

physical and mental actions, such as killing other beings, lying and holding ill thoughts towards others.

The benefit of contemplating our suffering and its true cause is that we actually gain some conviction that our own karmic actions are the true cause – we can clearly point the finger at the harm we have given others, which cause our problems and suffering. This understanding gives new direction to our lives, encouraging us to as much as possible abandon negative actions like causing harm to other beings. On the other hand, we are also inspired to undertake virtuous actions that benefit other beings. The practice of adopting virtuous actions and abandoning non-virtuous ones can bring more happiness to and remove suffering from our lives.

As Shantideva, the renowned Indian master, says, we should also understand that suffering has the potential to bring positive benefits. Suffering can teach us how to be more caring, sympathetic and compassionate towards others. It also teaches us to renounce this suffering existence, samsara, by teaching us to do right actions and not to do wrong actions.

What we are learning here is how our everyday actions are the source of our experience. If we perform positive, wholesome actions, they can benefit ourselves and others. If, however, our everyday actions are negative and unwholesome, they can bring harm to our lives, and to the lives of other beings. The message is that in our practice of karma, we should be honest with ourselves, and honest and fair with other beings. We should not just totally ignore our own behaviour, and always blame, criticise or find fault with other beings' actions of body, speech and mind. You have the same faults in yourself. For example, if we do something undesirable to someone else, because of which they say or do something undesirable to us, and we only complain to others, it is obvious that we are not being honest. In practising the teaching of karma, or cause and effect, we have to be honest.

This teaching of karma also gives us a positive way of thinking about problems. As a benefit, even if our outer circumstances are painful or undesirable, we can make sure that we don't mentally suffer too much, and feel completely hopeless. If we do not have a positive way of thinking, our mind can make adverse circumstance seem worse than they are. As said before, we are continuously creating actions, we cannot stop creating them. The doors through which we create those actions are body, speech and mind. You know your body is not your self, and neither is your speech and mind, but if the actions of your body speech and mind are undesirable or disgusting, suddenly we appear to others as a bad person. If we lie or cheat others, they see us as being unreliable and untrustworthy. On the other hand, if your actions are honest and friendly, these show you to be a good, warm-hearted person.

We will leave the teaching here and chant the Buddha's mantra seven times. Now if you could sit again in the meditation posture and make yourself comfortable and relaxed, bring the mind inward and try to focus. As we begin the chanting, please focus the mind on the mantra.

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