practiced in the classic “seven-point posture of Vairochana.” Similarly, many other spiritual traditions and secular meditation groups emphasize sitting quietly to meditate. This seated, still form of meditation has become the most widely recognized approach worldwide. However, today I want to invite you to explore meditation from a different perspective.

I have noticed that many people here in Sydney place great value on outdoor physical activity. Jogging, leisurely walks, and walking dogs are common and much enjoyed. Perhaps it is the clear skies, fresh air, coastal views, and beautiful natural surroundings, combined with a free and open lifestyle, that make these activities so appealing and accessible. Of course, this is not unique to Sydney—many people around the world

prioritize physical exercise, seeking to improve their health and well-being by caring for their bodies. This is a goal that many of us pursue in our daily lives.

While physical health is important for all of us, regardless of our age, cultivating inner well-being is even more crucial. For genuine happiness does not stem solely from a strong body; it is more deeply rooted in a healthy mind. To achieve this happiness of the mind, we need to enhance our mental well-being through training, including developing wisdom, building resilience, and cultivating kindness and compassion within ourselves.

Physical exercise can only help maintain the health of our bodies in this lifetime. But if we cultivate a healthy and strengthened mind, the happiness it brings will endure far beyond this life. It continues lifetime after lifetime. Therefore, training the mind is essential.

How, then, can we train the mind? There are many approaches, and among them, one of the most effective methods is meditation. Today, meditation is widely recognized as a powerful practice for enhancing both physical and mental well-being. It is embraced not only in religious contexts but also in universities and various social organizations around the world.

Through meditation, the mind can achieve balance and tranquility. This is essential for everyone, because as human beings, we frequently experience suffering and are prone to afflictive emotions such as desire, anger, and ignorance. When driven by these disturbing emotions, our words and actions often become unwise or even harmful. Therefore, it is always important for all of us to maintain the clarity and health of our minds.

In actual practice, while it is relatively easy to meditate while sitting still, it can be challenging for us to incorporate meditation into everyday activities such as walking and eating. Fortunately, Buddhism offers approaches to integrating meditation into daily life. For example, in the *Great Discourse on the Foundations of Mindfulness*, the Buddha taught:

Monks, when a monk is walking, he knows, "I am walking." When standing, he knows, "I am standing." When sitting, he knows, "I am sitting." When lying down, he knows, "I am lying down." Whatever posture the body assumes should be known just as it is.

Thus, in addition to methods that cultivate stillness of mind through seated meditation in quiet environments, Buddhist scriptures teach us to develop meditative awareness by observing the mind throughout all our daily activities. This approach

was clearly taught more than two thousand years ago and remains profoundly relevant today.

The practice of incorporating mindfulness into our everyday activities is incredibly important, especially since many people may not have the time or opportunity to engage in regular sitting meditation practices—whether in the morning, evening, or throughout the day. By integrating meditative awareness into ordinary routines such as driving, walking, or commuting, our minds can gradually become more peaceful and balanced.

However, it is important to recognize that such a state is not easily achieved. Like any meditative state, it requires consistent, long-term effort and dedication. Therefore, we must vigilantly guard our minds and maintain inner clarity by observing them with care and diligence.



MEDITATION IN ACTION IN THERAVADA BUDDHISM

As many of you may know, Buddhism can be broadly categorized into three main traditions: Theravada Buddhism, Han Buddhism, and Tibetan Buddhism. Within each of these traditions, there are diverse methods for practicing what we might call “mediation in action.” I will now briefly introduce a few examples from these traditions.

Let us begin with Theravada Buddhism. In Buddhist communities across countries such as Myanmar, Thailand, and Sri Lanka, where this tradition is predominant, there are many practices aimed at cultivating mindfulness and staying present during everyday activities. A well-known example is the Mahasati Meditation, which is a dynamic, movement-based form of meditation developed by the late Thai Buddhist teacher Luangpor Teean.

I have learned about this meditation technique from related teachings. Mahasati Meditation can be practiced in various postures, including sitting, standing, and lying down. In the sitting practice, the practitioner moves rhythmically while maintaining awareness of the body’s movements, particularly the hands.

