



# Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

## Ringu Tulku Rinpoche *Questions and Answers 12*

QA12: Questions and Answers 12 (after the teaching BA16)

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Transcribed by Pat Murphy

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*“Teachers have sometimes reminded us when faced with another’s suffering, when we want to rush over and help, to stop first and notice, is it our own discomfort we want to make better, or the suffering of the other being? I understand the point being made, yet get tangled up in a ‘self’ that starts conceptualizing and analyzing instead of opening my heart to just help. Would you please comment more on this?”*

I fully agree with you. Of course, when you see something negative, not so nice happening, somebody suffering, you naturally feel uncomfortable. You naturally feel bad and that’s why you want to help and you want to make the other person feel better and also by that you feel better. I don’t think there is anything wrong that you try to help somebody because you want to feel better and you want to make others feel better. I don’t see this as a big problem at all. But if you are doing something and you kind of claim it’s for the benefit of others but actually it’s nothing to do with others, it’s only for you, then maybe it’s not so good because maybe that other person doesn’t really need or doesn’t really want you to do something for them. So this is something to understand, I think.

*"I have a question about stanza 23 which begins:*

*'Could our father or our mother  
Ever have so generous a wish?'*

*As a parent, I am aware of wishing all good things for my daughter, especially happy relationship, interesting job etc., but I am also aware that this kind of wishing actually causes me a lot of suffering when I fear she will not get these things. Since beginning to study these teachings, I realize that if I can wish her just to be free from suffering, this leaves me a better state of mind. Can this still be bodhichitta even though I feel it is me who is benefitting?"*

I think one thing which is very important to understand is that when you wish well to somebody, when you have compassion, when you have love, when you have bodhichitta, it is not necessary that you have to suffer and only the other has to benefit. That's not the case. Others have to have benefit but I also have benefit. That's nothing wrong, you know. Of course parents wish very best thing for their children, but what he's talking here about is that they do not know what is the best for their children most of the time. It does not mean to say that the children know the best. They also don't know sometimes and they make mistakes and then it's the duty of the parents to try to explain to them when they're making a mistake that they're making a mistake. That's another matter. That's not to say that the parents can never make any suggestions or any advice or give their experience and guide their children. But, you know, try to guide them in such a way - not just, you know, push them into some relationship or something that you think would be good for them even if they don't like it. Not do that, but try to bring something which is more long term and genuinely benefitting for them. I think that's the understanding here.

*"The question I have is about some of the suffering experienced in the world today. At the moment we are experiencing more severe weather disturbances, earthquakes and other natural disasters than is usual for the world. It is not always clear if these are due to the activities of men or simply to changes in the physical world. As well as this there are many wars, conflicts, turmoil and difficulties. Can it be said that all these things happening in the world are due to karma, or are some simply the consequence of physical and organic laws working in the world completely independent of karmic consequences?"*

The world is interdependent. Everything is interdependent. So therefore, you know, you cannot say only one thing. You cannot say everything is because of only this. There are lots of causes and effects. That's the first thing to understand. The theory of karma is coming from the philosophy. The philosophy of karma is coming from the philosophy of interdependence, or dependently arising. It's same and one. Everything has its causes and its conditions and because of these causes and conditions things happen. It is not to say that everything that happens to me is my fault. It's not like that. It's lots of causes and conditions there. So there are lots of causes and conditions that's not made by me. There's lots of causes and conditions that's made by me and my people, or our people also.

But one thing very important to understand is that what I experience, the way I experience is totally because of me. That's my karma. So therefore, you know, whatever may be happening around me, the way I experience it, the way I react to it, the way I see it is because I am like this. So therefore, that is my karma. I think I have explained this many times. This is very, very important to understand, to see this clearly. But then, you know, what happens to the world around us, our container, the world we live in? It is not very difficult to see how much we have destroyed it, how much we have violated it and polluted it in last hundred years. This is something that is very clear. So therefore if we continue to do that I think it is very clear that our world will become something very difficult to live in and that will affect all of us and all our future generations. So therefore, it is also very important that we take care of our home, our, you know, our mother, the way we live. This is also very important. So this is karma also that if I do something, if I clean my home, then I will have a clean home. My children will have a cleaner home. If I make my home, my place, my room full of dirt and full of pollution, then I will have to sleep in that. So that's karma in a way. This is also very important to understand.

*"It looks as though these events that so commonly give rise to suffering may become more common over the next few decades. But it seems to me that just as you can get a downward spiral, you can also give rise to an upward spiral. What would you say is the best way to help make sure that in the future things turn in this good, upward way?"*

It is absolutely true. Things can go up and things can go down. How I experience myself and how I make my life or make my world is very much up to all of us. So if all of us work together, you know,

we can create this world as a better place to live in. You can look at what are the main causes of the problems that we have contributed to make this world a worse place to live.

Basically it's the conflicts, the hatred towards each other. We fight, we inflict harm to each other, we make bombs and we bomb and we make so much weapons. We kill each other. Hatred, that's one reason. Conflict, coming out of hatred. Then greed. Because of greed we exploit the land, we attack each other, we try to grab at each other. All the conflicts and wars come out of this. That is one reason.

