

# **A few instructions on Taking Suffering into The Path**

By the precious Lord Tsongkhapa

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

You should understand that combining suffering with the path has two points:

1. Overcoming the mind that does not want suffering.
2. And then - the actual part of taking suffering into the path.

## **Overcoming the mind that does not want suffering**

Your incapability of tolerating suffering accords with the increase of your unhappiness to the point that it torments you in this life. Depending on that, your continuum becomes increasingly disturbed by hostility to the point that the torments of this life cannot be compared with the torments this will bring in future lives.

Employing many reasons, a skilled person repeatedly engenders determination that is strongly intent on not giving way to a mind that cannot bear suffering. If you become determined, even great suffering will not torment you; and 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 their own bleeding injuries, their firm courage grows stronger. The coward falls unconscious upon seeing others' bleeding injuries.

## **Using suffering as a path**

Using suffering as a path, has two sections:

1. Using it as a path in relation to yourself.
2. Using it as a path through focusing on others.

### **Using suffering as a path through considering yourself**

Having found strength of mind, be glad when suffering arises because it induces good qualities [which are requisites for a] powerful discerning wisdom, for (1) you become determined to leave conditioned existence; (2) find confidence in refuge; (3) dispel haughtiness and (4) shun negativities; (5) prefer virtue and (6) develop compassion for sentient beings.

#### **(1) Becoming resolute in leaving conditioned existence:**

Think: "So long as I wander in cyclic existence, controlled by karma and afflictions, I will still be solely 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 that this is something you do not deserve, think that this is the way samsara is.

**(2) Finding confidence in refuge:**

Having wandered through the terrors of cyclic existence not just once or twice, but rather without finite depth or limits, think that with such fear the sole protection from suffering is the non-deceptive three jewels. Thus, become resolute by thinking that whatever you might 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 many virtues and is the basis of a multitude of misconduct. Think, “If it is the door to much harm, I will use this suffering to overcome my inflated ego. 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 those who do not wish for it should give up non-virtues – its causes. Focus on 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) Preferring virtue:**

Think, “Happiness devoid of such suffering will bring benefit only. Therefore, if I prefer happiness in which suffering has been turned back, I will exert myself in its cause – virtues”, and with this recognition gather 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 too be free from all suffering”.

**Taking suffering as a path through focusing on others**

After extensively meditating 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 considering your own suffering to be in lieu of the harmful experiences of sentient beings so that its continuity is cut off; through to a contrived practice of giving and taking: sending them all your happiness and well-being and taking their negativities and suffering upon yourself.

Through gathering the accumulations of Kusali, emanate innumerable bodies and practice many times a day giving unconditionally whatever they wish for. Culminate by sealing it with the view that everything in the three spheres lacks inherent existence. Making enormous heartfelt aspirational prayers for the sake of sentient beings in general, and for harm-doers [in particular] is praiseworthy.

Do this as the actual training in virtue and do other meditations and recitations in between sessions. I advise you to alternate between them 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 into the path and bad omens are turned into fortune, so that the maras could be transformed into spiritual friends.

Whatever you take into 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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Translated by Ven. Karma Tsondru, January 2024.