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## Practicing around the clock

### H.E. Thuksey Rinpoche on the whole life as a spiritual practice

Storms, earthquakes, floods - the effects of the climate change are noticeable worldwide. Everyone knowing the causes of this phenomena can contribute to a change. On invitation of Hamburg's Live To Love Germany foundation H.E. Thuksey Rinpoche has explained in a public dialogue the interrelations that are responsible for the state of the world's climate. He talked about a „Philosophy of flexibility“, about an applied form of meditation and the very common delusion of not having enough time.

*2014 was the warmest year since the beginning of the worldwide weather records, there are more and more striking weather phenomena and plastic garbage patches in the oceans. Are we talking too much instead of acting? And what do we need to undertake in order for something to change?*

H.E. Thuksey Rinpoche (H.E.): I think that the environmental conditions cannot only be changed through ecological measures. The most important thing is that the people are changing their behavior. 2014 was a very hot year. And this is not only the sun's fault... We are the ones having caused this heat. We are saying that there are so many „natural disasters“ in the world: floods, earthquakes... I do not believe in the slightest in natural disasters. These disasters are not caused by the nature but by humans. We are trying to deny our responsibility by using the term „natural disaster“. Nothing is natural about it! All is having a cause and without a cause there is no effect. We humans are it!

The world is changing. This is not only the case in Germany. Up in the Himalayas, in Ladakh, where I live, there always has been snow. Now the snow is melting. There is not much snow left in the mountains. Why? Because in Ladakh we also are buying more cars, burn more things in our chimneys, use up more water.

Due to these reasons I am saying that these disasters are made by us. All this happens because we are so selfish and self-involved. We are always talking about „me, me, me“ and „mine“. This is the cause and this is why we need to change our behavior.



*Many people are very motivated and would like to become actively involved but our society is getting faster and faster. There is so much to do. We are involved in our jobs, in our families. Some people just don't have the time. What is your advice on this?*

H.E.: Everyone has this problem – including me. We have no time. No time to practice (i.e. the spiritual practice), no time to eat, no time for this and that. So this is a common problem. And it is a common excuse. I would say having no time does not exist.

*“The most important thing is that people change their behavior. These disasters are not made by nature, but caused by humans”*

There is time. It is just that we feel that there is none. If it is about something, which concerns someone else – say doing something for someone else – then we have no time. If it is something, which one does for oneself, then there is always enough time. And to practice you don't need a “special time”. You can practice along the way, when you are talking to people, when cooking, when you do little things. It is not that you have to sit in front of a shrine to practice, in a church or in a temple.

*So I don't have to necessarily sit on my meditation cushion for 30 minutes every day?*

HE: The true practice of compassion and loving kindness starts in dealing with your own anger, with your desire and many other topics. This can be exercised every day 24 hours. When we are driving, when we are walking. Spiritual practice should help us to become a better person. You can practice to love others and to care about others. Practice means to train your mind, to become a kind person. To think more about others and less about oneself. That is what practice should be about. To do this, you don't need extra time, not even an extra minute. Everything then is practice, until you go to bed in the evening.

*“I believe all animals have the same right as we humans to lead a happy life. And it up to us people to make this possible.”*

*Activity instead of sitting. So could you say there is a very close connection between meditation and humanitarian commitment?*



H.E. All religions have their own form of meditation, but the philosophy is the same: be kind, not hurting anyone, not to kill, not to lie. That is what is really needed. A kind of simple Dharma. This improvement should happen during the daily practice, through development of compassion. You develop compassion, as soon as you understand the suffering and it's causes.

Photo: The Drukpa animal sanctuary in Ladakh

*In the scope of your street dog project in Ladakh, Live to Rescue, you care about dogs and call that active meditation. Could you explain this in more detail?*

H.E. In Ladakh the winters are hard. There is less food, many people are gone, but the dogs are still there. Ladakh's dog population is very high in relationship to the number of people. So the animals start to eat each other due to hunger. They have also eaten a cow, a donkey and even a nine year old girl. So this is a terrible situation. But we have to understand why the dogs act so aggressively against each other.

Normally a dog eats no human. A tiger may eat you or a lion, but no dog. It is a people's problem. What have they done? They have kicked the dogs, have thrown sticks at them. Dogs got no love or care from the people. So the dogs became aggressive towards the people. Whenever they meet a human, they have the feeling, he is somewhat dangerous. Thereupon the people decided to kill these dogs, because they didn't want dogs which are so terrible. But instead of killing the dogs, we should teach the people in love and compassion. The human has to behave differently in order for the dog not to bite him.