The movements are simple and repetitive, often beginning with resting the palms down on the thighs, then slowly turning each palm and raising and lowering the hands in a step-by-step motion. Throughout this process, the practitioner cultivates self-awareness by closely observing the movements of the body and mind, maintaining this awareness at all times without any judgment.

In his teaching, Luangpor Teean used a vivid metaphor to explain the relationship between thought and awareness. He likened thought to a rat and awareness to a cat. At first, when a thought arises, the mind is dragged along like a kitten chasing a big rat—the rat (thought) is bigger and stronger than the kitten (awareness). As we cultivate self-awareness, it is like feeding the kitten until it grows into a big, strong cat. Eventually, when a thought arises, the mind is no longer dragged along, and the thought stops immediately. When the mind can overtake thoughts in this way, insight arises. This insight leads to the realization of the End of Suffering—the state of Birth-Extinction.

If you apply this practice to daily life, it means maintaining continuous awareness in all situations. For example, when walking, you are aware that you are walking; when strolling by

the sea, you are aware of walking by the sea; and when listening to a lecture, you know you are listening to a lecture. In essence, it is a method of observing your own thoughts with mindful awareness at all times.

I once met someone who claimed to be very skilled at maintaining meditative awareness throughout daily life. He told me, “I am able to be constantly aware of my own mind, no matter what I am doing.” While this is certainly a valuable ability, it is not necessarily a very advanced level of meditation—it is a state that anyone can reach with consistent practice. However, the nature of mind is incredibly subtle. Simply maintaining awareness of the mind is not enough to realize its true nature.

According to the Mahasati Meditation method, if you are unaware of the thoughts that constantly arise, suffering cannot be eliminated, and the cycle of birth and death cannot be broken. Once you cultivate self-awareness and become aware of your thoughts, you gradually move toward liberation. But this method alone misses a crucial element: an understanding of the mind’s fundamental nature of emptiness. Without recognizing the empty nature of the mind, it is impossible to sever attachment. Without severing attachment, there is no guarantee that

suffering will not return, thus making true liberation remain out of reach.

Still, cultivating mindfulness of the mind is especially important today, particularly in this age of advanced science and technology, where people's minds are increasingly distracted by external stimuli. For example, two people may spend an hour eating together, yet much of that time may be spent absorbed in their own phones, rather than engaging with each other. Although physically present, they are mentally elsewhere, busy texting, sharing photos, or sending emails—with very little actual interaction between them.

Under such circumstances, if we do not turn inward and focus on our minds, not to mention maintain mindfulness of our thoughts, even sustaining basic relationships with others can become surprisingly difficult. Therefore, cultivating mindfulness through meditation is essential in our modern lives.

MEDITATION IN ACTION IN HAN BUDDHISM

Within Han Buddhism, there are also methods of practicing meditation in action. One notable example is the “Samadhi of Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present” (Bozhou sanmei 般舟三昧). It is so named because, when perfected, it enables practitioners to witness buddhas appearing before their very eyes. This practice requires practitioners to walk continuously while recollecting Buddha Amitabha or reciting his name, without sitting or lying down. The duration can range from a single day and night to as long as ninety days and nights. While in motion, practitioners maintain an unbroken meditative awareness focused on Buddha Amitabha.

The Samadhi of Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present is a renowned practice in the history of Han Buddhism. Many highly respected masters, such as Huiyuan, Zhizhe, and Daoxuan, have undertaken this meditation. The practice process is also quite austere and often leads to physical hardships, such as blistered or swollen feet from the continuous walking. However, through recollecting Buddha Amitabha and reciting his name with meditative awareness while walking, practitioners can ultimately achieve a direct vision of Buddha Amitabha, the very object of their contemplation.

Another example of practicing meditation in movement comes from the Chan tradition. The Sixth Patriarch of Chan, Huineng, explains “sitting meditation” (Zuo chan 坐禪) in the *Platform Sutra* as follows:

To achieve absolute freedom and remain mentally unperturbed by all external circumstances, whether favorable or unfavorable, is called “sitting” (zuo). To realize inwardly the imperturbability of the mind’s essence is called “meditation” (chan).

