



H.E. TAI SITU RINPOCHE
HOW TO COPE WITH DRAMATIC TRAGEDIES

Greetings to all of you at Palpung Center. As you have requested me, I will be briefly talking about how to cope when tragedy comes into our life. Or as tragedy in society. According to the Dharma, as you know, the tragedy is many kinds. Sometimes personally involved, personal tragedy. Sometimes, community's tragedy that will be community disharmony, or natural disaster, or that sort of situation. And you are dealing with them, you are coping with them, case by case. For example, if you have a personal tragedy, that means only you and few people involved, but not community at large, but then you have to deal with in a way that made such things never happened to anybody and this situation that happens to me personally, to my family personally, it is the result of our karma, therefore, let us purify our karma and make this not happen to anybody else. And then of course you have to look at the particular situation and problem without using perspective and then you can make things better or even solve the problem because of the nature of the tragedy. But when it will become a community tragedy such as natural disaster in which you might not be involved personally, it is happening somewhere such as like the cyclone tragedy in Burma, the earthquake tragedy in Szechwan, and or so the hurricane tragedy, tornado tragedy in US. These sorts of things when it happens then you personally might not be affected directly, but as a human being, one feels the pain. And one feels the suffering of the others. There, we can only do two things – first, is pray and pray to Buddha, pray to Bodhisattva so that the people who have died will have a better birth? and people who lost loved ones may they have less grief and may they be able to cope with the tragedy in the most positive way and then also those who are injured and affected may they recover and also such tragedy will not happen again. So this kind of understanding, and this kind of prayer which will definitely benefit them as well as yourself, because you have done whole heartedly what you can. That is one way. Another way is to practically, technically do something. Such as when such disasters strikes, then there is a need for medicine, these is a need for food, there is a need for shelter, there is a need for clothing and there is all of these needs, which becomes many times desperate and of course one individual can not do very much, but whatever little that one can do practically then it will be much, much better than not doing it. Because even you can send medicine for only 10 people, then that will definitely help 10 people. And if you don't do that, then the 10 people will not get the help. And if you can do that for 100 people, 1,000 people, 10,000 people, of course this is a wonderful thing. And also you can, you can motivate others to positive activity such as collecting medicine, collecting food, and organizing shipment, all these sorts of things that you can do. And that is how we deal with the tragedy in a practical manner. And then, long term, eventually people should learn from all of these tragedies, like tornado, or hurricane, then earthquake. All these things one can learn from these tragedies. Most of the time, people have problems because we ourselves create these problems. For example, if environmental awareness is there, then this low lands, sea, coastal area, normally there is a natural barrier to protect the land from the sea, such as mangroves and that sort of natural protection. And we human beings in many ways are not too careful and also little ignore it and it destroys those natural protections. And then those natural protections are gone, then when the sea rises, or when the big waves that comes to the shore, then there is nothing to stop them so it will come inland. And for example this kind of lesson we should learn and then we should be mindful and do the right thing so that in the future - of course in the future there is going to be hurricane, there is going to be earthquake, there is going to be tornados and all of these things are going to be there. These things will not go away. But we can prepare ourselves in a better way so that these kinds

of disaster things will be minimized. For example, with construction, there is a very clear understanding, scientific understanding already there, which areas are earthquake prone zone and which places will not have earthquake and which places will have very little chance to have earthquakes for example. And so since we know these things we should be using this knowledge and we should construct the houses, bridges, roads and whatever we do we should construct in such a way that the tragedy, the loss of life, all these things will be lessened, less loss of life. For example, like tornados, we know very well which places will be having a tornado problem year after year. We know. So therefore we should build our houses, and we should build shelters etc. according to the needs of the place. According to the danger which is likely to take place. According to that, we should construct, we should prepare. So that way, of course we can not prevent everything, but we can prevent the loss of life by maybe 10%, maybe 50%, maybe 90%. Therefore, therefore, I think this kind of lessons we should learn from all of these kinds of natural disasters, tragedies. And then another tragedy such as personal tragedy. These personal tragedies are all coming from, coming from some sort of individual karma. At the same time – of course everything is karma – but at the same time well you know, this negative karma, become worsened when we don't understand and when we don't handle them. For example, in a personal tragedy. If the children are not doing well in their education. Or parents have problems with each other. Or there is a problem with other people, like life threatening situations or loss of property or misunderstanding, or anything like that. If you really look at them, you know the karma does not mean that's something that we can not understand. Every aspect of karma, if we want to, we can understand. How these things happen. So if you go back in the event, step by step, day by day, then how did such situation occur right now, it has developed into this fruition, for many years, for many months in the mind. And then we can learn from it and in the future we should not make the same mistakes again. We should not let that situation to happen. For example, if somebody has a big misunderstanding about you, that did not happen just in a moment. That developed over the months, weeks, months, years. And then it was not realized by you. It is maybe not realized by the other person. So when it just goes on and on and on, it is very much like a brainwashing process. So that the person somehow has the very serious, very strong perception of you, or perception of somebody, which is absolutely false. But because there was nothing done about it, it wasn't, nobody was aware of it, then it somehow develops into reality. So fiction becomes fact. When the fiction becomes fact, then unnecessary problems happen. And when this happens, then the person who is also sufferer of these problems, will have a very hard time to deal with it, because the person knows it is not true, but other side thinks it is true. And you will never find out exactly what other side is thinking and perceiving very clearly because you yourself does not have the perception of what wrong you have done because you haven't done anything wrong. But, because of your ignorance, because of your lack of mindfulness, you have said, you have done things that appears to the other person it is very offensive, it is very negative, it is very bad. So, so this way, then a kind of human to human personal tragedy takes place. And this kind of thing we can learn from it as well as lord Buddha's teaching goes, mindfulness and awareness. Is very important. So that is one way. Another way is you know, when you personally have tragedy, or we as a community have tragedy, or we see other communities have tragedy, it is very important for us to have compassion. Because you should look at the problem and see that if you are in that main problem, how would it be. So therefore, therefore, other person suffering you can feel, and without being overwhelmed by other person suffering you can do something to help the person and person in many different ways as I have mentioned earlier to help them overcome the suffering, overcome the tragedy. And at the same time, at the same time, when you have the problem, you have some kind of tragedy, you also should have compassion because if you don't look at your problem only if you look around, and there's so many people who have problems 10x bigger than yours, 100x bigger than yours. And when you see those people's problems, then you should develop compassion for them. You should really feel for them. Because when you are in trouble, you know how it feels. Then, when you see other person having bigger troubles, then you know how they feel. So that way, that way, comparing to the other person's problem, your problem will become very small. So that is also another way of dealing with it and above all if you are a very senior practitioner, when I say senior, I mean mature and accomplished practitioner, then of

