



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche: Questions and Answers 3

QA3: Questions and Answers 3 (after the teachings BA5 and BA6)

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Transcribed by Pat Murphy

Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra

The first question is from Guadalupe and she says,

“A friend told me once: “A bodhisattva should be responsible not only to what he says but also to what people hear when he talks.” Sometimes, our motivation is for the benefit of others but people hear the contrary. Is this quotation true? If so: is it possible to always have an influence on what people hear despite their own way of perceiving reality?”

I don't think this is possible. I don't know who said this, but maybe they were talking about bodhisattvas of very high realization, buddhas and things like that. Maybe they have so much positive influence that people can, most of the time, get something positive from them. But I think it is also not true. If you look into the story of the Buddha there have been many cases where people misunderstood him. But the most important thing here is that now we are going through the Bodhicharyavatara and this is not about great bodhisattvas. This is not about enlightened people. This is about how to enter into the bodhisattva's path. So whatever I am saying is at that level and it is important for us to concentrate there. We don't need to too much discuss about what the buddhas will be experiencing or what bodhisattvas of the greatest kind of realization would be doing or experiencing. That's not our standard at the moment. We are not there so we don't need to discuss this. We cannot actually discuss this. We have to discuss what we understand and what we can do and practice now. So therefore I think at this level, you know, we

should try to generate bodhicitta, compassion. It is not that our compassion, bodhicitta is absolutely pure or completely perfect. When we talk about bodhicitta, we are not talking about something impossible, something completely perfect or anything. We are just talking about good motivation, good aspiration, you know, a beneficial way of thinking and understanding and acting that we can do at this moment. We are not talking about something totally out of the world or beyond samsara. So this is very important to understand.

Now we go to the next question and it's from Isabel:

“When I read of the Buddha sitting in meditation and transforming weapons into flowers and resisting all temptation, I realize that my actions aren't free from impurities. I see that, like for the Buddha, meditation can change one's conscience to both inside and outside. Introspection sometimes has to deal with so many points of view that it's really hard to find ease. How can I develop patience with myself in a world pushing us constantly to action and reaction?”

Now we must look in this way: Even Buddha, you know, who was going to become totally enlightened in the early morning- the evening before that he still had temptations and he had to transform weapons.

So that shows that it is not easy to be free from all the problems. Whether what this story tells exactly happened like that or not is another matter, but this is a teaching. It is said in our stanzas also, that the negative thoughts will come, negative emotions will come, negative habitual tendencies will come and that's nothing impossible. That's nothing extraordinary. That's nothing completely bad and like I have to feel so bad because I have some negative emotions. It's not like that. But it's not good for us if we allow ourselves to be taken over by the negative emotions and negative reactions, so therefore we have to little bit be aware for our own good and for the good of others. We have to, as much as possible, try to react in a positive way. And try to act in a positive way as much as possible. That's the whole point. So if we do this, if we take this as our way of life, then it doesn't matter if the world or the people around us are pushing for whatever or not. That's not the important thing. Of course there will be lots of positive and negative influences pushing from outside, from inside, from all negative things. That's why we said it is not easy to get

positive things all the time. So therefore, we need to just remind ourselves of this and then act accordingly. It's not that we should not act at all and just always remain in meditation. It's not saying like that, but we have to be a little bit mindful (about) how we act and react.

Next question is from Denis.

"If spontaneous positive thoughts happen to be too rare, is it possible to generate good resolutions and try to follow them?"

That's exactly what he is talking about. We need to realise that we are samsaric beings. Everybody around us are samsaric beings. We have ignorance, we have aversion, we have fear, greed, anger, all the negative emotions. So, it's not something totally out of context, it is normal. But these negative emotions are not good for us. These negative reactions from ourselves, these habitual tendencies are not going to bring good things for us and others so therefore we need to remind ourselves that we need to be a little bit decisive and make the motivation, make the resolution, make the decisions. Reminding (ourselves) again and again. That is what is called practice. It's not that you are always just sitting in the meditation all the time and doing nothing, you know, that's not the case.

This is a question from Lucy. She says,

"What is the meaning of 'through the Buddha power' in this stanza? It seems to be referring to an outside power bringing the inspiration for those moments of virtuous attitude. How can that be? Khenpo Kunpal talks of the light of the Buddha's bodhicitta and aspirations. I don't really understand that either. Could you explain a little, please?"