Unlike the common understanding of sitting meditation as simply sitting in one position and focusing the mind on a specific object, this explanation points to a profound state of realization. It means that in whatever activity, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, we abide in the mind’s essence and remain undisturbed by the arising of thoughts.

This insight is echoed by Master Yongjia in his *Song of Enlightenment*, composed after his own awakening. He writes:

Walking is Chan; sitting is Chan;

Whether speaking or silent, moving or still, your essence is at peace.

In other words, regardless of whether our body is sitting or moving, whether we are speaking or silent, and whether our

mind is agitated or calm, we always naturally abide in the state of wisdom.

This can be considered a rather advanced state in Chan Buddhism. Personally, I admire this state very much, because although we are often able to maintain a peaceful mind in certain situations, once we leave those settings and circumstances change, our minds often become unsettled or even lose control. That is why cultivating a stable and undisturbed mind through meditation is so crucial.

MEDITATION IN ACTION IN TIBETAN BUDDHISM

From the perspective of Tibetan Buddhism, stilling the mind in meditation is not as easy as we might wish; it requires consistent training. In order to support meditation effectively, it is essential to cultivate the skillful practices of vigilance, mindfulness, and conscientiousness. Without this training, the mind is often restless, like a mischievous monkey or an untamed horse, never staying still even for a moment. Even when we attempt to rest the mind in meditation, it quickly generates a stream of thoughts and becomes easily distracted. However, by applying these three practices, the mind can gradually settle, regardless of the object or circumstance it encounters.

As for the meaning of these three practices, vigilance refers to continually checking the status of one's body, speech, and mind. With the knowing aspect of the mind, we observe: "What is my mind thinking? What is my body doing? What am I saying?" Regularly examining these three doors—body, speech, and mind—with vigilance is like a guard watching over a territory or a trainer keeping a close watch on a horse. This kind of vigilance is especially important during meditation.

However, merely monitoring the three doors with vigilance is not enough. We must also apply mindfulness to our meditation. That is, continually remember the virtuous dharma that counteracts negative thoughts taught by our teachers, parents, or mentors. Just as a trainer reins in a horse with a rope to prevent it from going astray, mindfulness acts like that rope, anchoring the mind in virtue through constant recollection of the dharma to be cultivated.

In addition to vigilance in checking our three doors and mindfulness in remembering virtuous dharma, we must also earnestly apply care in discerning what should be adopted and what should be avoided. This prevents the mind from straying onto the wrong path and ensures it remains aligned with the right one. This practice is called conscientiousness. Together, these three skilful methods form an essential triad for beginners embarking on the path of meditation.

When practicing meditation in action, there are generally two approaches. One is reciting mantras, which is a common and accessible method for many people. This practice enables not only the mind, but also the body and speech, to enter a meditative state at any moment. Personally, my favorite tool for meditative practice while in motion is my mala. Using it to

count repetitions, I often recite the Mani mantra, “Om Mani Padme Hung,” while visualizing Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara in my mind. This practice helps bring my body, speech, and mind into a meditative state, whether I am walking, traveling in a car, or engaged in other everyday activities.

I have noticed that many Tibetans in our audience also wear malas around their necks. While some young people might treat the mala as a decorative accessory, it is much more than a simple ornament. It is fair to say that a mala is a powerful tool for maintaining a peaceful and clear mind, regardless of the activity in which we are engaged. This tool is not unique to Tibetans here today; if you visit the Tibetan regions of the Himalayas, you will see many people reciting mantras with malas in their hands. This form of meditation practice in daily life has contributed greatly to the profound inner peace and happiness experienced by the Tibetan people.

The power of mantras for the mind is as remarkable as a remedy prescribed for a specific illness. Everyone here, whether you have faith in Buddhism or not, can try it for yourself and experience the benefits it brings to maintaining a peaceful mind. Some of you may not be familiar with reciting the Mani mantra, which is “Om Mani Padme Hung Shrih.” You can recite this

mantra at any time—while walking, washing vegetables, or doing the dishes. Through reciting it, your discursive thoughts, mental suffering, and afflictive emotions such as fear and anxiety will naturally and gradually subside.