course you will see your problem and sometimes of dream, sometimes of illusion, sometimes of shadow of many other things. And therefore, you will not become affected by the problems in a negative way. In fact problems become positive condition for you to become a better, kinder, stronger, person. So these are the, a couple of ways through which you can face a tragedy, whether it is a personal or community tragedy. Then of course, I wanted to conclude here by saying that you know we should pray all the time, no tragedies will happen to anybody. There should be no tragedies, there should be natural harmony, there should be human to human harmony, there should be harmony within the nature, within the elements and we should always pray for that. And our prayers, sincere prayers are very, very strong, very powerful. We can have bad dreams as well as we can have good dreams. So the Samsara is some kind of dream, but quite real, long as in this particular physical body. And so therefore, therefore we should pray that no nightmares will happen to us or to anybody and all the tragedies are a nightmare. And as long as we are in this body we feel them. As long as we are dreaming we feel the fear, we feel the pain inside the dream, isn't it. So in the same way, as long as we are in this body, then we feel the pain, we feel the loss, we feel the tragedy and so we should have a very strong wish and aspiration at all times that no tragedies should happen with anybody's life, any community shouldn't have it. We should pray for it, we should sincerely wish for it and we should do our best to make our little contribution whichever way we are able to. And I know that you are sending the medicine, the help for the earthquake victims in Szechwan and the nearby provinces. I really appreciate very much and my sincere dedication is there so that the, this sincere gesture, sincere help which is not much but through our sincerity and pure compassion, pure devotion, pure care, it should multiply many fold and it should benefit lots of people. And so I sincerely pray for that and also I sincerely pray that in the future wherever help and assistance is needed we should have more, better, capabilities to assist them, spiritually as well as practically and we should have a better ability. Right now we can not do very much, just a little but we pray that in the future we can do much, much more, we can everyone one of us can do much, much more wherever, humanity or life on earth has tragedy. We should be there to make a difference, to make not just a sincere gesture, but a real helpful, real beneficial, effective service. And I pray for that as well. And above all we should reach a higher realization, enlightenment so that just as Buddha has done, just as all the Bodhisattvas have done, we can help sentient beings to be free from all kinds of suffering, not only from time to time and tragedy, but all kinds of suffering that sentient beings are suffering individually at all times. And we should have a greater ability, like Avalokitesvara, like Manjushri, and like Vajrapani, like Maitreya, like Guru Rinpoche, like Buddha Shakyamuni finally. And I sincerely pray for that.

And so all the best for all of you and I'm sure you're Dharma practice is going well, you're doing your best and I'm sure that all of you have lots of blessing from the Buddha so that the way you will handle your personal tragedy or other people's tragedy and then you will be doing it and you will be able to do it in a most wise and effective way. I believe in that. Because when you are sincerely in the Dharma, you have this better ability. And I also pray that every human being, every sentient being on this earth and beyond will develop greater ability to cope with and overcome whatever tragedy they might face in their life. Ok, that's all on this subject.

