



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche *Questions and Answers 5 (Chapter 3)*

BA3Q5: Questions and Answers 5 (Chapter 3)

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So, some of the questions. Question number 5 of chapter 3. The first question is:

“Thank You for the precious advises!

To give the body away is also the practice of Chö. To apply this may be difficult without a strong background of confidence (in the Dharma and in the own True Nature of the Mind) and without a minimum of realization. Can you please explain further about the 'Conduct that is the Discipline of Awareness' in relation to testing one's confidence or realization?”

Hm. In this regard, you know, 'giving the body' is not *giving the body* like cutting away part of the body and giving it. Here, 'giving the body' means more like *using* your body, *using* your life, to serve people. And that's 'giving the body'. That, because you find that the most important thing is the benefit of beings, or benefitting other beings, so therefore you find the most important thing, the purposeful thing, for you to do is to do something that is benefitting others. I think that's more 'giving the body'.

Now in *Chö*, it's a practice. It's not really giving the body either. But to learn, to practice, not to have too much attachment to your body you make this ritual, this visualization, this meditation,

that your body is, kind of, distributed. This body is first blessed and made into *amrita* and then offered to everybody as food, as *amrita*. This is an exercise in the mind. It is not necessary that you need to have realization for that. Of course, if you have realization of the nature of mind, the more you have that, the more better anything, but it's not that you *have to have* a great realization to do that. It is a practice.

So therefore, I think that is the main thing: that the testing, the confidence, and things like that are not so necessary. I mean, it's a practice. You do as much as you can and then slowly get used to it and become better and better, that's the idea.

Then another long question:

"Upaya comes up powerfully here. (Prajna regarding actions?)

3:12-15 – 'Let beings do to me whatever does not bring them injury'

'If they do something that brings injury to them now or in the long run then I should try to prevent that because it is not good for them ...' '

Whatever they may think of me let this not fail to bring them benefit.'

'Whenever, whatever ... any actions they do towards me, May that be of some benefit ...

Not returning ill for ill, that surely has to be the base.

I remember years ago (1994?) my teacher (the Dzogchen Pönlop Rinpoche) lead a workshop on Social Justice in Halifax, with the Shambhala community. I asked him about intervening in some ill-deed, how to respond to someone who was doing ill. In the style I've come to know so well he began his reply with, 'Give them a break!' This, to me, signals an over-arching benevolence.

But I am thick, and slow, and clumsy. How to 'give someone a break' in a manner that does not do them injury 'in the long run'?

I am surely not to establish a co-dependent relationship where I door-mat myself and indulge their delusion.

I can appreciate 'taking the lance directly into your heart and there dissolve it' but my understanding is so thin I can't imagine how to acknowledge their goodness, through the antagonism and confusion.

I suppose that's because my own prideful resentment is muddying my mind!

Thank you, Rinpoche, for your gentle counsel, Karma Chöpal"

Now, this "Give them a break", I also don't understand right away. Maybe afterwards he explained what that meant. But the idea is this: that when you look into this, what is the most important thing or what is the most purposeful thing for me to do? Then to find out, that trying to help others, trying to do something for the benefit of many beings becomes very important. And, also what is sometimes said like this, and I think is very important, don't ask: "Why should I be compassionate?" Ask, "Why I am selfish?" What is the reason? What good is being selfish? And then you will find that being selfish is really not a good thing for myself, and it is not good thing for anyone else, so, therefore, it is much more useful, much more reasonable, much more purposeful to be compassionate. So therefore, you know, to be of service to the others is very important.

Now, what others are doing to me. The understanding is this: if someone is doing something that might not be so good for me, then if I can stop that, I would stop that. But if I cannot stop that then I would not take it so *painfully*, so *hatefully*, with so much *resentment*, and I think that one thing that is very, very important is that even if someone does something bad to me, that I try to take it in as positively as [I can], because that's good for me. Now, if somebody is doing something wrong, something negative, any negative action is bad for themselves and bad for others also, so if I can do something to stop them, I think that I should. But it is not always possible to stop them. So if I cannot stop them, then, you know, what can I do? That's it. So it is also very important to understand that I cannot do everything. There are lots of good things happening around me, that's very good, I have to appreciate them, and there are lots of not so good things happening around me also and maybe I cannot do much about them. But, you know, I should just let it be, because if I cannot [do anything about them], to be just worried and just unhappy and think that I have to do everything and I have to be responsible for every action of everybody, that is impractical.

So, therefore, maybe I can make a dedication, maybe I can make a prayer, maybe I can pray that I'll be able to help in the long run, but I don't need to get myself too much emotionally involved with *everything* that's going on. I think that would be the right thing to do because we have to be focused on what is the most important at this moment and then work on that. We cannot be involved in everything that's going on around the world. I think that's also important.

Next question is:

"Thank you for your explanation of these stanzas and it is great to have the Shedra again after a summer break. When I first read the stanzas they seemed to be about extreme self-sacrifice, but in your explanation they describe amazing generosity. Maybe this apparent discrepancy is because westerners have particular associations to the language used in the verses?"

That is also possible. The translations can become a little bit too serious sometimes. I think from the Buddhist point of view there's nothing like only right and wrong or *"this you have to do"*, *"this you cannot do"*. Everything is *advice*, everything is a *counsel*, everything is a *guidance*, everything is a kind of *explanation* to understand, so, therefore, if you take it as an *order* or a *command* then it doesn't work. So, therefore, this needs to be understood in this way also.

Then the next question is:

"Dear Rinpoche, Thank you for these teachings. What you say inspires joyous perseverance. The question is this: Buddha said to trust our own common sense and inner voice about what seems right, and we are taught to have total dedication to a teacher. How do we integrate these two teachings?"

Firstly, when we decide [upon] or when we find a teacher, that is decided by our own common sense or inner voice, you know? Because the teacher is appointed, my teacher is appointed, by *myself*. I find that teacher trustworthy and then I say: *"This is my teacher"*. So, therefore, it's based on common sense and inner voice.

Secondly, the teacher never orders you, a good teacher never orders you or commands you to *do*

this or *don't do* this despite your, how can you say, unwillingness. If you don't want to do something, the teacher cannot tell you to do this and nobody will do that. Teacher is only guiding you, explaining to you, making you understand that this is better. He is, or she is, trying to *teach* you, trying to make you learn, trying to make you understand. I think this is the most fundamental mistake lots of people are making, that if I have a teacher he will tell me to do things which I don't want to do. That is *wrong*. The teacher *never* tells you to do things that you don't want. The teacher only guides you and counsels you and makes you see things clearly and makes you understand things. Because if I don't understand why I should do something, even a practice... If the teacher does not explain that if you do this practice, it is done like *this* and *this* and this benefits in this way and therefore you should do it, if that explanation is not there, then you don't know how to practice and then you are not taught, so therefore, it would not work. So, therefore, the teacher's job, the teacher's action is to guide and explain and make you understand what is best for you. And, once you get that teaching, then you do it as according to the way you *can*, as much as you can, and that's the understanding. So it's very, very important to understand, I think, this is the basic misunderstanding, most of the time, in the West especially, that the teacher is like a... you know, I have appointed a kind of dictator or something like that, and he tells you what *to do* and *not to do* and if you can't do it then you are, kind of, totally punished. That is not the case. The teacher only guides you, the teacher only explains, the teacher only makes you see things clearly and understand. That is very, very important.

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.