

## **Drive All Blames Into One**

A lot of people seem to get through this world and actually make quite a comfortable life by being compassionate and open - even seemingly compassionate and open. Yet although we share the same world, we ourselves get hit constantly... For instance, we could be sharing a room with a college mate, eating the same problematic food, sharing the same shitty house, having the same schedule and the same teachers. Our roommate manages to handle everything OK and find his or her freedom. We, on the other hand, are stuck with that memory and filled with resentment all the time. We would like to be revolutionary, to blow up the world. We could say the schoolteacher did it, that everybody hates us and they did it. But WHY do they hate us? That is a very interesting point.

...

Everything is based on our own uptightness. We could blame the organization; we could blame the government; we could blame the food; we could blame the highways; we could blame our own motorcars, our own clothes; we could blame an infinite variety of things. But it is we who are not letting go, not developing enough warmth and sympathy - which makes us problematic. So we cannot blame anybody... This slogan applies whenever we complain about anything, even that our coffee is cold or our bathroom is dirty. It goes very far. Everything is due to our own uptightness, so to speak, which is known as ego holding, ego fixation. Since we are so uptight about ourselves, that makes us very vulnerable at the same time... We get hit, but nobody means to hit us - we are actually inviting the bullets.

...

The text says "drive all blames into one". The reason you have to do that is because you have been cherishing yourself so much... Although sometimes you might say that you don't like yourself, even then in your heart of hearts you know that you like yourself so much that you're willing to throw everybody else down the drain, down the gutter. You are really willing to do that. You are really willing to let somebody else sacrifice his life, give himself away for you. And who are you, anyway?

*From Training the Mind & Cultivating Loving-Kindness by Chogyam Trungpa ,*

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When we look at the world in this way we see that it all comes down to the fact that no one is ever encouraged to feel the underlying anxiety, the underlying edginess, the underlying soft spot, and therefore we think that blaming others is the only way. Reading just one newspaper, we can see that blaming others doesn't work.

We have to look at our own lives as well. How are we doing with our Juan and Juanitas? Often they're just the people with whom we have the most intimate relationships. They really get to us because we can't just shake them off by moving across town or changing seats on the bus, or whatever we have the luxury of doing with mere acquaintances, whom we also loathe.

It doesn't mean, instead of blaming other people, blame yourself. It means to touch in with what blame feels like altogether. Instead of guarding yourself, instead of pushing things away, begin to get in touch with the fact that there's a very soft spot under all that armor, and blame is probably one of the most-perfected armors that we have. You can take this slogan beyond what we think of as 'blame' and practice applying it simply to the general

sense that something is wrong. When you feel that something is wrong, let the story line go and touch in to what's underneath.

Strangely enough, we blame others and put so much energy into the object of anger or whatever it is because we're afraid that this anger or sorrow or loneliness is going to last forever... 'Drive all blames into one' is saying, instead of always blaming the other, OWN the feeling of blame, OWN the anger, OWN the loneliness and make friends with it. Use the tonglen practice to see how you can place the anger or the fear or the loneliness in a cradle of loving-kindness; use tonglen to learn how to be gentle to all that stuff. In order to be gentle and create an atmosphere of compassion for yourself, it's necessary to stop talking to yourself about how wrong everything is - or how right everything is, for that matter.

*From Start Where You Are : A Guide to Compassionate Living by Pema Chodron*

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Whether you are physically ill, troubled in your mind, insulted by others, or bothered by enemies and disputes, in short, whatever annoyance, major or minor, comes up in your life or affairs, do not lay the blame on anything else, thinking that such-and-such caused this or that problem. Rather, you should consider:

This mind grasps at a self where there is no self. From time without beginning until now, it has, in following its own whims in samsara, perpetrated various nonvirtuous actions. All the sufferings I now experience are the results of those actions. No one else is to blame; this egocherishing attitude is to blame. I shall do whatever I can to subdue it.