And then I just wanted to say a few things which are not related to tragedy. When wonderful things happen in our life, if we lose our awareness, if we lose our compassion, if we lose our devotion, if we lose our mindfulness and awareness, then good things can always become a tragedy. So therefore we should be able to recognize good things in our life and make it better. If you have some positive ability, then you should use it for helping others. Not just to keep it for yourself. And that way it will not become negative it will remain positive and it will grow and grow and grow. All the best. All the best for everyone and I sincerely dedicate that all the Dharma centers in everywhere will flourish and of course right now I'm talking to the Palpung Lungtok Choeling. So therefore this Palpung center will flourish to serve the Buddha, serve the Sangha, through practicing Dharma, serve all sentient beings. I wish you my best, and Buddha's bless, Buddha's bless, Buddha's bless.

QUESTIONS

Q: How do we use the tragedy (our individual tragedy) as support for our practice?

A: Oh ok, well, you see you can not proceed with sweet until you taste the bitter right? So that way, if there is a tragedy, tragedy shouldn't happen, you shouldn't look for problems, personal problems. But if it happens then we will know, we will know what is the problem. So this way, then we are not only experiencing the problem, but also, we will be able to experience that no problem much better. And able to appreciate no problems much better. And also we will develop compassion for others much more genuinely if we don't have any tragedy in our life, which is good, then other side is then we don't know how do you feel when there is a problem. So if we have experience of problems in our life, then we can also feel for others how do they feel when they have a problem. Then we don't have to imagine compassion. We will have genuine compassion through experience. These are the few ways.

Q: You mentioned trying to give help to communities in need, but what happens if governments refuse the help they need. What do you recommend us doing or not doing?

A: Well then, I think then we better pray that government will allow. From there, I think divine intervention will happen so that whoever has the authority maybe they have fear, maybe they do not understand, then they will not have the fear, they will have the understanding, and they will be, they will be how do you say, their eyes will be opened by the blessing of the Buddha.

Q: Can we change the world through individual Dharma practice?

A: Change the world? we are going to change the world...it's a little bit – it's a good intention, good aspiration, but a little bit not realistic. As you know I am very pragmatic person and we have a little hard time to change ourselves, so changing the world is a little bit too big. But, but, we can make our contribution. For example, we are one of the, each one of us are one of the around 6,000 million human beings. So we definitely can make 1/6-billionth difference. You know? And then if we become more enlightened and if we have more strength and maturity then we can definitely have bigger, bigger contribution. We can make a bigger contribution. We can make maybe like contribution of 1,000 people, contribution of 10,000 people, contribution of 100,000 people, maybe 1,000,000 people. So that way when our abilities, our maturity becomes stronger and more stable, then our effect for these betterment of the humanity becomes more. But change the world is another thing because you know one generation, one generation is in this world for not more than 80, 90 years. In that 80, 90 year, the effective age would be about 30, 40 years. Before that you will be children, after that you will be very old. So in between that, about 30, 40, 50 years each. And then after that, a whole new generation will come. So if we, if, lets say if we are able to change the world this time, it doesn't mean next generation is going to continue the same way. You know? They might change backward. That way we shouldn't be too much concerned about this aspect. But, be more realistic so that we can make the difference. And we can leave something for the next generation. Better environment, better understanding, better system, and better wisdom. These things we definitely can contribute if we are a good practitioner. If we are able to practice genuinely. Ok?

Q: I heard that it's a bit late for practitioner to do personal practice, does that mean it's not as good a time as before for the Dharma practice?

A: It's never too late. We are talking about it is the proof that it is never too late. Ok? Just by talking about it it proves that it is never too late. Ok?

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Conclusion:

.... We should dedicate for all sentient beings to be free from all aspects of suffering and finally to reach Buddhahood so that way everything that we are doing, everything that we practice is for helping all sentient beings to overcome all kinds of tragedy, all kinds of suffering. So we should keep on doing our best. Do you remember that a couple of years back there was a huge meteoroid that crossed the earth, just a few hundred thousand miles from earth. So that is a very, very, very serious thing. And somehow we overcame that major, major tragedy, disaster. And so things like that you know? And we should pray all the time, dedicate everything, not only for natural disaster, but for all kinds of suffering. All kinds of suffering, all kinds of ignorance, all kinds of anger, all kinds of jealousy. To help all sentient beings to overcome all of them. That should be the purpose of our practice. We should dedicate every practice for that. Now of course on top of that, if one want to, one can do like Tara because there are all kinds of manifestation of Tara – each one is to protect sentient beings from different fears. Fear of the weapons, fear of the element, fear of the disease, etc. etc.

Ok, Ok, so now I know that 49 days before today there was tens and tens of thousands of people died in Szechwan and then of course just one or two weeks before that, you know tens and tens of thousands of people died in Burma, and of course then afterwards a number of people died all over the world. So the 49<sup>th</sup> day is a very special day for human beings when we face death. And let us all do a short Amitabha prayer for all of them. Ok, can you say the prayer?

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Chanting/Prayer by Tai Situpa

Ok, ok all the best for everyone. Ok, Bye

Thank you Rinpoches and applause

Ok, Ok, Buddha Bless You.