



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche: The First Chapter Stanzas 1-3

BA 4: The First Chapter, Stanzas 1-3

October 31 2010

Transcribed by Karma Sonam Rinchen

Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra

The second half of stanza 1

So now we come to the second half of the (first) stanza and the rest - which is the promise to write the book. And here it says:

*According to the scriptures, I shall now briefly describe
The practice of the Bodhisattva discipline.*

Actually, you know, I didn't have the new version of the new translation of the Bodhicharyavatara in English, and I was following my old book and I didn't know there was some difference – it's a little bit different in translation - but it comes to the same thing. Here, in the homage section (the first half of the first stanza), in the new version it says:

To those who go in bliss, the dharmakaya they possess...

Dharmakaya here means all the dharma actually. It means all the experiences of the dharma, all the teachings of the dharma. Sometimes we say the skandha of the dharma or the heap of the dharma or the form of the dharma or every dharma. Therefore it comes to the same thing anyway.

Now what he's saying here is that I'm not teaching anything that's not taught by the Buddha and commented on by his great followers and disciples and lineage holders. I'm saying everything here is coming from a source, a teaching.

A scripture doesn't mean just a book, but all the teachings that came from the Buddha. It's not that I myself invented something - it's based on the wisdom of the ancients. And this teaching is about the practice of the bodhisattva's discipline, how to become a bodhisattva or how to train yourself in the path of the bodhisattva. How to become a person that would be helpful. How can I liberate myself from my own problems and sufferings and how can I help other people in this path, or in this direction or purpose. What can I do, how can I work towards that? This is all about it.

Stanza 2

So he says:

*Here I shall say nothing that has not been said before
And in the art of prosody I have no skill.*

Now he's trying to make himself more humble, and trying to maintain the humility. Because it's not that he has no skills in writing or in poetry or in prosody - it's not like that - this is regarded as one of the most eloquent, the most beautifully written works, but he's trying to get humility.

This humility is something that's important. It's not that 'I'm bad', thinking that. 'I'm bad, I don't know anything. I'm really bad'. It's not like that. It's not that you have no appreciation of yourself or it's not that you really think you know nothing - it's not like that. But it's also not thinking one thing and saying something else - it's not like that either. Like I think that I'm really good but then, just for the sake of saying I say that I know nothing - but actually I feel that I know lots of things - it's not like that.

Because, generally, everything is comparative. If I compare myself with somebody who knows nothing I know a lot. But if I compare with somebody who knows a lot then I know nothing. So therefore those who are humble, or have humility, they see the good qualities of others, and they see lots of good qualities of others, and actually when you see the good qualities of others that means you have the ability to see them - you have that quality, otherwise you wouldn't even be able to see them, you wouldn't be able to even judge. So therefore the more you see the positive qualities of others, the more you can appreciate the positive qualities of great beings - learned people and other beings. Naturally, in comparison, I feel that I know nothing and there is a lot

more to learn, there's a lot more to develop, and then I naturally become humble. So therefore it is often said that humbleness is the sign that you are learned, you know a lot - you have lots of good qualities, because you have the capacity, you have learned to see and appreciate others great qualities.

If you are proud - 'Oh I am best! I am really great!' - when you think like that, that means you don't see, you don't understand, you don't appreciate. You don't even know there are better things and other people have better qualities, and better knowledge and more wisdom. Then you become very proud and think 'I'm the best!' But actually you have only seen a little bit, you haven't seen much. Therefore you also can't learn because if you already think 'I'm the greatest so what more is there to learn?' So you don't learn. So you look at everybody in a very bad way.

So therefore, to have this humility is something really important. It's always said, that if you cannot see the positive qualities and good things, and appreciate others positive qualities, then it means you cannot learn any more. Therefore it is very important to train ourselves to see the positive qualities in others and appreciate them. And the more we can do that, the more we can learn. The people who are great can appreciate other great things, therefore they are not proud. The more great you are, the more learned you are, the more advanced you are - usually you become more humble and you have more humility. So he's trying to say that, he's trying to show that.

He says then:

I therefore have no thought that this might be of benefit to others.

