

Instructions on Taking Suffering onto The Path

By the precious Lord Tsongkhapa

A virtuous friend told me once that it would be good if there were a short summary of (the practice of) taking suffering onto the path. Since we already have the corpus of these teachings, it is inappropriate to create something on top of what already exists. However, in order not to go against his request, I shall give you a summary of it:

Combining suffering with the path is divided into two sections:

1. Coming to know that and overcoming the mind that does want suffering.
2. And then - the actual part of taking suffering into the path.

The more incapable you are of tolerating suffering, the greater your unhappiness is so that it torments you in this life. On that basis, your mental continuum is increasingly disturbed by hostility to the point that the torments of this life cannot be compared with the torments this will bring in future lifetimes.

Employing many reasons, a skilled person repeatedly engenders certainty in developing fortitude of mind, thinking "I shall not give way to a mind that cannot bare suffering". If you become so determined, even great suffering will not torment you. If your determination is weak and your mind is feeble, even that which is meaningless will become suffering for you. For example, when a warrior sees his own bleeding injuries, their firm courage grows stronger. The coward falls unconscious upon seeing others' bleeding injuries.

In taking that as a path, there are two:

1. Taking (suffering) onto the path through considering yourself.
2. Taking (suffering) onto the path through observing on others.

Taking suffering onto the path through considering yourself

Having found strength of mind, so that you develop good qualities such as powerful discerning wisdom, be glad when suffering occurs, for (1) you become determined to leave conditioned existence; (2) find confidence in refuge; (3) dispel haughtiness and (4) shun negativities; (5) rejoice in virtue and (6) develop compassion for sentient beings.

(1) Developing the thought that is determined to leave conditioned existence:

Think: "So long as I wander in cyclic existence, controlled by karma and afflictions, for that long I will solely be harmed by this kind of suffering. Therefore, I shall attain the state of peace in which I will not be compelled to repeatedly meet up and conjoin with the appropriated aggregates". Henceforth, so long as you wonder in cyclic existence and are endangered by a multitude of suffering, instead of thinking "I do not deserve this; may this not arise", think that this is the natural state of cyclic existence.

(2) Finding confidence in refuge:

Think: “While wandering in cyclic existence, terrors do not occur only every once in a while. Rather they are without finite depth or limits. With such fear, the sole protection from suffering is the non-deceptive three jewels”. Thus, become resolute in thinking that whatever might you encounter in all your lives, you shall not forsake the three jewel and make effort in going for refuge.

(3) Dispelling haughtiness:

Despising others brought by pride oriented towards oneself destroys so many virtues and is the basis of so many misdeeds. Think, “If it is the door to much harm, I will use this suffering to overcome haughtiness. I will eliminate pride because it is seen as a sorry state”.

(4) Shunning negativities:

When huge torments such as this suffering arise think that you do not want any of it and that therefore you have to give up its causes - non-virtues. Consider your past faults and downfalls and with the four powers cleanse and purify them and make effort so that not even a trace of them will remain in the future.

(5) Liking virtue:

Think, “Happiness devoid of such suffering is a sole benefit. Since I want happiness in which suffering has been turned back, I shall make effort in its cause - virtues”, and collect the accumulations in many ways.

(6) Developing compassion for sentient beings:

Think, “Just like me, sentient beings are tormented by such sufferings and suffering that are even greater than mine”. Considering this, generate compassion thinking, “May they also be free from all suffering”.

Taking suffering as a path by focusing on others

Meditate extensively on humans and non-humans who are external condition for the suffering of sentient beings in general, and in particular, for your suffering – as being [your] mothers. Make effort in training your mind, beginning with a contrived practice of *giving and taking*: consider your own suffering to be in lieu of the harmful experiences of sentient beings so that its continuity is cut off; send them all your happiness and well-being and take their negativities and suffering upon yourself. Through gathering the accumulations of Kusali, emanate innumerable bodies and practice effortlessly, giving many times every day [corresponding to] whatever they wish for. Culminate by sealing it with the view that everything in the three spheres lacks inherent existence. Making great waves of aspirational prayers from the bottom of your heart for the sake of sentient beings in general, and for harm-doers [in particular], is praiseworthy. This is the actual training in virtue. Consider alternating between other meditations and recitations in-between sessions as it is understood to be good.

If you practice accordingly, what for others - sufferings that become the unfavourable conditions for virtue - is [in actuality for you] befriending with the excellent. Hence, difficulties are taken onto the path and bad omens are turned into fortune, so that the maras could be transformed into spiritual friends.

Whatever you take onto the path - as soon as you get discouraged, supplicate the lama that is indivisible from the yidam, and offer tormas to obstructing spirits, confidently promising that in the future you will do even better. With this, see that your continuum is undisturbed and is accompanied by virtue.

It is said that if you gradually practice with small sufferings, you will become adept with great suffering, and hence consider that accordingly.

This explanation was set forth by the glorious Lobsang Drakpa that was exhorted from afar by the lord of scripture and reasoning – Nyeltonpa Rinchen Samdrup.

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