

## Contemplation: Suffering

Begin by contemplating suffering, focusing on the six realms. Vividly imagine existence within each one. Your mind can enter other realms through the power of visualization, which allows them to unfold in your experience. The potential for any experience abides in the mind. In contemplation, extrapolate from a moment of pain you have actually felt—scalding water, perhaps, or biting winter winds numbing your toes and fingertips—to the extreme, all-encompassing pain of the hot or cold hells. Moments of hunger and thirst magnify into the famished, parched deprivation of the spirit realm. So your mind can journey.

If the experiences of other realms lie too far outside the scope of your imagination, contemplation of human suffering is enough. For example, put yourself in the place of someone caught in a war zone, in constant fear of being maimed or killed, surrounded by devastation, separated from friends and family, confronted by brutal inhumanity and hatred.

Even to rejoice in violent victory over enemies creates terrible karma. How much more tragic the forced participation in the killing! No one is exempt from the downward spiral—not the leaders who will be karmically accountable for every injury and death that occurs because of their orders; not the soldiers who carry out the killing; not the victims who are catapulted into the *bardo* with their minds inflamed with anger.

This human realm has no scarcity of suffering. The depth of your contemplation depends on really placing yourself inside such situations and allowing yourself to feel what others have felt, to stand in their shoes. When this has been accomplished and the mind yearns for cessation, drop all thoughts and rest.

When thoughts intervene, generate compassion. Think of the countless beings in the six realms. ... They are caught in cycles of misery and have no idea how to extricate themselves. Think of their predicament until compassion wells up as the wish that their present suffering be alleviated immediately and that ultimately they be liberated from the sorrows of samsara altogether. Then, again, drop all thoughts and rest.

When thoughts flood into your meditation, direct them toward prayer. Pray that suffering not sweep you away and that you see whatever arises as purification.

In the confusion that suffering brings, pray not to create karmic causes for more misery. Pray as well that you attain the power to lead others from the depths of samsara to a state beyond sorrow.

Pray that all beings be liberated from the endless cycles of samsaric suffering. Relax in uncontrived meditation.

When thoughts arise once more, make a firm commitment to practice the path until you attain liberation from suffering, for the sake of all beings.

Before, as you yourself were drowning in the ocean of samsara, you could not rescue others. Now, by the skillful means of the path, there is hope of escape. Resolve not to sink back, not to abandon others, and then rest in the peace of natural relaxation.

**Source:** Tromge, Jane. *Ngondro Commentary: Instructions for the Concise Preliminary Practices of the New Treasure of Dudjom*. Compiled from the teachings of H.E. Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche. Junction City, CA: Padma Publishing, 1995.