



# Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

## Ringu Tulku Rinpoche **Questions and Answers 2 (Chapter 2)**

BA2Q2: Questions and Answers 2 (Chapter 2) (after teaching BA2\_8-9)

April 9, 2011

Transcribed by Pat Murphy

Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra

So I am going to answer some of the questions from the Chapter 2. And the first question is,

*“Rinpoche, is the state of mind you describe in these two stanzas that which we should aspire to be in if we want to take the bodhisattva vows?”*

Well, the bodhisattva vows is similar, but you can have different levels of aspirations for taking bodhisattva vows. Generally it's kind of similar, I think, but bodhisattva vows can be with a very strong empathy for others and trying to understand that I have to do something for myself and for others. Then you can start to have the intention bodhisattva vows and then slowly it grows, so there is no kind of, it has to be only this way or only that way. I think it's something that's growing, generating, cultivating. It should not be taken as compulsory in any way. I think that's very important to understand.

Then another question from Françoise,

*“Such complete devotion and surrendering of the self for the well being of others is indeed the most wonderful and, for me, the most difficult challenge in the practice of dharma. My experience is it's easier for me to help people who are not so close to me, than sometimes to be selfless for my*

*own mother, husband and children. This shows me that I have very much to prove my motivation. Rinpoche. Sometimes we have to choose between bigger tasks and private life. If the essential point by the practice of bodhicitta is the motivation, it could be possible that it's better to be, for example, a good mother/father or grandmother/father, to be a good friend, than to work on big dharma projects."*

I think it is like that. In fact most people will be working for their parents or for their children, or for their family. That's very common and very natural in human society. Somebody working also for a bigger- for more people, for the whole humanity is a little bit less usual. That does not mean to say that you should stop working for your own family, for your own near and dear ones. It is of course very important to do that, but that doesn't mean that you should only do that and not do anything else. I think that's the understanding. In your actual life probably you have to do more for some, than for others. What kind of activity you do has to come according to the need of that time and situation, but generally, to have this empathy and to have the aspiration to act for the welfare of the many is the essential thing he's talking about.

Then next question is,

*"Dear Rinpoche, when offering one's body to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, should I aim to do that through living masters, root gurus in action of body (e.g. service), speech (e.g. chanting mantras) and mind (e.g. meditation and prayer), or is it meant mostly as an act of devotion through imagination and faith, offering my body and mind to the mandala of all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas?"*

I think first we should start to love ourselves. That's the starting point. Then we should feel empathy for others also and then dedicate our body, speech and mind for the welfare of the beings, including myself. What he is talking about here is offering your body, speech and mind, you can say. But it not that you should do something that you will regret later and you are not strong enough to do at the moment, even if it is supposed to be a good thing. So therefore, we can start with the small things. We can start with loving ourselves, caring for ourselves, then our family, relatives friends and then slowly for others. Or if it is easier to care for others than for your own people, do that, there's nothing wrong. But there's nothing like, this has to be done and then only

this can happen. I think from Buddhist point of view there's nothing like that. We just see what is better at this moment and in this situation that I can do something good for myself and for others. I think starting that way is the best and in case you cannot do much, you can make a kind of imaginative offering of body, speech and mind for the wellbeing of other beings. That's also a very good start so there is nothing wrong with that also.

Then another question is,

*"Dear Rinpoche, thank you so much for these meaningful teachings. Please would you elaborate on why melodies are considered the highest offering? What is their function and how are they valuable to Buddhas and bodhisattvas?"*

I don't think I said melodies are the highest offerings, but melodies are also great offerings. I think maybe I mentioned that the highest offering of melodies or the best melodies, or something like that. The melody is also nice, I mean the music is said to be very inspiring. It changes your mind. We all like to hear wonderful and beautiful music, so therefore we want to make an offering of that also. So, I think it is something like that. It's the sounds, you know sounds. There are three things: the form, the sounds and the thoughts. This includes almost all our experiences. The form, you know, the form we see, the form we taste, the form we smell, the form we touch. So it's the strongest kind of experience we have. Then the sound we hear and the thoughts we experience, that we feel. So that's why we try to make an offering of all that is experienced by us through form, sound and thoughts. That's the understanding.

