



# Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

## Ringu Tulku Rinpoche **Questions and Answers 7 (Chapter 2)**

BA2Q7: Questions and Answers 7 (Chapter 2)

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Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra

*“Could you please explain exactly how we can dedicate our practice to the purification of negative karma? I can understand from your explanation of these stanzas why it’s very important to do this but I am not sure that I know how to do it. So far, I have just been trying to let go of negative thoughts and emotions and not act on them, (sometimes successfully, sometimes not), and to generate more positive actions. But does purification involve something more than this?”*

That’s a very good thing, a very good way of doing it. But what he’s saying here is that you recognize the negative actions as negative actions, and then if you remember whatever negative things you have done, you make it a point, through doing whatever good practices you do, whether it’s a purification mantra, or a meditation, whether it’s a visualization or another mantra, to take that as a purification practice.

Because I would like to purify, I would like to get rid of all the negative deeds that I have done. So therefore this practice that I am doing may help to make this purification complete. And then, one of the main things is that I try not to do again.

Now this “trying not to do again” and seeing the negativity of the action has a very strong connection, because if I don’t see, truly, how not useful this action is for me and others and how negative and harmful it is for myself and others really, then I would not be able to say that I

wouldn't do it again. But if I really am able to see that this is really something not good, it's useless, it's not beneficial, it's completely something that I should get rid of and not do again, then I might have this stronger feeling, or stronger decision that I will not do it again. And once that happens, I think that's the kind of strongest kind of purification. I see it like that.

But then of course, since we are samsaric beings we are not completely under our control. We have not tamed our mind, so therefore, it is not always possible that we do everything right. So therefore, we need to make the purification again and again.

*"I have just listened again to the question number 5 of second chapter because it is also about refuge (that's stanza 26) and because I found your answer to the second question very inspiring and beautiful... about how we should remember to pray to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Is this the context in which purification of negative karma can take place, that is, in the presence of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in our minds?"*

I think that's very true. That's correct. That's one way of doing the purification. You know, when we talk about the support, when we talk about the antidote, this is the support and the antidote is the positive things that we do. Four things are the purification. First, seeing the negative deeds as wrong and not beneficial, useless. Second, the support, Buddhas and bodhisattvas and all like those things. Third, any positive actions you do, or even letting go, letting go like that and then fourth, you try to make a decision not to do it again.

*"We should have this strong sense of urgency, which comes from acknowledging impermanence and the uncertainty of life. On the other hand we need to practice patience. Could you say something about this? Often these seem like contradiction."*

No, this is not contradiction at all. Actually, having patience for negative things and then doing something wrong or, you know, not reacting when you should be reacting, is the wrong way of doing patience. All six paramitas have the right side and the wrong side, or something that is not proper. That is improper patience. It's described in the teachings very clearly.

As we have discussed before and will be discussing in the next chapters, patience is about not getting angry and being able to see that all these negative emotions are not good and so therefore you don't have to act on them. That's called the real patience.

Then the second kind of patience is, to understand that things can be hard. To achieve something great, something very beneficial, is not easy so therefore you have to work hard. We have to take things seriously, take things urgently. You can't just be lazy. This is also part of patience. Patience is not that you are easily fed up, or easily give up.

And the third kind of patience is that your mind is open enough, so therefore your mind is able to accommodate all sorts of arguments, all sorts of reasons, all sorts of ways of thinking.

The next question is, *"I have a question about suffering. Is it a correct attitude, when I experience pain, and I cannot change the situation, to think, at least, I am purifying my Karma"?*

Yes. This is a good practice. But the problem is, sometimes you kind of put it on others. If somebody is suffering and you say "Oh, it's his karma," that's wrong. That's not right.

The thing is, that if I try to purify my karma by going through it, but if anything negative comes, you cannot just ignore it, or you cannot just not accept it. You can't run away. There's no way to run away. If it doesn't come from the door it'll come from the window or from the ceiling or from anywhere. So therefore, you cannot run away. You have to face it. You have to deal with it. You have to accept it and then you have to purify it. You have to do something about it.

There are many different ways of doing that. One way is to take it as purification and if you want to do it even better, then bring all the others' negative karmas of the same kind on it and think that I am not only purifying my karma, but I am purifying others karmas as well. And then I feel everybody has been purified of that negative kind of karma.

But don't say that others should suffer because they're purifying their karma. Not necessarily. Just by suffering doesn't purify your karma, but can sometimes create more negative karma because if

you are too angry or too negative about it, then you create more negative karma also.

*“When we did a bad action many years ago, and after that we apply oneself to do positive actions, day after day, is there a way to know when we are free from this bad action, when the negative karma has been purified?”*

I don't know exactly but I think you shouldn't take it like that. We do lots of negative things, we do lots of positive things also, but if I look into myself and find that I'm not inclined to do that kind of negative action now, I think I could say that I am free from that negative action. You know, it's a little bit like if I've been addicted to something, say I've been drinking too much or I've been smoking too much or something like that. And then I want to get rid of it and I don't take it, I purify myself, I kind of work on it, work on it and then at a certain time, even if there are people drinking around me and all these kind of things are there, I don't even feel like drinking, it's no problem for me. That's the time I'm really off it. So I think it is similar.

Next question is, *“My question is about the purification of others deeds. Sometimes someone that we like commit a very wrong action. How can we help him to purify and lead him to do positive things? Through compassion? Or logical arguments?”*

Well, we can try. We can try compassion. We can try logical arguments. We can try to kind of bring him or her to certain experiences through which they can understand that continuing in this way is not good. We can try. I don't think there's any guarantee, because as long as that person doesn't really want to stop doing those deeds, or doesn't want to purify, I cannot do it for them. But we can influence. We can help. Especially if I'm with somebody who is doing something not so good. It's kind of which character is more stronger. If I am stronger, maybe I influence that person. If that person is stronger, I get influenced by that.

You know, you all get influence from each other. So maybe if you are yourself doing the right thing and behaving in the right way, that might actually help this person, you know. If you create the environment. Environment is also very important, I think.

So, I think that's the questions so far. I am very sorry that I was not able to answer these questions and also send teachings for some time, especially when I was in Russia. But now I am back and I'll regularly send the answers and the teachings also. Thank you very much for your patience. Thank you.

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