



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche **Questions and Answers 5 (Chapter 2)**

BA2Q5: Questions and Answers 5 (Chapter 2)

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“Rinpoche, taking refuge seems to be the most essential practice if we do it in a profound, extensive and sincere way. I wonder if it could be very good to take refuge with the whole body. I mean, to be conscious about the aggregate state of our bodies, all its structures, atoms, micro-organisms and inhabitants. So we first develop a consciousness about the body which is not solid at all. Then to take refuge with the life energy, lung, energy body, with the speech and with the mind as our stream of consciousness, including all functions. I find it really helpful to do this before practicing self-healing meditation. I like to do this in my work as a therapist and with ill people, to create a powerful connection to inner resources. What do you think about this idea? As you rightly mention in your teaching, the main refuge is our Buddha Nature, the primordial state of our consciousness, a totally healing space free from pain.”

In some sense, when we say we are taking refuge [it is] a decision to transform - like when we say in the Vajrayana sometimes, *“I take refuge in tsa, lung and tige; in channels and the wind energy and in the bindu, the essence”*, what I’m really saying is that I would like to transform my channels, my energies and my essence. So it’s not that “up there” there’s the *tsa, lung, tige* and I pray to them - but that I want to purify them, I want to transform them. So, from that point of view, this is okay. But there’s nothing like, *“I have to take refuge with all parts of my body”* and things like that. Usually it’s not necessarily like that because the refuge is taken by our mind, our consciousness.

Because even if it's our body which needs to be transformed then who decides? The mind decides, because the body itself cannot decide what to do or to take refuge or not. It's the mind which is controlling everything. So therefore I don't think there's anything like the body takes refuge and mind doesn't take refuge and things like that. But from the point of view of transforming, then there is this thing, as in the Vajrayana. I mean that is the ultimate way of taking refuge, so in that case, you know, there is maybe a possibility of something like that.

Then the next question is,

"Sometimes, particularly when one feels distressed, one tends to understand taking refuge as turning to some external or transcendental power that could rescue us from our misery. Is that a misunderstanding?"

This is also okay, although generally when we take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, we take refuge in the Buddha as a teacher, the Dharma as the practice and Sangha as the company, or help, to make us kind of understand the Dharma and also to help us to practice together. But the Buddha is seen with ten powers, with immeasurable compassion, immeasurable wisdom and therefore immeasurable power to help us. The Buddhas know how to help us in every way and they have the power to help us.

If we ask for help from Buddhas or bodhisattvas it is certainly helpful and it's certainly possible that we get help and blessing and protection and things like that. So therefore, to seek help, to seek blessings, guidance, teachings, inspiration, all these things means that we can use this enlightened essence or enlightened beings at different levels also.

The ultimate refuge is that I want to transform myself and therefore I would become enlightened and I would work for that in order to help myself and in order to help all other beings. And as Buddha Shakyamuni and all other Buddhas have become Buddha, I can also do that. So that's the ultimate refuge.

But also, that understanding includes that there are enlightened beings full of wisdom, full of compassion, full of power to help. Why do I want to become a Buddha? Because I can help

beings.

I also receive that help from the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. So it's very natural and very traditional and also advisable that you also pray to the Buddhas, the bodhisattvas and to different Buddhas for different kind of energies and help. Medicine Buddha for healing and for illnesses of all kinds. Then, Tara for fears and all kind of dangers and Manjushri for wisdom and getting rid of all kinds of confusions and Vajrapani to protect us from all kind of negative forces and all these kind of things.

But then it is also true that all the enlightened beings have all these capacities so therefore, you know, it's very good and very necessary and advisable to seek their help and blessings and power when we feel distressed and in need.

Actually it is always good to remember the Buddhas and bodhisattvas and pray to them in any situation, especially when we are afraid or when we have problems. We call them, we feel their blessings and we feel them in our heart, feel them on our head, feel them next to us day and night. This is something which is also part of the practice. Many people do it with Guru Yoga. You know, you feel [the presence of] your Guru and if you have lots of confidence in the Guru you can do this with the Guru. Lots of people do it with their Lineage Gurus, who are also great bodhisattvas and Buddhas and have the capacity to help beings. And then also you do it with Buddhas and bodhisattvas and so it's like that. Thank you very much.

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