We say in our aspiration when we generate bodhicitta, that I would like to find a lasting peace and happiness for myself and I would like to bring lasting peace and happiness for all the beings. And

therefore, I would like to work on it and become enlightened. So if you don't have some understanding or some kind of idea that if I become enlightened then I would have more power, more wisdom and (more) influence to help other beings to become enlightened, then there's no reason to do that. There's no reason to work for the enlightenment. So there is this understanding that the more advanced you are, the better equipped you will become to help other beings and the more powerful you will become to help other beings. Therefore, it is understood that buddhas have lots of power, lots of wisdom, lots of compassion to help other beings. All the buddhas who have already become buddhas are not just resting or doing nothing. They are always trying to help, trying to guide, trying to influence, trying to give positive energy. It's not that they can do everything for us. It's not possible that they can just take us and put us somewhere. But they have limitless wisdom, limitless compassion and also lots of positive power. So therefore, this is the understanding: even a little bit of positive energy that I get, the positive aspirations that I get, could be with the help of the positive beings, buddhas and bodhisattvas. It's not that Buddha is the creator and the Buddha does everything and if he pleases then he gives us blessings and gives us good things and if he is displeased then he wouldn't give us good things but would give us more punishment. That's not the understanding from Buddhist point of view. Buddha is not the creator, but Buddha is the helper and Buddha can help and should help and when we become buddhas and enlightened beings, (the understanding is) that we would have more power and more energy and more influence to help other beings.

Now we come to the next question from Shenpen Thaye.

"How great that we can share in these teachings with you, worldwide. Thank you, Rinpoche. This is part of a great legacy that you are spreading. Something that will be of benefit way beyond which we can possibly imagine."

I don't think this is a question but thank you very much for saying (such) nice things. If you have received anything good from this I am extremely happy and I'm encouraged. So I will continue to do this and let us all together study and practice and go together. Just me alone cannot do anything, all of you should help me. All of you should join this course. Everybody who wants to study with me, who wants to practice together with me, who wants to be my student, to learn

something and work together, I think they should all join this course. It's very important that you all join this course and we work together on this. Just now we are going through Bodhicharyavatara, but then we will go through many other texts as well, slowly, step by step. So thank you very much for your encouragement.

Then there's another question from Lynda Miller.

"What is the source of our positive thoughts and feelings? I know that the three poisons are the source of negative impulses, but I'm not sure where kind and generous feelings come from; do they maybe arise from our Buddha Nature even though we may not be aware of this."

You can say that they come from the Buddha Nature if you want because the understanding is that basically, the positive is our nature. If we are not disturbed, we will be kind. If we are not disturbed by our inner emotions or outside problems, then our mind will be more peaceful. If we are not disturbed, then emotionally I will not be angry, but more calm and kind. So all these things show that basically we are not completely negative. Sometimes when we are, you know, in a positive situation or an inspired situation, we have positive aspirations and positive emotions and good motivations. But that can also go away, so all these things are not so stable in us. Even if I have a very good motivation now, it doesn't mean that it will stay there all the time. It will wane. So that's why we need sustain it, we need to practice it, That's why the practice is necessary. That's why reminding ourselves is necessary. That's why thinking again and again of the reason why we do this, and why it is important to have bodhicitta, is important.

Then another question from Ruth.

"How can we reconcile the idea of spontaneous response free from second thoughts, put forward by Bernard and Tsering with a Mahamudra emphasis, on that moment between the event and the response which is characterised by suspension of judgement and by a pure awareness free from any kind of action?"

Generally, this is the understanding. I think I mentioned it earlier also, that all these negative thoughts and emotions and reactions are an acquired habit from the Buddhist point of view. It is a habitual tendency. It's very strong, but still comes out of a misunderstanding, out of a wrong view or wrong way of looking at things. It comes out of not knowing how to experience ourselves, how to react to things. So therefore, if we really knew ourselves, if we really understood what I am and the way things really are, then we naturally do not have to react with negativity. We do not have to react with too much aversion, too much attachment, but our reaction will be naturally compassionate and with peace and we don't have to run after something and run away from something all the time.

So in the Mahamudra - not only Mahamudra, but in all these teachings, when people encourage meditation, encourage naturalness, encourage non-action, what they are doing is trying to remain in that natural state of our mind that we do not have to run after things and away from things all the time. It's not saying that we should not act all. It's not saying that we should not do something for the benefit of others, that we should not act with compassion, or not practice the Six Paramitas. It's not saying anything of those things. We have to work. We have to do something for the society, for ourselves. The more compassionate activities we can do the better it is.

What it's saying is that we need to find a way to bring peace and tranquility within ourselves, to learn how to act without running all the time after something or away from something with aversion and attachment. So therefore, when we can do that, when we can be more free from tension, then our actions will become much more clear, much more deliberate, much more compassionate, much more wiser. Because too much negative emotions cloud our way of seeing things and our reactions and therefore, it brings problems for us and for others. So that's the understanding.

So we need to act with compassion. We don't need to just become lazy and do nothing. But we have to act (without too much reaction) and too much emotion and just running after something and running away from something all the time, only thinking about myself like a mad person. And running, running, running all the time, running with so much tension and pain and so much intense aversion and attachment and dissatisfaction and fear and only running, running, running and at the end of the life, you know, what did you do? You did nothing. Nothing for yourself. Nothing for others. We should not do that. We should learn to relax. We should learn to free ourselves from tension. We should learn to be, to be and not just run, but to be. And to know

ourselves slowly and thereby, learn how to do things, how to act with deliberation, with concentration, with kindness, with compassion. (Not to react too much) and do nothing that is really useful for ourselves and for others.

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