And then ignorance, because we don't know what's good for us, what's good for our future, how to make our life better just today and tomorrow for our children. So if we can take care of these three things, if we can generate compassion towards each other, if we can learn how to live together in a cordial way and a kind way, that will of course make this world much better and all the society much better. So this is the important thing.

*"Thank you for this inspiring teaching. When you talk about action bodhichitta I relate this to my work in the National Health Service, when I see individual people whom I aspire to help, of course not always successfully. How is it best to remember the bodhichitta aspiration during a busy working day so that it can be clearly in my mind? Would it be by memorizing particular stanzas or even by bringing a particular image to mind as this is more immediate?"*

I think it's not really necessary to have too much like that. You know, you have a general attitude: I'm here to do something good for everybody. Whoever is next to me I try to help. I don't have to too much think about how I feel about this all the time. I just go and do something good and helpful and if somebody says something, if somebody does something, I should not feel too sensitive about my own emotions and my own feelings. I think that's the way I should go forward. Not always thinking about me but thinking about the other person and my work. So that's the way. If you have certain problems sometimes, if you feel frustrated, or too anxious or nervous or something like that, or too tired, then maybe you can have certain things that you can remember and you can say. You can say a mantra or you can remember some stanzas or something that inspires you, this you can do also.

*"This is a very basic question, but I would really like to understand if there is a direct connection between the bodhichitta aspiration and the Four Immeasurables? These are part of my daily practice and I always find myself wondering if they are saying the same thing, or maybe in some way are distinct from each other. Could you kindly clarify?"*

It's the same thing. It's the exact same thing. *Four Immeasurables* is the way to generate bodhichitta.

*"Is there not a danger for us samsaric beings to think that just thinking positive thought is enough, that we can leave doing something about it till later. We are not at the stage where our compassionate thoughts produce results spontaneously as we are told Buddhas to do. Nevertheless, maybe our thoughts act on our minds and take us little further on the path, make us a little more capable of compassionate action, just as the resolution to act precedes the action. Could you kindly comment?"*

Nobody is saying that just having positive thought is enough. It's not enough, therefore we have to act. But a positive action has to be preceded by a positive thought, otherwise you would not do the positive action. So positive thought or positive intention or motivation is the first step. So that's very important. We cannot have positive actions without positive motivation. So it must be generated and must be generated. That's very important. But, you know, if you really have a positive motivation, then the positive action will naturally come and it should come. If it doesn't come then that thought was not good enough or not deep enough, you know. So therefore it must continue. It is a step. Nobody is saying that it's enough, but it is good if you have even a little bit of positive thought. It's much better than not having one so therefore it's very, very good on its own also. So this is the understanding.

*"At the end of the talk you recommended a book on the reincarnation by Ian Stevenson. Stevenson has written several books on the subject. Could you tell us which particular one you recommend, please?"*

Actually, I don't know anything about Ian Stevenson, I just heard recently about him and then I googled and found very interesting things that he said and about his findings. I have not read any

books by him but I think you should read all of them or at least some of them. I read parts of things that I can find and it was very good. So it's something I just suggested because somebody asked me can you say something about what his findings about. I never heard about him and actually most people have never heard about him although it seems that he has done really very important job [and done] lots of research into reincarnation.

*“My main practice is Mahamudra and my main prayer is the Dorje Chang Thungma. There seem to be some discrepancies in the way that this prayer has been translated and it has caused problems for me when trying to follow the debates. Could you please advise me as to the correct interpretation of the last line of the stanza relating to non-distraction? Should it be ‘free from conceptualization’ or ‘free from the idea of something to meditate on’? For me these two phrases have very different meanings.*

*(NB. The Oklahoma Centre in America has translated the verse as follows:*

*'Non-distraction is the body of meditation as is taught.  
Whatever arises is fresh, the nature of realization.  
To the meditator who rests simply in naturalness,  
Grant your blessings that my meditation is free from conceptualization.'*

*The Samye Ling Centre has translated it as:*

*'Non-distraction is taught to be the actual meditation.  
Thus, whatever arises, the true meditator simply rests within the uncontrived,  
In the very freshness of the essence of thought.  
Grant your blessing that he may be free from ‘something to meditate on’.)’*

This is not a very easy thing to translate because the concept is a new concept, so the different translators have translated in different ways. But the main thing is, you try to let your mind be as natural as possible and then as it's said, let your mind be fresh, what is said here:

*“Non-distraction is the body of meditation as is taught.  
Whatever arises is fresh, the nature of realization.  
To the meditator who rests simply in naturalness,  
Grant your blessings that my meditation is free from conceptualization.”*

Then another translation is,

*“Non-distraction is taught to be the actual meditation.*

*Thus, whatever arises, the true meditator simply rests within the uncontrived,*

*In the very freshness of the essence of thought.*

*Grant your blessing that he may be free from the idea of something to meditate on.”*

These are different translations so I think you should not get fixed on the words. I don't think any word can actually say the actual meaning. The words are just, you know, symbols of thoughts, of words, of expressions. Whatever words you say you can get the same meaning if you understand what it means. Whatever words you say you can get some wrong meaning if you don't understand it, so better understand the meaning. Better get some teachings and really understand it by those teachings and do not depend on the words too much. Thank you very much.

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