So I have founded the animal sanctuary to accommodate all the aggressive and terrifying dogs. The people said: "Don't touch him, he has eaten a human, he has eaten a cow, he has done this, he has done that..." In spite of everything I have taught my team to touch the dogs. The dogs approached us very fondly and we have fed them. When the dog would have been evil, then he would have bitten us also after all.

The dog, the fish, the human - we all need love and compassion. That is the practice. If you come to an animal sanctuary, wash a dog, care for a dog, clean the dog, give him something to eat- this is the Buddha-Dharma.

*But You also can't care about all the dogs in Ladakh...*



H.E. As soon as the dogs are big and healthy enough, we release them for adoption. We make sure, that the animals are well provided for. We make surprise visits in the families to check if they care. If not, then we take the dogs back. I believe all animals have the same right as we people to lead a happy life. And it is up to us people to make that possible.

*Would it be a form of compassion or the consequence that we should eat vegetarian?*

H.E. To have compassion and being a vegetarian is very closely connected. I live vegetarian since a few years. It is not that I don't like meat. To be honest I have eaten a lot of meat in the past. But one day a friend of mine said while we were joking during dinner: "You are eating dead bodies." That made me think. It was a joke, but at the same time I thought: "This is actually the truth, that is a dead body and we eat it."

It is like a dead body, cut into pieces and cooked up. It is the very same thing. And suddenly I thought: „which way does meat come to us? What is this meat?“ Suddenly I was disgusted to eat this meat that had been slaughtered with so much suffering. We put it on our plates for pleasure thinking it to be something beautiful. It is crazy. Thus I became vegetarian out of my own understanding, caused by the awareness of the suffering and not because of the Buddha saying: „you shall become vegetarians.“

An animal feels like a human being - it feels the same pain. But animals are being transported like plastic for example. They suffer a lot of pain and they cry also.

I have seen an animal crying before it was about to be slaughtered with my own eyes. Animals sometimes even have better senses than us humans.

But animals cannot raise their voices for themselves. This only we humans can do for them, this is the responsibility of our society. Of course this is not easy, but if an individual becomes a vegetarian then he can really make a difference.

*In our society flexibility and quickness are considered to be a virtue, the downside often being stress. Then we are quite narrow and under pressure. How much flexibility is good for us?*

H.E.: Flexibility is a very important practice. There are many ways: flexibility in the mind, in the body, in the way of thinking. All has its origin in the mind.

To this an example: if somebody might say that we are beautiful, then we are happy and feeling good. On the other hand maybe there are a hundred people saying you are not such a good person. Then you are sad, although you have many friends around you, a wife, kids, which all care about you. We get so frustrated because we never look at both sides. We are always one sided. Therefore flexibility is so important.

Another good example is the steam bath. It is so hot inside, one almost gets cooked. People sweat and sweat and get all red. Yet the doctor says it is good for you. If your mind tells you it is good for the health, then the heat is good also. Directly after the steam bath you go, just as the doctor has told, into the freezing cold water. It is quite easy because the mind tells us the cold water is good for the health. So many people feel good and there are no complains.

All is made by one's own mind. Hot and cold, happy and unhappy – it doesn't matter. Something like good or bad, beautiful or ugly does not exist, because it is created by one's own mind. When we learn to become flexible, then this is a way to make ourselves happy.

The interview was conducted by moderator and journalist Simone Utler.  
Fotos: Agnes Forsthuber

## **Thuksey Rinpoche**

Thuksey Rinpoche is an important master of the tibetan-buddhist Drukpa order. Out of his love for animals he together with the Young Drukpa Association and in cooperation with Live To Love International has build up a modern animal sanctuary for dogs in Indian Ladakh which is unique in the Himalayas. Besides his manifold monastery tasks, he amongst other things presides over the renowned secular Druk White Lotus School, which provides the children with education, a home and cultural roots.

## **Live To Love Germany**

In 2014 the Foundation Live To Love Germany was established, being part of the worldwide Live To Love network. Live To Love was founded by the Gyalwang Drukpa and is a secular humanitarian initiative. The holistic approach of Live To Love can be found in the Live To Love projects: education, environmental and animal protection, empowerment of women worldwide, medical aid and relief aid in disaster areas, preservation of cultural heritage.

Information: [www.livetolove.org](http://www.livetolove.org)  
[www.live-to-love-germany.org](http://www.live-to-love-germany.org)