*"Another question not related to this particular teaching is about disturbing thoughts. Please can you help me with advice as to how to deal with them."*

Well, disturbing thoughts.... that's a difficult thing. It's a most important thing. I think we need to allow ourselves to come down to the ground, you know, let the mind be in our body. Maybe we can do some body work. Sometimes that helps, you know, like gardening or being in the nature or with the elements. In Tibet they make tsa tsa in the water, or with the earth or something like that. Maybe gardening, or walking, or being in nature is a good example. You know, doing something physical. Prostrations may be a good thing. Doing some yoga may be good. Doing some very simple

pranayama may be good. And also, sometimes if it is too bad, too disturbing, then maybe you can go to a doctor and also get some medicines. That's also important.

Then there's another question which says,

*"Dear Rinpoche, a unanimous and urgent question during our Shantideva retreat was how to locate within ourselves the authentic questions to ask you that helps us really progress? (Rinpoche laughs) "Could you please share your lifetime of experiences as dharma matured within you, how to bypass mere intellectual curiosity and get to the heart of our own true questions? Thank you for your advice for this ever present and troubling issue that causes such struggle, as our time with the lama is so precious and life is so fleeting."*

I don't really know. I don't think there is kind of one question that one needs to ask. I think the main thing is that you ask the question from your own heart, from your own experience because sometimes the question that is most important is something that is not really necessarily sounding very profound or sounding very deep. You know, the question could be something that's coming from your heart, from your experience. So whether it is asking questions or whether it's giving teachings I think it's like this. If it comes really from your heart, then it is useful and it would work. If it comes too much from your head then it doesn't click and it doesn't help too much. This is what I find when I am teaching also. If it comes from my heart then I think it works, it goes to the heart of the students also. It sometimes helps a little bit. But if it comes only from my head then it doesn't work very much. This is my finding.

I think there are three letters or comments but I think these are not really questions.

*"Dear Rinpoche, I am in Lerab Ling each time you come through here since 1996, and your teachings always touch my heart and mind. My commitment to you is my life quest to become a better human being. Your advice and teachings is something that I take very much to heart. Thank you for your transmissions, writings and Losar greetings. Please Rinpoche, I pray that you don't forget us and that you know that your presence here in Lerab Ling is one of the foundation stones of our path to Buddhahood. How lucky are we to have met you. You are a true son of Buddha's intent. From the depth of my heart with all respect and love, thank you. Please be happy, I wish you many,*

*many students and disciples with superior capacity and pure devotion and that you live very long to grant hope to sentient beings in these difficult times.”*

Thank you very much. This is from Annette. Yeah, I will be in Lerab Ling soon. Thank you.

Another, *“My dear Ringu Tulku Rinpoche, thank you for the precious opportunity to study this wonderful text with you. You are an inspiration for us.”* Ian Young.

Thank you, Ian.

*“Thank you very much, Rinpoche, in continuing this study and reflection on the stanzas of Bodhicharyavatara. I am coming closer to what you explain as the heart of the enlightened mind. Here and there I had real difficulty in overcoming attachment and aversion so that at a certain moment someone much stronger than me gave me a push in the right direction so that now I have to face reality as it is and be grateful for the space and time I can spend to learn and to follow in the footsteps of you, my kind and dearest dharma Masters.”*

So thank you very, very much and I am very grateful that some of the things I do like explaining the Bodhicharyavatara is of some benefit to all of you. The credit doesn't go to me, the credit goes to Shantideva. Shantideva is regarded as one of the greatest bodhisattvas and his teachings have been always helpful and always going to the heart and helping people throughout the ages and so therefore we study this text together and try to practice as much as possible. That's my intention and that's my wish also, to work together with all of you. So those who have joined please continue. There's nothing kind of compulsory to do this way or that way. It's very nice to go through the text of Shantideva for me also. It's a reminder and for you it's a reminder. So thank you. Thank you very much.

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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.