

karma, then as human beings we also have the opportunity to find a remedy to lessen the pain, and cope with the situation. If that negative karma ripened in a future life, rather than this present one, the result could be rebirth in a lower realm where there is even greater suffering. If you can understand that the outcome in that instance could be much worse, and that what you undergo now is very minor compared to what it might be, you would feel happy to take a loss in this present life. This teaches us to cultivate a broader and more positive way of thinking.

Of course we cannot expect to integrate this profound practice immediately and to make rapid progress. First of all we just have to try to understand the benefit of this teaching, and try to apply these methods as much as possible whenever difficulties or problems arise in life. Problems, as we all know, are unavoidable. Usually things go as we wish with friends and possessions, but at other times things go in the opposite direction. We must endure these bad times, and in such circumstances it is very easy to lose interest and to forsake our spiritual practice. However we do know that some people when they face serious problems such as a threat to their life, turn to spiritual teachings hoping that this can help them.

We also have to think that problems are a very good opportunity to practise Giving and Taking meditation. In the past you might have imagined taking on the suffering of others, and giving them your happiness. Here is an even better opportunity. Now you can imagine that the actual suffering you are enduring is the suffering of other beings. You can gladly accept that suffering and hope that no other being will have to undergo that problem. Not only this but you can also pray that all the other problems that sentient beings face will come upon you. If you use this meditation when you face any adverse conditions, then rather than forgetting about practising Dharma you are reinforcing your practice. So in this way problems are actually favourable cause to practise Dharma.

Benefits of Suffering

According to Shantideva's text *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, the benefits of undergoing misery and difficult situations in life are that they can be a cause to eliminate feelings of pride. Suffering can also be a cause to cultivate compassion for other beings, based upon one's own experience of suffering. It can be a both cause to refrain from negative actions, which serve as a cause of all unwanted things, and a cause of encouraging the practice of virtue which is the cause of all that you desire.

What we always have to remember is to practise Dharma at all times: in times of both pleasure and pain, and not to lose your practice of Dharma. In times of pleasure we must ensure that our mind is not completely distracted by pleasure. Rather we should think of increasing the bodhicitta mind, and understanding that all the pleasure found in life is the fruit of all the virtuous actions we created in the past. Then when we find such favourable conditions we are inspired to create more positive actions, which is the very cause of the conditions we enjoy. Similarly when you undergo pain or difficulty, which is the result of negative actions try not to see it as

an obstacle to practice. Rather try to apply these Thought Transformation teachings to see the situation, and thus bringing the practice of Dharma more alive in your mind. These unfavourable conditions then become a favourable cause to practise Dharma. We have to find a way to ensure that the spiritual practice we have begun is carried on continuously, on a very consistent basis.

The compulsory question for the written test is to explain the verse from *The Guru Puja* on giving and taking:

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Kind and venerable guru
Grant me blessings that all sufferings
Of sentient beings ripen upon me
And all my virtues be given to others.

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

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Note on authentication

The original typescript is prepared by Kathi Melnic 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.