

Preface

The instructions given in this book are scientific 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 may experience deep inner peace, or peace of mind, and accomplish the real meaning of human life. I particularly would like to encourage everyone to read specifically the chapter *Training in Ultimate Bodhichitta*. Through carefully reading and contemplating this chapter again and again with a positive mind, you will gain very profound knowledge, or wisdom, which will bring great meaning to your life.

Geshe Kelsang Gyatso