You do not need to have a strong interest or faith in Buddhism to incorporate this practice into your life. In today's world, it is important that we allow truth to take precedence over religious faith as our guiding principle. Just as you might not fully trust a certain medicine but still benefit from its healing effects, the same applies to practices that benefit the mind. Such practices should not be limited by religious boundaries. As long as they are effective and powerful in improving mental well-being, they are worthy of our exploration.

The second approach to meditation in daily life involves a more advanced level of practice—recognizing the true nature of mind. We can observe that when we encounter difficulties in life or when our work does not go smoothly, we naturally experience suffering; conversely, when things go our way, we feel happiness. However, these feelings of happiness and suffering are merely projections of the mind. Upon closer examination, we find that the mind itself lacks inherent, independent existence. If the

mind has no true existence of its own, then the happiness and suffering it projects cannot ultimately be real or attainable.

When we recognize that the mind is empty of inherent existence, we awaken to the wisdom of selflessness. We often believe in the existence of a substantial self, but upon close investigation, this so-called “self” is ultimately unfindable. This unfindability is not just a Buddhist concept; it is a universal truth that anyone can verify and experience through meditation.

A great master in Tibetan Buddhism, Venerable Atisha, who came from India to spread the dharma in Tibetan regions, once said: “If one generates one hundred dualistic thoughts in a day, one encounters the wisdom dharmakaya one hundred times.” While ordinary people may not necessarily realize this, experienced practitioners who have attained a certain level of realization can readily recognize it by looking into their own minds. Recognizing the nature of mind does not require meditation in a solitary place; it can be realized in any daily activity, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down.

Recognizing the nature of mind is extremely important for each of us in the cycle of samsara. Yet, it is regrettable that in today’s world, many people remain absorbed in fleeting, illusory pursuits, while very few genuinely turn their attention inward

to explore the mind's true nature. Before my talk, when the professor introduced the diverse, global student community of this university, I thought, "What a remarkably inclusive institution." Yet almost immediately, another thought arose: "Among such a diverse community, how many people truly engage in introspective meditation to uncover the mind's true nature?" In that very moment, I was practicing meditation in action.



UNVEILING THE INNER BEAUTY OF MIND

As I toured the university earlier, I was deeply impressed by its innovative architecture, which is more sophisticated than many I have seen. The way cutting-edge technology is seamlessly woven into the design is truly admirable. Yet, while we devote great attention to external innovation, we should also focus equally—if not more—on exploring the truths within ourselves. Glimpses of such inner wisdom are often preserved in communities where technology may be less advanced, but traditional wisdom remains vibrantly alive.

These days, whether in the East or the West, universities often place great emphasis on the external, material world, using various instruments to measure and collect data. Yet, the inner landscape of human consciousness and the journey to discover our true selves receive far less attention. As a result, when we encounter life's practical challenges, such as aging, illness, and death, many of us often feel unprepared or at a loss for answers.

To wrap up today's talk, I would like to share a short parable from the time of the Buddha:

Once, a young novice monk accompanied Venerable Shariputra on an alms round. Along the way, they observed a farmer channeling water into his fields. The novice asked, "Can water be directed to flow wherever one wishes?" Shariputra replied, "Yes, it can be guided where it is needed."

A little further on, they saw a craftsman using fire to straighten a bamboo arrow. The novice asked, "Can a crooked bamboo truly be made straight?" The Venerable answered, "Yes, with the right skill, it can be straightened."

Later, they came across a carpenter shaping a tree trunk into a wheel. The novice asked, "Can such a trunk be made round?" Shariputra replied, "Yes, it can be crafted into any form."

Reflecting on these encounters, the novice thought, "Water can be guided, bamboo can be straightened, and wood can be shaped. These things possess no consciousness. If they can be transformed, then surely I, who possess consciousness, can also train and master my own mind."

Upon returning to the monastery, the novice devoted himself to diligent practice. In time, he overcame his afflictions, realized the true nature of mind, and attained the peace and happiness of liberation.

In conclusion, as you navigate life in this high-tech world and search for meaning and purpose, may you not lose sight of the beauty within, and may you discover the true nature of your own mind. Thank you all.



