

How to Solve Our Human Problems

Also by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso

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GESHE KELSANG GYATSO

How to Solve Our Human Problems

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS



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Introduction

The instructions given in this book are methods for improving our human nature and qualities through developing the capacity of our mind. In recent years our knowledge of modern technology has increased considerably, and as a result we have witnessed remarkable material progress, but there has not been a corresponding increase in human happiness. There is no less suffering in the world today, and there are no fewer problems. Indeed, it might be said that there are now more problems and greater dangers than ever before. This shows that the cause of happiness and the solution to our problems do not lie in knowledge of material things. Happiness and suffering are states of mind and so their main causes are not to be found outside the mind. If we want to be truly happy and free from suffering, we must learn how to control our mind.

When things go wrong in our life and we encounter difficult situations, we tend to regard the situation itself as our problem, but in reality whatever problems we experience

come from the side of the mind. If we were to respond to difficult situations with a positive or peaceful mind they would not be problems for us; indeed, we may even come to regard them as challenges or opportunities for growth and development. Problems arise only if we respond to difficulties with a negative state of mind. Therefore, if we want to be free from problems, we must transform our mind.

Buddha taught that the mind has the power to create all pleasant and unpleasant objects. The world is the result of the karma, or actions, of the beings who inhabit it. A pure world is the result of pure actions and an impure world is the result of impure actions. Since all actions are created by mind, ultimately everything, including the world itself, is created by mind. There is no creator other than the mind.

Normally we say, 'I created such and such', or, 'He or she created such and such', but the actual creator of everything is the mind. We are like servants of our mind; whenever it wants to do something, we have to do it without any choice. Since beginningless time until now, we have been under the control of our mind, without any freedom; but, if we sincerely practise the instructions given in this book, we can reverse this situation and gain control over our mind. Only then shall we have real freedom.

Through studying many Buddhist texts we may become a renowned scholar; but, if we do not put Buddha's teachings into practice, our understanding of Buddhism will remain hollow, with no power to solve our own or others' problems. Expecting intellectual understanding of Buddhist texts alone to solve our problems is like a sick person hoping to cure his or her illness through merely reading medical

instructions without actually taking the medicine. As Buddhist Master Shantideva says:

We need to put Buddha's teachings, the Dharma, into
practice

Because nothing can be accomplished just by reading
words.

A sick man will never be cured of his illness
Through merely reading medical instructions!

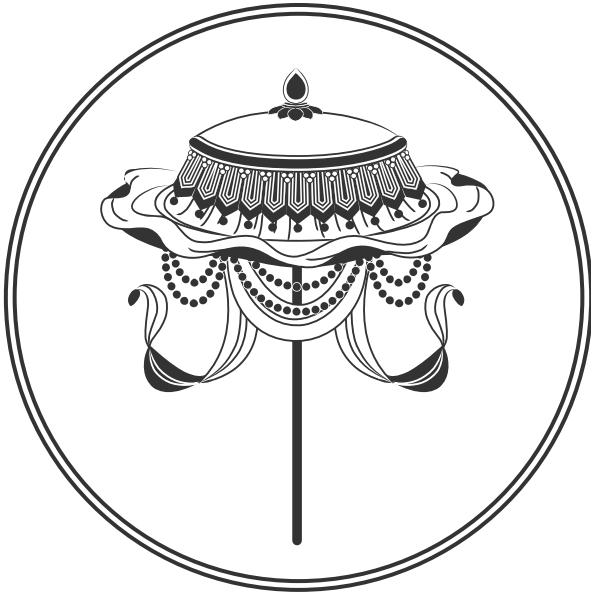
Each and every living being has the sincere wish to avoid all suffering and problems permanently. Normally we try to do this by using external methods, but no matter how successful we are from a worldly point of view – no matter how materially wealthy, powerful, or highly respected we become – we shall never find permanent liberation from suffering and problems. In reality, all the problems we experience day to day come from our self-cherishing and self-grasping – misconceptions that exaggerate our own importance. However, because we do not understand this, we usually blame others for our problems, and this just makes them worse. From these two basic misconceptions arise all our other delusions, such as anger and attachment, causing us to experience endless problems.

I pray that everyone who reads this book experiences inner peace and accomplishes the real meaning of human life.

*Geshe Kelsang Gyatso,
USA,
April 2004.*

PART ONE

The Noble Truths



Come under the great umbrella of Buddhism



Desire

To solve our human problems and enable us to find everlasting peace and happiness, Buddha gave the most profound teachings for us to use as practical advice. His teachings are known as 'Dharma', which means supreme protection from suffering. Dharma is the actual method to solve our human problems. To understand this, first we should consider what is the real nature of our problems and what are their main causes.

Our problems do not exist outside our mind. The real nature of our problems is our unpleasant feelings, which are part of our mind. When our car, for example, has a problem, we often say, 'I have a problem', but in reality it is not our problem but the car's problem. Our problems develop only when we experience unpleasant feelings. The car's problems exist outside the mind, whereas our problems are inside our mind. By differentiating between animate and inanimate problems like this, we can understand that the real nature of our problems is our own feelings, which are part of our mind.

All our problems – our unpleasant feelings – come from our delusions of attachment and self-grasping ignorance, therefore these delusions are the main causes of our problems. We have strong attachment to the fulfilment of our own wishes and for this aim we work very hard throughout our life, experiencing many difficulties and problems. When our wishes are not fulfilled we experience unhappiness and depression, which often causes us to become angry, creating more problems for both ourself and others. We can understand this clearly through our own experience. When we lose our friends, job, status, or reputation and so forth, we experience pain and many difficulties. This is because of our strong attachment to these things. If we had no such attachment, there would be no basis for experiencing suffering and problems at their loss.

Due to strong attachment to our own views, we immediately experience the inner problem of unpleasant feelings when someone opposes them. This causes us to become angry, which leads to arguments and conflicts with others, and this in turn gives rise to further problems. Most political problems experienced throughout the world are caused by people with strong attachment to their own views. Many problems are also caused by people's attachment to their religious views.

In previous lives, because of our attachment to fulfilling our own wishes we performed many different actions that harmed other living beings. As a result of these actions, we now experience many different problems and sufferings in our life.

DESIRE

If we look in the mirror of Dharma, we can see how our attachment, anger, and especially our self-grasping ignorance are the causes of all our problems and sufferings. We shall definitely realize that unless we control these delusions there is no other method to solve our human problems. Dharma is the only method to control our delusions of attachment, anger, and self-grasping ignorance. This is why we can say that Buddha's teachings, Dharma, are the only method to solve our human problems. Ancient Kadampa practitioners and many practitioners of today understand this through their own experience; they are witnesses to this truth. Buddha's teachings are the supreme scientific method to solve human problems. If we sincerely put his teachings into practice, we shall definitely solve our human problems and find the real meaning of our life.

End of preview

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