

Khenpo Karthar: Do Not Be Discouraged Practicing the Dharma

Your mind is defined by the fact that you can cognize. You can experience, you are aware, and therefore the defining characteristic of your mind is cognitive lucidity. Your mind is not just lucidity because it is not a substantial brilliance like the sun or the moon. The mind, while lucid, is utterly insubstantial. It is empty of any substance or entity whatsoever. Furthermore, this lucidity and this emptiness are not two different things. They are inseparable. You rest in a state in which you experience your mind just as it is, which is the union of lucidity and emptiness, and you do so without any kind of fixation, without any conceptualized apprehension. This is *great even-placement*. In general, even-placement can refer to either the meditation of perfect tranquillity or of insight. Here it refers to insight because it is more than a state of tranquillity. In this state the mind is resting completely and utterly within a direct experience of its own nature. You remain within that state, practicing the *conduct of extreme simplicity*, which refers to a mode of conduct that is free from elaborations or complexities. Your mind is free not only from mundane activities, distractions, and disturbances, but even from conceptual functions of mind and thinking itself. At this point you make the aspiration to perfect this practice—the conduct of extreme simplicity—so that you can achieve the supreme liberation, perfect awakening, at the very moment of death.

[People often say], "People used to achieve this in the good old days, but nowadays it does not happen." In fact, it happens all the time. In my lifetime..there have been several instances of this in my own experience and countless others as well. [Khenpo Kathar then gives several examples of modern practitioners who have gained *thugden* rat their death.]

I mention all of this and comment on it at length because it is important to understand that, as bad as the times are, the dharma is not affected or diminished in any way. We do indeed live in an age of decadence, but the dharma is not decadent. The dharma is the same as it always has been. The land of Tibet has suffered greatly throughout the preceding century, yet all that has brought great suffering to the people and has greatly diminished practice resources—has not affected the power or authenticity of dharma in any way. The compassion of buddhas and bodhisattvas and their blessings are utterly unaffected by the circumstances of the times we live in. The dharma is always effective and it will always work. You simply have to do it. I am confident that if someone practices these things properly, they will definitely achieve the result described here. It is infallible. I want to inspire you with this same confidence and knowledge that, "If I practice this, I will achieve this."