



# Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

## Ringu Tulku Rinpoche: The Precious Human Life



BA 5: Chapter 1 Stanza 4 The Precious Human Life

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Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra

Now we come to stanza number 4 and we come to the actual teachings, actual instructions. And here, the *Bodhicharyavatara* is actually of ten chapters. It is divided like this: the first three chapters are on how to generate bodhicitta for those who haven't generated bodhicitta; bodhicitta has not arisen in their minds. Then the next three chapters are on how not to degenerate the bodhicitta in those who actually have some bodhicitta already generated so that it doesn't become less—to maintain the bodhicitta. And then the next three chapters are on how to improve on them, how to enhance, how to make the bodhicitta stronger and develop more and more. These are the first nine chapters.

And then the last chapter, the tenth chapter, is the result of the bodhicitta, how to share it, how to dedicate it for the benefit of all the beings. These are the ten chapters.

Now the first chapter is about the benefit of the bodhicitta, in order to encourage people to generate bodhicitta and develop it. So first you have to know the benefits, what is good, why bodhicitta. So there are two things: one is the actual kind of benefits of the bodhicitta, the training, the mental state, the motivation. But before that, what are the right conditions, good conditions for generating this bodhicitta? This is what we are going to discuss first. Then, there are two things. One is the right conditions of the body and the right conditions of the mind. So here they are going to discuss the right conditions for the body, the right conditions that are good for bodhicitta.

Now, the first thing we have to understand very clearly. As we said earlier, Shantideva said that, I write this, I say these stanzas, I wrote this book or I express these ideas, in order to remind myself how to practise, how to become a better human being and how to develop bodhicitta and things like that. So therefore, we must read it [as] when you say you, it means **you**, Shantideva: he's talking to himself. Like when we discuss with ourselves, we remind ourselves, then I say you, you Ringu Tulku, you should not think like this, you should think like this, you should not react like this, you should act like this. So this is the understanding. It's very important to understand this. It's not talking to others, it's talking to yourself.

The fourth stanza is about what we call this precious human life. The English translation reads like this:

*So hard to find [such] ease and wealth  
Whereby to render meaningful this human birth.  
If now I fail to turn it to my profit,  
How could such a chance be mine again?*

The precious human life. First we need to think of all the negative things that can be. If I have to appreciate what I have then I have to see all the possible problems and negative things that could have been. Then I should be happy that it's not like that.

So therefore, sometimes we talk about eight eases and ten wealth or ten endowments and things like that. Those things I'm not going to explain too much here. If you want to know them you will find them in the commentary.

Basically, what we are saying is that compared to lots of other possibilities, I'm so fortunate. If you look at some other forms of life, then compared to them I'm so fortunate. I must appreciate that. So this is about appreciating myself, all the chances that I have, all the possibilities that I have. Generally, it's understood that the human beings are the highest evolved beings on this earth. We are very powerful. We are very fortunate. We have lots of resources. We can think, we can talk, we can do things with our hands, we are very innovative, we are intelligent. So, even if I have nothing else than this life, I must appreciate it and we must appreciate what we have. If we don't appreciate what we have it's the same as not having them.

So therefore, I need to think, I need to remind myself, this life, that I have, at this moment, all the facilities that I have, all the problems—there are problems in life, everybody has problems in life—but just because there are one or two problems doesn't mean that everything is bad. Who doesn't have problems? Therefore, I must really appreciate all the good things that I have. I have this precious human life and the precious human life didn't come just like this, for no reason for no causes and conditions. To be a human being with all these fortunate things that I have around me in my life, all the things that I enjoy, it came with all sorts of positive causes and conditions, millions of causes and conditions.

So I must really appreciate this: not just appreciate it, but I must take this opportunity and do something really useful. It's not enough that I just enjoy myself, spend this life with no use or no benefit for anybody or for myself. I can't waste this life, I have to make good use of this life and make it better, make it better for me and learn to do something that will bring much more understanding, much more usefulness, much more joy and happiness, much more wisdom and compassion and much more purpose for myself and also do something that will really bring benefit for lots of people because there is this possibility. I'm not completely incapable. There are lots of abilities, there are lots of capacities and if I don't do this now, this is the chance, this is the

time we should not neglect, we should not just waste and we should not rest especially thinking that it's so bad and there's nothing good and all these things. This is wrong. We should not become discouraged, we should not let our life be wasted by only thinking how bad it is and how little power that I have. Because, if we don't do anything, then we have no power. If we don't even start, if we don't even attempt, then we of course, cannot do anything. But if we really try to help ourselves and to help others, try to do something, then why not? It will happen. So everybody can do something that is good for you and is good for others and whatever may be I should start. At least I really need to generate the right kind of motivation, the right kind of aspiration, I at least try to go into the right direction with this strong resolve, strong commitment to decide to turn my life into something that is useful and positive and bring something really good to myself and to others.

So that's why I should think like this, that this life is precious, lots of good things there, lots of capacities, lots of potentials. But this is difficult to get, because we need lots of positive conditions for this. Therefore, I must not waste it. Life goes very quickly and it's impermanent. I must take this chance to learn to work on myself to try to do something that's useful for others because if I don't do this now then I can lose it and I might not get it for a long time.

So therefore, resolve to do something that would be very, very useful and very, very good for myself and not just for myself, not just for my own family, not just for my relatives and not just for my own country but for all the world and every being.

At least I need to generate that kind of intention and motivation.

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This is a transcript of a video talk given for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra by Ringu Tulku Rinpoche. The transcript has been only lightly edited and is meant to be used within the Online Shedra study context.