

The first slogan, **Turn all mishaps into the path**, sounds at first blush completely impossible. How would you do that? When things go all right we are cheerful, we feel good and have good spiritual feelings, but as soon as bad things start happening, we get depressed, we fall apart, or at the very best, we hang on and cope. We certainly do not transform our mishaps into the path. And why would we want to? We don't want the mishaps to be there, we want them gone as soon as possible. They are certainly not the path! The path is love and light, compassion, joy, and so on, we think.

But keep in mind that **Transform bad circumstances into the path** is the third point of mind training. It comes after the first slogan, **Train in the preliminaries**, which one presumably has done thoroughly, and after the practices of generating compassion, as we've discussed. Having established all of that, we have shaken up our conventional point of view. We are beginning to be more like the Bird's Nest Roshi than the poet below him, beginning to recognize that perhaps our habitual ways of thinking about our lives need to be reexamined. Also, we have been training in the practice of slogans, repeating them over and over, reflecting on them repeatedly, so that now they often pop up naturally, unbidden, when we need them. Now when something difficult or terrible happens

to us, a loss, a setback, a frustration, an insult, naturally we immediately feel dismay or anger or disappointment or resentment just as everyone does, just as we always have—but now also a slogan pops into our minds, because we have trained ourselves in it. *Turn all of this into the path*, the slogan tells us.

So we practice patience: we catch ourselves running away and we reverse course, turning toward our afflictive emotions, understanding that they are natural in these circumstances but that avoiding them won't work and that there is no use blaming ourselves or wishing that things were otherwise. We know that this is how the human heart works, this is how we all are. We forestall our flailing around with these emotions and instead allow them to be present with dignity. We forgive ourselves for having them, we forgive whoever we might be blaming for our difficulties, and with that spontaneous forgiveness comes a feeling of relief and even gratitude. We think: "Oh, yes, I really am angry right now, I am pretty upset right now, but this doesn't belong to me, this upset is what people feel under such conditions, and of course I feel this way. And I am grateful to feel what everyone feels under such conditions. I am glad to stand in solidarity and understanding with other human beings who are probably, right now, in this very moment, also feeling this."