So he says that, 'I'm not the greatest and there are lots of other beings, other writings, other books which are so good and have so many positive qualities - so if those cannot help lots of people, mine...(well,) I've not much expectation to help them. This is also very important: if you expect too much from your things then of course you are disappointed. And it is not easy to help: this is also a very important thing. I mean as a bodhisattva you have made the commitment that you would work towards helping other beings and yourself also - all other beings. But it does not mean that you expect that it will happen very quickly, or in a completely kind of big way: that you can just completely transform everybody in a few years, or something like that. It doesn't happen like that. So you need to know that, you need to expect that. You can't expect too much, that's not realistic. So therefore you have to become ready to work, life after life, aeon after aeon, a

long, long time, lots of hardships. You do not become disheartened by small failures, or if it doesn't happen exactly as it should, or you expect that it should. This is a very important thing to say.

And then, 'Why did you write?'

I wrote it only to habituate my mind.

So 'I wrote it', he says 'only' but maybe not only (but) 'mainly' – to train myself.

And it's also important we need to remind ourselves - to know something is not enough. Maybe I received some teachings about different things and I agree with that, I understand it. And I say 'Okay now I know, it's okay'. (Yet) it's not enough because I know it. It's not about knowing, it's about really reacting in that way - using that way of thinking, saying, becoming - totally kind of, habituated in that - becoming one with that way of reacting. So therefore this is practice.

The practice is to remind myself of what I understand I should do, (how) I should react and see - act and react in that way because that's the right way - that is something that is useful for me and others. So I need to take that into account, I need to remind myself of that because we all have lots of negative habitual tendencies and we need to transform those habitual negative tendencies. If we cannot do that, then we will not transform, so therefore we need lots of repeating, reminding ourselves - especially when we are distracted or when we have negative (experiences). You know, when we have a big problem, then we say 'O - oh I have too much problems! I cannot think about dharma'. That's because we are not used to – we have some understanding but we have not practiced them, and so when the real problems come we cannot use it. So therefore we have to use it now, from now onwards, little by little and all the time, and the more we can do that the more we will become more capable of using those understandings and experiences when even big problems come. So therefore this is his reminder to that.

Stanza 3

*My faith will thus be strengthened for a little while,
That I might grow accustomed to this virtuous way.*

So when I read them, when I remind myself once, when I think in this way, then for a while, I become more positive and everything becomes okay for me. And then again, slowly, slowly, that wears off and I start to forget, and then I need to remind again and again.

That's why many people, many great masters, used to read the root text of Bodhicharyavatara everyday - they'll recite it. Reciting the sutras and reciting this kind of text everyday is a practice because it's a reminder - that's why they do it like that - and many people have memorized the whole text and then they recite it, and things like that. So it's virtually, it's mainly for that. And he's also saying that this should be done by everybody. When one is in a little bit of negative mood, or feeling a little bit low, then, if you read and recite the sutras, this Bodhicharyavatara, or teachings by great masters, like 'Songs of Milarepa' or Patrul Rinpoche, then you feel kind of rejuvenated - this happens to everybody. That's why he says like that.

"But", he says,

*But others who now chance upon my words
May profit also, equal to myself in fortune.*

What it means to say is that if there are other people like me, who are the same as myself, the same environment, same problems - being a human being and all this kind of similar way - if they read this, it is possible that they may also be benefited a little bit as I have benefited myself.

So he's not thinking that he's not going to help anybody - it might help, it will help - he knows that it will help other people also who (are) like himself - all of us who are in a similar way. Human beings who can see things, are in this world, have this samsaric state of mind. And we also have these positive qualities of little bit of love and compassion and kindness - some kind of thinking mind and we can understand things. So if we are like this then it's very clear that it would help us, it would teach us, and so therefore we should do that. We should read it. This is the understanding.

What he is saying is that you should not expect that you just study this once and then you become totally transformed. It's not like that. You study it once just to understand, then you repeat it again and again, you remind yourself again and again, and that is the practice in (our) life. And the practice is that. Practice is not just doing something like meditation or recitation of mantra or only those kinds of things. Practice is working on your emotions, on your attitude, way of seeing

things, on your habitual tendencies. And the real way, the best way, the only way, is through understanding, through reminding yourself to bring back that understanding, and then changing your way of reacting, acting - how you act with your mind, how you act with your speech and how you act with your body, and then maintain that.

And that's the practice.

©Ringu Tulku