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Study Group - “Liberation *in the Palm of Your Hand*”  
A Commentary by The Venerable Geshe Doga  
Translated by Samdup Tsering



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25 April 1995

Try to generate the right motivation to the best of your ability

**422.212.21: Contemplating The Suffering Of Humans (Cont.)**

We are talking about the suffering of human beings. Even though it is excellent to be born as a human being, there is still a great deal of suffering in that human existence. Try, therefore, to realise that the reason why there is suffering in the human realm is because a human birth is also a birth in cyclic existence. As the nature of human existence is suffering, and because you do not wish to experience any suffering, you should try to see the cause of this suffering, and seek the path to liberation.

**Suffering Strengthens Our Spiritual Practice**

At the times when you face a problem in life e.g. some physical disease or receiving harm from others, you must remember to reinforce your knowledge of Dharma. You must think of integrating the teachings on the law of karma as explained in the small stages of the path. The difference between those who follow the spiritual path and others does not depend on their outer looks, but is in their mental outlook – their approach to life. When we face life's problems, we have to try to see them in the light of our Dharma knowledge, such as the law of karma for instance. The pain we experience from disease, or the feeling of hurt caused by others, are all manifestations of the fruit of our own karma which we have created in the past.

Realising that the true cause of such unwanted situations is our own karma, shows us that there is no reason to get angry at another person or object. It is like cutting our own hand with a knife through our own fault. Since it is our own fault, we do not get angry at anyone else, and somehow we have tolerance of the pain. It is the same if we realise that unwanted situations are caused by ourselves, or are the results of our own karmic actions. As we have already learnt, once an action is created it will definitely produce its result. So we can see that an unpleasant situation is the result of our karma, and this is a good thing, because now you know that will not have to experience that result in the future. This generates more tolerance towards the unpleasant situation. Also, because the result of that karma is

undesirable, you are keen to avoid creating that karma again.

To a large extent, the way we mentally view a situation makes a great difference. If our view is very negative this gives us further mental problems, in addition to the problem we are actually facing. Tempers are frayed, courage is lost and so on. However with a correct view you will have more tolerance of the situation. This will encourage you, and give more strength to your spiritual practice.

**The Benefits Of Contemplating Suffering**

Obviously meditation on suffering is to free ourselves from the suffering, not bring more. As a result of meditating on the various faults of cyclic existence, we will receive the benefits listed in Shantideva's *Guide to a Bodhisattva's Way of Life*.<sup>1</sup>

- refraining from non-virtuous negative actions
- having strong wish to perform a positive or virtuous action
- cultivating compassion towards other samsaric beings
- overcoming pride
- generating a feeling of disgust towards cyclic existence

Through knowing the sufferings of cyclic existence in a personal context, compassion towards other beings will increase. For example someone who has had excruciating stomach pain in the past, will naturally feel sympathy for someone else suffering the same pain. Therefore it is natural that through fully realising your own suffering in cyclic existence you will recognise it in other beings, and feel compassion towards them.

In reality everything that we experience personally, and that we see others experience, is a learning experience. It

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<sup>1</sup> *Bodhisattvacharyavataara*, Chapter 6, verse 21 :

Furthermore suffering has good qualities:

“Through being disheartened with it, arrogance is dispelled, compassion arises for those in cyclic existence, evil is shunned and joy is found in virtue.”

In the lam rim teachings generally the additional benefit of inspiring one to take refuge is stated.

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teaches the Dharma to us. For instance, if you are a spiritual practitioner, and you see somebody who is very sick and in pain, you cannot simply watch. You know that the cause is negative karma. For you, therefore, it generates the motivation to refrain from negative actions. Likewise the happiness which we always seek is the result of positive karma, and this generates the motivation to practise positive actions. You will feel compassion for the one who is undergoing suffering, and realise that although you are not presently suffering from physical pain or disease, it may happen to you in the future. So there is no pride when you see other beings suffering since you could also face that same suffering. As long as there is samsaric rebirth due to force of karma, and delusion, there is no escape from the sufferings that follow: sickness, aging and death.

**422.212.213: The Suffering Of Sickness<sup>2</sup>**

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Having finished the suffering of birth and aging we now move to the suffering of sickness. Think of how sickness changes our life: the loss of mental clarity and thinking power, not to mention the decline of our body in terms of its physical appearance, strength, and the sense organs. All these decline. Your feelings also change. Because of sickness you lose your desire for things which you usually like, and must take things which are very undesirable. On the surface some look healthier or happier than others, but in reality we are all caught in the nature of the suffering of illness.

**Meditating On Suffering Strengthens Motivation**

Meditation helps us to practise virtue and to avoid non-virtue. This is very important. Why do we meditate on suffering? It is because our aim is to attain happiness in this life and future lives. If, by meditating on suffering, we develop a stronger motivation to practise virtue and avoid non-virtue, then naturally this will help us in the future. For even if one does not wish it, happiness will come naturally, and suffering will not be experienced even if we should want it.

The practice of creating virtue and avoiding non-virtue will even help us in this life, because it will help us to purify negativities. This cleanses our continuum. The reason why our mind is unruly, uncalm and unhappy is because of the piles of negativities inside us. In a sense the more negativities we accumulate within us, the more unruly and unhappy our mind becomes. On the positive side, through the practice of adopting virtue and avoiding non-virtue you will find more peace and happiness within your mind.

**Anzac Day Holiday**

Today is a public holiday because of Anzac Day. To Geshe-la's knowledge this is the day on which we remember the very brave Australian soldiers who went to war and gave their lives for their country. It is important to remember them. Because of their sacrifice, Australia today enjoys peace, freedom and national security. To show our gratitude to them we shall recite Chenrezig's six syllable mantra twenty-one times . Dedicate the mantra to those who died for their country and people, so that they will be born in pure land of Chenrezig.

Geshe-la would like to thank you for rolling mantras last week. We did many but there are many more to do. We shall do some more next week.

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**Headings with outline numbering are derived from the Text. Headings without outline numbering are derived from Geshe Doga's commentary.**

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*The original typescript is prepared from Alan Molloy's original transcript, which has been checked against Damien Busby's notes. Adair Bunnett then checks the typescript against a tape recording, and edits the text, which is finally checked by Alan Molloy.*

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<sup>2</sup> *Liberation In The Palm*, page 492. The title used in the text is The Suffering Of Illness.