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H. H. the Dalai Lama's Presentation Suffering Caused by Greed and Consumerism

Sr. Mary Margaret Funk, OSB, H.H. Dalai Lama, Geshe Lobsang Tenzin

from [Gethsemani Encounter II, April 2002](#)

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Mary Margaret Funk: While everybody else in the United States is lined up at the post office with their tax returns, we are going to discuss on this Monday, April 15, 2002, suffering caused by greed and consumerism. And we have the privilege of hearing a text read by Geshe Lobsang from His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

We were challenged when we came here on Saturday evening by the abbot to stretch, stretch our boundaries for the sake of our own transformation and transformation of the world, and so today we do that. It is my privilege this morning to introduce to you Geshe Lobsang Tenzin, who is going to read for us the text that has come to us from His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Geshe Lobsang Tenzin: It is a privilege for me to read the text from His Holiness the Dalai Lama for this occasion:

Regarding the transformation of suffering, our Buddhist texts on logic explain that every single phenomenon has countless aspects, so, much depends on what angle you view something from. For example, when you encounter suffering, if you dwell only on its painful aspects, it is intolerable. But if you forget that aspect, you may be able to see it from another angle. The Buddhist point of view is that by enduring suffering, you can purify your past negative actions and generate the determination to achieve liberation. Therefore, it is not true to say that suffering remains the same from any angle. The nature

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Sr. Mary Margaret Funk, OSB, was the executive director of the MID board from 1989-2004. She was prioress at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Beech Grove, Indiana and is the author of a number of books, including *Thoughts Matter* and *Islam Is . . .*

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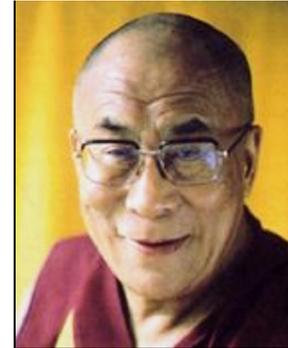
of suffering changes, depending upon your mental attitude and the way you look at it. If you are able to transform adverse situations into factors of the spiritual path, hindrances will become favorable conditions for spiritual practice. Through accustoming your mind to such a practice, you will meet with success and nothing will hinder your spiritual progress. It is said that being able to transmute adverse situations in this way is a sign that you are really undergoing spiritual training.

Taking adverse situations onto the path can be done in various ways. In good times or bad times, whether we are rich or poor, happy or unhappy, whether we are staying in our own or a foreign country, in a village, a city, a monastery or an isolated place, whoever is accompanying us, whatever kinds of suffering we encounter, we can reflect that there are many other sentient beings encountering similar sufferings. And we can go on to think: May the suffering I am undergoing serve to counter the sufferings experienced by other sentient beings. May they be parted from suffering.

The primary aim of the meditational practice of taking on others' sufferings is to eliminate our self-centered attitude. If you apply it with dedication, you will find it effective. The practice of taking on suffering is one of the most forceful techniques for controlling self-centeredness.

To motivate ourselves, we can think about the plight of suffering beings on the one hand and the benefits of compassion on the other. Like us, other beings are under the influence of disturbing emotions, such as ignorance, desire, animosity, and jealousy. Consequently, they cannot enjoy the happiness they wish for, but constantly suffer varieties of pain.

Compassion, on the other hand, is crucial to our survival as human beings wherever we live. We human beings are social animals. We need companions to survive. If we



His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is the head of state and spiritual leader of the Tibetan people. He has been involved in interreligious dialogue through the Gethsemani Encounters and visits to India and the United States for many years.

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Geshe Lobsang Tenzin holds a Geshe Lharam degree from Drepung Loseling Monastery in India, and a Ph.D. from Emory University in the U.S. He is the founder and director of Drepung Loseling Institute.

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develop concern for other people's welfare, share other people's suffering, and help them, ultimately we will benefit. If we think only for ourselves and forget about others, ultimately we will lose. The more we care for the happiness of others, the greater our own sense of well-being becomes. Cultivating a close, warm-hearted feeling for others automatically puts the mind at ease. This helps remove whatever fears or insecurities we may have, and gives us the strength to cope with any obstacles we may encounter. It is the ultimate source of success in life.

I am grateful for this opportunity to extend my greetings to many old friends and perhaps some new ones, too, who will be participating in the Monastic Interreligious Dialogue's Gethsemani Encounter II. Many of you already know of my personal enthusiasm for the work you are all doing. I believe that such meetings between members of different spiritual traditions, exploring and sharing each other's experiences, have the potential to make a real practical contribution to greater peace and understanding in our world. I pray for the fruitful success of your dialogue.

H. H. the Dalai Lama, April 12, 2002

Continued in **H. H. the Dalai Lama: Discussion
(Gethsemani Encounter II, April 2002)**

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