



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche Questions and Answers 5

QA5: Questions and Answers 5 (after the teaching BA8)

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This is a question from Eleine. It says,

“Although, in daily life situations, I may feel the aspiration to be of help to others, I often don’t see how to do this well, in the best or right way. My perceptions of what’s good, best or right are too often unclear and deceptive and therefore I neither trust them nor feel confident that acting on their basis will lead to positive effects. The intention may be good, but I’m not so sure the means and effects will be so. Does developing bodhicitta step by step naturally lead one to see more clearly what’s the best way to contribute helpfully moment by moment?”

You know the first step is to have the right intentions, the right motivation. That’s the first step because without the positive good intention, our actions will not be positive. Now once you have the good intention, you have to check, you have to see that what you are doing is really helping or not helping, that what you are actually doing is really motivated, that your actual action of body, speech and mind is in accordance with that intention or not. Because sometimes, you know, you think that you want to help, but then if you look a little deeply it’s not about you helping others, it’s only about yourself. You are concentrating too much on yourself and then if you look how you are acting, you’re acting [from a] kind of ...hurt feeling. You are very unpleasant, you are very kind of upset and in a bad mood all the time and then you are criticizing other people. So when you see that you are acting this way, then you are not helping. So I think it is very important to [look at] not just the motivation, but the actions that you are actually doing with your body, speech and

mind [to see if] they are really in accordance with your original motivation or not. First you see whether the motivation and the action are aligned together or not. Then you see whether your action is following that motivation or not. It's very important to honestly look at yourself and see what you are doing. Then I think it will improve.

Then the second question is,

“From the way you speak it sounds to me as if the aspiration to generate bodhicitta is like a complete path in itself, that if you can develop bodhicitta and live your life in this way, then that can be the main focus of your practice. Is this a correct understanding and how do other practices like Ngondro fit into this View?”

Now this bodhicitta is the motivation, is the right direction and then in order to work on it, all the practices that you do are either to generate this bodhicitta, or to develop that bodhicitta— it means wisdom and compassion— or are as a result of this bodhicitta. So therefore you have to see it like this. The Ngondro and every other practice is actually something to do with this. There is [no practice] which has no connection with this.

Then there is a question from Christian Ledain.

“If I develop a constant vigilance about my motivation, this attention becomes the earth of the practice. If I develop a constant inner practice, then what's the use of external practice such as rituals, recitations and that form of practice?”

There's nothing called two: external and inner. Every practice is for that inner practice and all ritual, whatever you call it, is not ritual. What we call rituals, or sadhanas, or recitations or mantras – everything, is a means to work on this [inner practice]. So therefore you have to understand this. You have to see that every practice we do in Buddhism is [about how] to work on yourself, how to work with your emotions, habitual tendencies, on your way of seeing, your attitude. So therefore it's a way of transforming yourself and you need to understand that

connection. And then you will not find that there's two things, that there are practices which are kind of outside and practices which are inside. It's all about inside, meaning how to transform yourself.

Then there's David T, his question:

"I think my questions revolve around literal, concrete thinking. Stanza 7 begins: "For aeons..." – Immediately I'm thinking how long is an aeon?"

There is a great Aeon and then a small Aeon. Usually, it's the lifetime of a planet for instance. Or the lifetime of the world. It is said that eighty small Aeons makes the whole big Aeon. That small Aeon is like when the world is being created, from the time that world begins to be there until the first beings are born into the world. That takes twenty Aeons, small Aeons. Then from the time the beings come on earth until the beings become extinct is twenty Aeons, the living time of the beings. Then it takes twenty Aeons to kind of get the world destroyed. Then twenty Aeons it remains without anything and then again it starts. So the long Aeon, the complete Aeon is this lifetime of our world and then the short Aeon is [1/80th] of that.

This is from Denis,

"I have understood that if we practice meditation or preliminary practices to develop bodhicitta it was alright and if we don't need to practice to develop bodhicitta it was alright too. But isn't formal dharma practice a good way to change our mind? If we considered view, meditation, action, aren't the first two good pillars on which build up correct actions?"

Yes, of course. Every practice we do is to transform ourselves. So therefore, the view, meditation, action is all to transform ourselves. So any methods to work on that, any methods to develop our compassion, develop our wisdom, to tame our mind, to lessen our negative emotions, negative actions, negative reactions and habitual tendencies is all a practice. So the more we work on that the more our bodhicitta becomes stronger and clearer and more vibrant. And the more our

bodhicitta becomes vibrant, the more our compassion and wisdom becomes established and stronger. And that's what we call the development of our bodhicitta, or transforming ourselves, or working better for the wellbeing of myself and other beings.

So that's about the practice. Thank you.

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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 only been lightly edited and is meant to be used within the Online Shedra study context.