Skillfully and vigorously direct all dharma at egoclinging. As Shantideva writes in *Entering the Way of Awakening*:

*What troubles there are in the world,  
How much fear and suffering there is.  
If all of these arise from ego-clinging,  
What will this great demon do to me?*

and

*For hundreds of lives in samsara  
He has caused me trouble.  
Now I recollect all my grudges  
And shall destroy you, you selfish mind.*

*From The Great Path of Awakening : An Easily Accessible Introduction for Ordinary People  
by Jamgon Kongtrul, translated by Ken McLeod.*

## **Blame Everything on One Thing**

The next verse instructs us to blame everything bad that happens to us, from tragedy to ingrown toenails, on one thing alone: self-centeredness. This is a very powerful antidote to a very natural tendency. When we experience misfortune, we almost invariably look outward and say, "Who did this to me?" If we identify a perpetrator, myriad mental distortions arise in response. Another person may well have acted as a cooperative condition contributing to our unhappiness, but that person is not the real cause.

On the deepest level, taking karma into account, we are ultimately responsible for our present circumstances, and for the future we are creating right now with each action of body, speech, and mind. But we are responsible on another level also which can be helpful to consider. Imagine, for example, that someone drives into my car and puts a dent in it. In this particular instance I am blameless; my car was stationary. I can target the person who did it, and that person seems truly to blame for my suffering - the dent in my nice new car. But remember how our enemies first appeared when we approached them in the practice of taking and sending. I have isolated this person. It's a sure bet that I am looking at the person who dented my car as an intrinsic, autonomous entity, and in this way I feed the fires of my indignation and self-righteousness.

What is the real issue here? Was I at fault in this particular context? Both the law and my insurance company would say that I was not. Someone has damaged a possession of mine and I have no freedom to choose whether or not I experience this particular circumstance. On a deep level I have stacked the cards to experience this through my own previous actions. But here lies the freedom: How do I respond? The dent in the car has no power to cause me any suffering unless I yield to it. The dent is only an external catalyst, a contributing circumstance, but by itself it is not sufficient to cause me suffering. The suffering actually arises from the stuff of my own mind. If I were mindless there would be no suffering, but that is not an option. I cannot decide to reject my mind. Instead I must apply my intelligence: What element of my mind was responsible for my suffering?

The real source of my suffering is self-centeredness: my car, my possession, my well-being. Without the self-centeredness, the suffering would not arise. What would happen instead? It is important to imagine this fully and to focus on examples of your own. Think of some misfortune that makes you want to lash out, that gives rise to anger or misery. Then imagine how you might respond without suffering. Recognize that we need not experience the misery, let alone the anger, resentment, and hostility. The choice is ours.

Let's continue with the previous example. You see that there is a dent in the car. What needs to be done? Get the other driver's license number, notify the police, contact the insurance agency, deal with all the details. Simply do it and accept it. Accept it gladly as a way to strengthen your mind further, to develop patience and the armor of forbearance. There is no way to become a Buddha and remain a vulnerable wimp. Patience does not suddenly appear as a bonus after full enlightenment. Part of the whole process of awakening is to develop greater forbearance and equanimity in adversity. Shantideva, in the sixth chapter of his *Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life*, eloquently points out that there is no way to develop patience without encountering adversity, and patience is indispensable for our own growth on the path to awakening.

So think of your own example. Recognize that anger or resentment is superfluous mental garbage, and that clutter and distortion serve no useful purpose in our minds. Suffering is not even necessary

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## **Banish the One Object of Every Blame.**

Whenever any difficulty or trouble arises we usually blame it on some other person or object. Nations accuse other nations of causing conflict, and even dogs blame their troubles on other dogs. However, it is entirely incorrect to blame someone else because the true enemy deserving this blame is the self-cherishing attitude (bdag gees 'dzin), which we have always had within us.

We consider ourselves to be very precious and important, and such attachment and dedication lead each of us to commit many unskillful deeds aimed solely at bringing us temporal pleasure and comfort. When we do not possess something we desire or when danger threatens something to which we are attached, we react with aggression and selfishness. By acting in such a self-centered way, we accumulate negative karmic propensities that will arise later as misery.

