



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche *Questions and Answers 6 (Chapter 3)*



BA3Q6: Questions and Answers 6 (Chapter 3)
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So this is some of the questions that I would like to answer. And the first question is,

“Recently in your teachings you commented on the importance of dedication in order to be able to really help many other beings in future. In my case, I have become aware that even when I do recite the dedication prayers at the end of my daily practice, the truth is that I’m too self-centered. So I may be repeating words including good wishes for all other sentient beings but deep in my heart I do wish good things in the first place for myself. What I have found helpful is to start to contemplate the teachings regarding the emptiness of the ‘I’, the ‘egolessness’, we can say, and I’ve found that this can be helpful to ‘soften’ (in my case) the habit of being too self-centred.

Can you give me your advise on what else can I do regarding that point?”

Well this is very natural. There is almost nobody who is a samsaric being who does not, first and most importantly, wish good for oneself. There is nothing wrong with that. We all wish good for ourselves and therefore we know that others also wish that for themselves. So therefore, we understand that we have to care for ourselves but we have to care for others as well and also to understand that we are interdependent. I am an interdependent entity and everybody is an interdependent entity so therefore it is important that I have wellbeing and that I also wish wellbeing for others. That's the whole point.

Now regarding prayers or dedications: Sometimes, you know, things have to be started with words. Even if I don't deeply or completely passionately wish very good things for everybody else, if I start to say good things, then that's the beginning of a training.

Like once there was a beggar in India during Buddha's time. And the beggar was always saying *"Please give me please give me please give me please give me. I need, I want, I have nothing, please give me"*. And then Buddha came and stood in front of this beggar and said, *"Just say 'I don't want, I don't need anything. I don't want anything,' and then I give the food that I carry in my begging bowl"*. Now it was extremely difficult for the person to say *"I don't need, I don't want"* because he was so used to saying *"I want I need please give me give me give me."* So after a long struggle the person said *"I don't want. I don't need. I am satisfied."* And then Buddha gave him all that he had and said *"You know, this person has not been used to saying 'I don't want or I don't need or I am okay' for many, many lifetimes. This is the first time that he has said this word after so many lifetimes. So now that he has said it once, it's kind of the beginning of his training or development towards becoming more satisfied and not always wanting and wanting and wanting"*.

So the training has to start this way. Sometimes, even if we have no complete kind of compassion, or complete feeling of giving or dedication, even to say it – of course the more we can say it with deep feeling the better it is - but even just to say it sometimes is a good beginning.

The whole purpose of teaching emptiness and selflessness is about that - to see clearly what you are and thereby, when you see yourself as selfless, or everything as selfless and emptiness, see that you don't have to be afraid, or you don't have to be too greedy and too much attached with

too much aversion and too much fear.

So that's the main reason why in Buddhist teachings, emptiness, egolessness and all these things are so important. That's why compassion and wisdom are the only things for understanding this. To generate compassion, an understanding of why people need and that it's not only me but others also and others are like me. To understand that kind of empathy through compassion is one way of developing this sense of being able to dedicate.

And another is through wisdom, through understanding the emptiness, egolessness, selflessness and also impermanence, so that you kind of understand the nature of things, so that you can learn how to dedicate and how to be free from fear and too much clinging.

Next question is:

"I find these stanzas very beautiful and they give such a powerful sense of compassion, but I am not sure that I quite understand how they arise from the dedication of mind training. Does this refer to mind training as in The Seven Points of Mind Training? If so, when Shantideva wrote the Bodhicharyavatara would he have known this text?"

Actually, it's the opposite way. The Seven Points of Mind Training was written based on Bodhicharyavatara. The whole teaching of Mind Training was there of course for a long time. Of these particular texts the Bodhicharyavatara was first and The Seven Points of Mind Training came later. So all the things that you find in the Seven Points of Mind Training are based on the teachings of Bodhicharya here or there. It's all there in Bodhicharyavatara. That's the understanding.

Then, next question is :

"I have three questions regarding Chapter 3."

So there, the first question is,

"There are references to the 'vidya-mantras' in Chapter 3. What are these?"

"Vidya mantra" means the mantras. Sometimes things can be done through the power of mantras, like healing. Through mantra you can heal. You can use the mantra for different kind of purposes.

And effectively.

And the second question is,

"I don't mean to open up the whole big topic of the elements, yet would like to ask about the description of wind in Chapter 3. He writes, "...wind staves off decay" on page 130 of our text. I've never heard wind/air put this way. Usually, it is described as motion or vibration. Is it motion or vibration that staves off decay?"

Now this is talking about the wind. Not "blowing wind" but the wind element. Everything that is there, especially the living things, are made of four elements and when the four elements are in harmony, then things live. If the four elements are not in harmony, things do not live.

Even in a cell, or in the smallest living organism, or big living organism, whatever it may be, the thing that makes things kind of solid or consistent, that's the earth element. The thing that brings things together, that kind of holds things together, that's the water element. The thing that makes things ripen is the fire element. The things that kind of keeps it fresh, that makes things move and change so that they don't decay is the wind element. So therefore these four elements are in every living organism and when these four elements are in harmony, then things live and if these four elements are not in harmony they die or they disappear. That's the understanding.

The third question is:

"This is a question regarding bodhichitta. Our prayers are to develop bodhichitta. Since it's in us, and the afflictions are acquired, is it possible we might 'tap' bodhichitta in little bits, with intention and prayer, to help us choose the paramitas over afflictive thoughts, words, and actions? Somehow that the bodhichitta within is helping us, while we are strengthening bodhichitta?"

Of course, we have to develop bodhichitta step by step. And the more we reduce our afflictions or afflictive emotions, the more our bodhichitta is developing, the more we clearly see the need of the loving kindness and compassion. And the more we see the nature of ourselves, the bodhichitta develops. So therefore, to develop bodhichitta we have to work on our wisdom and our compassion. To see what we are, how we are and how everybody is and that they don't want to suffer.

Nobody wants to suffer. Nobody wants to have things that they don't want, but they have those problems. They have problems, they all have suffering and it is possible to transform that situation, that experience. And so I really need to - I want to work towards that transformation.

So they're the two things, that you really wish to work for the benefit of others and you see that there is a possibility [to do that]. When these two things come together I think we develop bodhichitta. But of course, step by step. That's what it's all about.

So anything that we study, and practice and contemplate - all this, in a way, is working towards the generation of bodhichitta. The less self-centred we become, the more we understand the nature of ourselves and the nature of all phenomena, and the more we understand how interdependent and dependent we are, the more we understand the need of other people. The more we understand the importance of wanting freedom from suffering for others, the more bodhichitta we develop, I think.

So, this is the question so far and thank you very much.

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