QUESTION AND ANSWER

QUESTION 1 Rinpoche, Tashi Delek. My hometown is Minyak in Kham. I want to express how much joy your arrival has brought to all of us Tibetans living in Australia. On behalf of the more than 1,000 Tibetans here, I would like to request that you kindly give us a dharma teaching for an hour or longer, if your schedule allows. If possible, we can provide a contact number and hope you might find some time for us. We are all eagerly looking forward to this precious opportunity. Thank you so much!

KHENPO SODARGYE Although it seems there are not many Tibetans present today, it is truly wonderful to meet fellow Tibetans in a foreign land. From the malas you wear and other distinctive signs, I can tell you are Tibetan, and I am happy to see you all. I am not certain whether I will have enough time to give a teaching, as my schedule has mostly been set in advance. However, please leave a phone number, and we will see what can be arranged. If I am able to find some time, I will contact you so we can discuss this further. Thank you very much.

QUESTION 2 You mentioned in your talk that we need to always observe the nature of our minds. I have been meditating for a very long time and have now reached a point where I can no longer find my feelings. I am not sure if this state will last, though. Should I just keep meditating? It feels like a strange question to ask, but I wonder if you have experienced something similar.

KHENPO SODARGYE This is definitely not a strange question at all—in fact, it is a very good one. When we meditate, our conceptual mind can gradually settle, and we may be able to sustain this calmness for an extended period. In Buddhism, this is what we call shamatha, or calm abiding.

However, simply stilling the mind is not enough. Not only can human beings remain in such stillness, but celestial beings can stay in meditative stillness for eons. Even some animals can remain dormant for months without producing a thought. On the basis of shamatha, we need to realize the true nature of mind. This is called vipashyana, or clear seeing. Without the insight of clear seeing, we cannot eradicate the root of samsara.

Now, according to your description, your practice appears to be in the state of shamatha. If you practice further, you may come to recognize the nature of mind. Ultimately, the mind

cannot be said to exist, nor can it be said not to exist. It is an inconceivable state beyond dualistic thought. But you must first rely on theoretical study to understand this, before you can truly bring it into direct experience.

QUESTION 3 I am from Bhutan. When I examine the things around me, I suddenly realize that everything is of a compounded nature, but this realization sometimes disturbs me. At times, I feel as though I belong neither to the phenomenal world nor to the spiritual world, and I find it difficult to cope with what is happening around me. For example, when I look at my daughter, she sometimes appears to me as merely a collection of parts. Why do I experience this peculiar sensation?

KHENPO SODARGYE This is not a strange or abnormal feeling. When certain causes and conditions come together, our ways of seeing, hearing, or valuing things can change, leading us to experience reality differently from what is commonly considered “normal.” In fact, you are not alone in having such experiences. Many people develop values or preferences that differ from the majority. For example, what most people consider good may be seen as bad by someone else. These differences in perception arise from individual karma.

I have had similar experiences myself. When I visited Bhutan in 1990, even though Bhutan shares many traditions and beliefs with the Tibetan regions, I still encountered things that challenged my usual ways of thinking and perceiving. We all experience moments when what we see or hear feels unusual or out of the ordinary.

From a Buddhist perspective, such experiences are quite natural. I encourage you to continue exploring this phenomenon and to engage in long-term contemplation to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying principles.

QUESTION 4 What stage has your meditation reached? And what is the ultimate result of meditation? Is it nothingness?

KHENPO SODARGYE Well, I can confidently say that I have achieved a high level of sleeping meditation. Since coming to Australia, maybe due to the jet lag, I have been able to “meditate” very deeply at night. Just last night, I was in such deep “meditation” that I slept straight through till dawn—without a single thought arising. So, you see, my meditative skills are pretty solid right now. [Audience laughs]

QUESTION 5 I am a student from the University of New South Wales. I was particularly intrigued by your talk on the meditation method of observing the mind during everyday activities. My question is: What are the results of meditation? Does it bring benefits in future lives, or does it make a difference in this life?

KHENPO SODARGYE The benefits we gain from meditation depend on our level of dedication. With sincere and consistent practice, it is possible to reach the highest states of meditation within this very lifetime.

Meditation in action can be approached in two ways: first, by cultivating meditative awareness while in movement; and second, by engaging in activities while maintaining a meditative state. For many people, the latter approach is especially important. For example, reciting the Mani mantra during household chores, as I mentioned in my talk, is an effective and meaningful practice. Personally, I hold this practice in high regard and share it based on years of experience. It carries profound significance for our spiritual growth.

