



# Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

## Ringu Tulku Rinpoche ***Questions and Answers 2 (Chapter 3)***



BA3Q2: Questions and Answers 2 (Chapter 3)

July 18, 2011

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Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra

So now, there are some questions that I would like to answer from Chapter Three.

The first question is:

*“Thank you for this very inspiring explanation of these two stanzas. At an intuitive level it makes sense to me to pray to all the Buddhas and enlightened beings throughout all time, but sometimes I wonder about in what way do the Buddhas who are not currently in human form in the present time exist? When you speak about different world systems can this be understood in terms of the three “kayas” or is it best not to try to put words to concepts that are beyond ordinary understanding?”*

You can, I think, talk about [it]. Usually, you know, we have, in Buddhist terms, the pure realms that are kind of classified as *dharmakaya* pure realms, *sambhogakaya* pure realms, *nirmanakaya* pure realms, and things like that – although the three kayas are not really three things but aspects of the enlightened experience. But, you know, the world – whether it's an enlightened kind of world or it is a samsaric world – is, as we have discussed before, not completely independently existing. It is an interdependently existing world which means, as we have discussed before, an unborn – it's not just a kind of projection but it is a perception. It's a perception that can be a kind of a collective perception, it can be individual's perception, it also has different causes and conditions. But when we are talking about this making prayers or making requests of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas to remain among us, to be with us, and to request them to guide us and give teachings, it is also a purification from our side. It is also making a certain kind of change in our attitude: that we want to be lead, we want to learn, we want to be inspired, we want to receive teachings. We want to work on that and we want to be in the company of positive beings. So therefore, you know, this is asking the Buddhas but is also a way of changing our own attitude and training on that way of being. And so, therefore, this has to be understood in this way, I think.

The second question is:

*"I try to discover what can explain the arising of Bodhichitta in the mind. The causes I found are : 1) the teaching of a Bodhisattva, 2) the good karma accumulated, 3) the blessings of great beings. Bodhichitta seems to be an expression, a manifestation of wisdom and compassion. Therefore, they seem not be the causes of Bodhichitta. Could you, please, help me to clarify that?"*

I think we talked about this before also. Bodhichitta itself is wisdom and compassion, and the real cause, or the real reason that we can generate it is because we have the seed, we have the essence. There is an essence of wisdom and compassion in us. Our mind naturally has that capacity. As it is said that we can kind of get oil out of sesame seed because there is oil there. That's the essence of sesame seed. If you press sand you will not get oil out of it because there is no essence there, there is no oil there. So, in the same way, bodhichitta is in us. But, what we are talking about here, when we talk about the cause or the conditions to generate it, is that, although it's there in us potentially in a hidden way, in order to express that, in order to bring that

out, in order to blossom that, we need some things to ignite that, and these are the teachings, the positive accumulation of karma and the friends or the company of good people, great people. These can help us to bring out our natural qualities of bodhichitta soon. That's the understanding here.

Then, the next question is:

*"I would like to ask a question related to trying to understand the dharma. When you talked about how we should let go of feelings of jealousy and envy because they are harmful (stanzas 1 – 4 in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter), I can see that this makes absolute sense. However I also think that it cannot be that easy because I have a deeply held but possibly erroneous belief that I am a jealous person, that it is part of my identity, so how can I just let it go. Is this because I have an unconscious confusion about the true nature of existence i.e. that I have a fixed and permanent self?"*

You know, when you say that *"I am a jealous person"*, from Buddhist point of view what I understand is that I have lots of kind of habitual tendency of acting or reacting in a jealous way. Because of my wrong way of seeing, because of my not understanding how to act and react in a positive way, because of my wrong way of looking at who I am, I have been acting jealously for a long time. So, therefore, it has become very familiarized with me: I almost automatically react with jealousy, so, therefore, I see myself as a jealous person.

But the way I react with jealousy is not me, it's my habit, it's my habitual tendency. So, therefore, I can change that, you know, like if I am a smoker. So, I say: *"I am a smoker"*. I smoke, I like to smoke, I'm used to smoking. If I don't smoke, I don't feel good – but that's the acquired habit. But that smoking is injurious to my health: smoking is not good and it is giving lots of illnesses and lots of problems for myself, and others also. And when I really realize that and I really want to get rid of that, then it's not easy – nobody says it's easy – but I must clearly understand how important it is for me that I give up that habit. And so, therefore, I try and I make a commitment and I make a kind of decision and then I don't smoke. And then it is very difficult, I want to smoke, I like to smoke, and all these problems of addiction come up. But then, if I'm strong enough, if I'm resolute enough, if I have all the right means and help, then slowly, I can give up smoking. And then slowly,

slowly I even come to that kind of a stage where I do not want to smoke, I have no desire to smoke at all.

So, in the same way, we need to work on our negative emotions as well. All our negative emotions are negative habitual tendencies based on a wrong way of looking and wrong way of seeing things and, therefore, you know, I cannot say: "I am jealous and that's it". I'm not. I have this jealous attitude, I have a jealous habitual tendency, yes; therefore if I have been acting like that for a long time it's more difficult for me to get rid of. But, since it brings lots of pain and problems for myself and others, I must do it. So, therefore, I need to slowly generate rejoicing and then more and more. And, slowly, I think you'll feel that it's not completely impossible.

Then, this is the last question and this is:

*"Chapter 3, Stanza 5 begins with 'And so I join my hands and pray.' I've been thinking about prayer—how to pray, what attitude to take in praying. In the recently published Chenrezig book you described prayer as 'letting go and trusting.' Would you talk about what is mistaken if prayer does not bring about trust and acceptance?"*

Well here, prayer, you know, *"join my hands in prayer"*, is more about request. I'm requesting the Buddhas and bodhisattvas and great beings to be within us or with us or among us, and then that they give us guidance and teaching and things like that. This is a request.

But generally, it seems, the word 'prayer' in English is the kind of equivalent for many different words and teachings and concepts in Tibetan. 'Prayer' seems to be the translation for *monlam*, for *soldeb*, even sometimes for *ngowa*, even sometimes for kind of *damcha* and also sometimes used for *druppa*.

So therefore, I think the word prayer is used for many different kinds of meanings and different words also and terms. And also even for one, like *soldeb*, there are slightly different

understandings. *Soldeb* as dualistic – you make a prayer to somebody up there – or then when you really visualize yourself and you see yourself as the enlightened being, that's another slightly different way of making *soldeb* or prayer. So there are slightly different meanings you'll find in Buddhism generally, but here I think it's more like a request. I fold my hands and think about all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, all the enlightened beings throughout the space, wherever they are in whatever form, in whatever pure realms, and things like that, and then I make a request for me and for all the other beings. I think that's enough for this.

So this is the end of the questions this time.

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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.