Even among nations, many unwholesome deeds are perpetrated for similar self motivated reasons. For instance, a nation with imperialistic attitudes wages war over territories belonging to other people with the motivation of exploiting their resources for its own selfish ends. Conversely, a country will fight to defend itself from external aggression because it fears the loss of its own territory. However, in so doing it creates only more conflict and misery. Even when two small insects fight, their reasons are the same, and we too commit many self-centered actions for similar aggressive or defensive reasons.

In our present situation as human beings born into the era of degeneration, most of us have accumulated strong adverse imprints on our streams of consciousness and thus have many karmic debts to pay. We must recognize that all our faults and problems are actually within us. The principal cause of them is the ignorant selfcherishing attitude that narrows our attention to only one person: our own self. When we feel uncomfortable from even a slight thirst or discomfort in the heat, our self-centered attitude desiring immediate relief from this annoyance leads us to crave a cold drink. Yet our self-cherishing attitude - the enemy - allows us time for only brief and comparatively unsympathetic thoughts for the numberless beings who have greater misfortunes than we.

The accumulation of karmic debts that we owe other beings can be terminated either through intensive meditation or by our own acceptance of the fruit of such debts. This last method is the easiest and is the technique taught in this text.

We should view any person who appears to be harming us as an intermediary who, in causing us difficulty, frees us from a more serious ripening of our past unskillful actions. In such situations those who harm us are, in reality, our benefactors. We should constantly remember their kindness in showing us, as our spiritual teacher does, that the burdens

heaped on us are actually the results of our own actions. For instance, if we had a debt and our creditor told us that to cancel it we need take only a slap in the face, we would see this person as kind for letting us off lightly. In the same way, harms inflicted by others help us eliminate karmic debts that may otherwise ripen in more serious ways.

Therefore, the true object that we must recognize as our greatest enemy, deserving all the blame for any misery we may experience, is the self-cherishing attitude we hold within us. In addition, we should always remember the kindness of other beings, whatever their character may be. Whether they appear to be harming or aiding us, they are always assisting us in the elimination of accumulated karmic debts. Never think that this is merely a pleasing or euphemistic way of interpreting events, for this is the actual way things are.

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## **Lay the Blame for Everything on One**

All suffering, all sickness, possession by spirits, loss of wealth, involvements with the law and so on, are without exception the result of clinging to the 'I'. We should not blame anything on others. Even if some enemy were to come and cut our heads off or beat us with a stick, all he does is provide the momentary circumstance of injury. The real cause of our being harmed is our self-clinging and is not the work of our enemy.

A basis for ego-clinging has never at any time existed. We cling to our 'I', even when in fact there is nothing to cling to. We cling to it and cherish it. For its sake we bring harm to others, accumulating many negative actions, only to endure much suffering in samsara, in the lower realms, later on.

It is not possible to point to a moment and say, 'This was when I started in samsara; this is how long I have been here.' Without the boundless knowledge of a Buddha, it is impossible to calculate such an immense period of time.

Our minds which cling to the illusion of self, have brought forth misery in samsara from beginningless time. How does this come about? When we come across someone richer, more learned or with a better situation than ourselves, we think that they are showing off, and we are determined to do better. We are jealous, and want to cut them down to size. When those less fortunate than ourselves ask for help, we think, 'What's the point of helping a beggar like this? He will never be able to repay me. I just can't be bothered with him.' When we come across someone of equal status who has some wealth, we also want some. If they have fame we also want to be famous. If they have a good situation, we want a good situation. We always want to compete. This is why we are not free from samsara: it is this that creates the sufferings and harm which we imagine to be inflicted on us by spirits and other human beings.

The degree of self-clinging that we have is the measure of the harms we suffer. It is only if we really have the wish to put an end to the ego-clinging which has brought us pain and loss from beginningless time - it is only then that we will be on the path to enlightenment.

*From Enlightened Courage, by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche*