QUESTION 6 I am from Inner Mongolia and currently study at the University of New South Wales. My whole family is devoted to Buddhism. Since coming to Australia,

I have also learned something about the Catholic faith, and I have noticed many similarities between Catholicism and Buddhism, especially in their emphasis on compassion. Sometimes I feel uncertain about which faith to follow, and I hope you could offer some guidance.

KHENPO SODARGYE Regarding matters of faith, there is a passage in the book *Albert Einstein, the Human Side: New Glimpses from his Archives* that records some of Einstein's reflections. He observed that while our age is rich in scientific discoveries, knowledge and skills alone cannot bring true happiness or dignity to human life. In his view, humanity's ethical conduct has been shaped more by prophets and spiritual leaders than by scientific knowledge. He noted that what we owe to figures such as Buddha Shakyamuni, Moses, and Jesus is greater than all the achievements of the inquisitive and inventive mind. Einstein further emphasized that we must do our utmost to preserve and keep alive the teachings of these revered figures, lest we lose our dignity, our sense of security, and our joy in living.

Therefore, it is truly valuable to have faith in a spiritual tradition. However, as to which path you should follow, this is a decision only you can make through thoughtful reflection. Once you make your choice, do not simply become a believer in name;

instead, engage deeply with its teachings. This is what truly gives faith its meaning. I hope you will make a wise and fulfilling choice.

QUESTION 7 Does the highest state of meditation refer to emptiness?

KHENPO SODARGYE The ultimate realization in meditation, or the true nature of all phenomena, is not merely emptiness. Ultimately, neither emptiness, nor non-emptiness, nor both, nor neither truly exists. This is known in Buddhism as the state “beyond the four extremes.” Although this may seem inconceivable, it can be directly experienced when your meditation matures to this level. Freedom from the four extremes is the true nature of mind, and it is the ultimate reality of all phenomena.

QUESTION 8 When reciting the Mani mantra, is it required to chant it exactly 108 times?

KHENPO SODARGYE There is no strict rule about that. Even a few repetitions are meaningful. However, the more you recite, the greater the benefit.

QUESTION 9 Suppose a practitioner has two Vajrayana masters whom they deeply trust. One day, however, the

two masters begin to openly criticize each other. What should the practitioner do? Should they apply pure perception, convincing themselves that this conflict is merely an impure manifestation arising from their own negative karma, or should they give up their Vajrayana practice?

KHENPO SODARGYE Disciples should not intervene in the interactions between their teachers, nor should they abandon their Vajrayana practice because of such conflicts.

QUESTION 10 Khenpo Rinpoche, thank you for being here and allowing us to attend your teaching today. I would like to ask: when difficult circumstances arise in life, I know I should use meditation to work with them, but sometimes reciting the Mani mantra does not seem to bring any noticeable effect. What should I do in such situations?

KHENPO SODARGYE If you do not feel any response from reciting the Mani mantra, it is perfectly okay to try another mantra or method that resonates with you. Sometimes, even something as simple as enjoying a good meal can help shift your state. The key is to find any practice or approach that enables you to move out of that difficult state and brings you some relief.

Host

Thank you all for your thoughtful questions, and a heartfelt thanks to Rinpoche for his insightful answers. I hope today's talk has helped everyone gain a deeper understanding of meditation in daily life. I also hope that you have found this session as enriching and inspiring as I have. As you leave here today, please remember to carry mindfulness into your everyday activities. Once again, thank you to Rinpoche for coming to the University of Technology Sydney and sharing such a wonderful dharma talk with us.

Dedication

May the merit resulting from this piece of work contribute
in the greatest possible measure to the long life of all great
masters, to the flourishing of the Buddhadharma,
and to the welfare of all sentient beings.

It is always our wish to present a work of the highest quality to the readers so that anyone who reads this text would find inspiration. So we would very much appreciate your comments, feedback or suggestions for how this text might be improved and made more valuable. You are also greatly welcomed if you want to make a contribution to any of our other projects of translation. Please email us at: *translation@khenposodargye.org*

