



# Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

## Ringu Tulku Rinpoche *Questions and Answers 1 (Chapter 4)*

BA4Q1: Questions and Answers 1 (Chapter 4)

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Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra

These are some of the questions from Chapter 4 of Bodhicharyavatara. This is Question and Answer number 1 of the Chapter 4.

*“Teachers come very rarely to my country. There are a few chances to get transmission of Ngöndro, or other basic teachings once or twice a year. Also, the local Buddhist community members are very unsupportive and even make jokes about my questions and aspiration. Could you give me some advice, what could I practice apart from contemplations on impermanence and compassion?”*

Actually, the Bodhicharyavatara, if you study it, will give you a complete practice. And I think that will be enough [to practice for one’s whole life]. So even if one doesn’t get anything more than that, I think it will be enough. And from that also, you will get quite a lot of understanding, background understanding on how to practice things like Ngöndro, and why we need to practice Ngöndro.

So if you have received the teachings on Ngöndro, if you understand them and use them in accordance with the teachings that you get from the Bodhicharyavatara, then I think that will be more than enough. The main practice would be six paramitas and there are lots of teachings and understandings on how to work with them.

I think it is not really a problem if you receive teachings of Ngöndro once or twice a year because it's not something where you need to get too many teachings. You can practice what teachings that you have received. Moreover, nowadays the technology is so developed and there are so many teachings online. Almost every teaching that His Holiness the Dalai Lama gives comes on the internet. Many of the teachings that His Holiness Karmapa gives come online. So I don't think there is any kind of lack of teachings. And if you have specific questions, then you can ask them when you meet the teachers and you can also ask them online as you are doing now. I think that would be more than enough.

*"I have two questions about the bodhisattva vows. In your teachings you mentioned about the importance of knowing about the bodhisattva vows and study a little bit what are the vows of the bodhisattva. Is there any sutra where the Buddha himself mentioned about the conduct of a bodhisattva? In many sutras there are stories of bodhisattvas acting with great compassion towards beings, but my question is if there is any sutra where the Buddha mentioned specifically the vows of a bodhisattva. If not, can you recommend any text or book (a translation if you know about that) where we can find and read about the bodhisattva vows?"*

There are lots of sutras with lots of instructions on the vows, on the bodhisattva's way of life, on the bodhisattva's aspirations and bodhisattva's trainings. What to observe, how to do and how not to do the specific vows are mentioned in these sutras. One that is specifically quoted in the commentary of the Bodhicharyavatara is the Akashagarbha Sutra. I'm not one hundred percent sure whether that's translated into English but I'm sure there are some translations on it. The detailed, specific vows of the bodhisattva is in what we call the Three Precepts. There are also what in Tibetan we call *dom sum*. There is a translation of the Fifth Chapter of the Treasury of Knowledge (*Sheja Dzö*) by Jamgon Kontrul. In that also, you will find a very detailed description of the vows of the bodhisattvas. And there's also Ngari Panchen Pema Wangyal's book. There is also

a commentary by Dudjom Rinpoche which is translated into English. There are also a complete vows of vinaya, bodhisattva and vajrayana. If you want you can study them. But if you just study the Bodhicharyavatara, you will understand what vows you have to take and the whole practice of the bodhisattva's way of life. So, there's no problem to understand that.

*“Can a Buddhist practitioner take the bodhisattva's vows if he or she has only taken the pratimoksha vows temporarily? (I mean has taken the pratimoksha vows not for a life long commitment but just some of the vows for a day, or on a special days?) Is it necessary to take all of the pratimoksha vows to take the bodhisattva's vow in a proper way?”*

It is said that to take the bodhisattva's vows through ritual, you need to have at least one pratimoksha vow. So if one has taken the Refuge vows, that is usually taken as a good enough basis for the taking of bodhisattva vows. But you cannot take Refuge for a short time. You have to take the Refuge for life.

*“Dear Rinpoche, thank you for this teaching on carefulness. It seems as if it could be so helpful and practical in everyday life. However when I think of my daily life at work, sometimes I get very stressed. Not because of the nature of the work itself, but because of having so much to do in a limited period of time, and I wonder how can I be more careful of my state of mind in such situations?”*

I think one needs to learn how to work, how to do things in a mindful way, in a clear way. You cannot do things absentmindedly. You have to know what you are doing. You have to know how to do that. You have to know what is the effect of your actions.

Whether you have lots of things to do or less things to do, if you don't know what you are doing, if you don't know how you are doing, then you will not be doing anything. Or anything correctly.

So this is how we are talking about “being careful”. You should not be doing things carelessly, or absentmindedly. You should not be doing things without knowing what you are doing, without being mindful of what you are doing,

You know, it's not about time. You don't need a special time for this. You need to know how to do things with awareness, to be mindful and clear and "there" on the job. If your mind is totally somewhere else, you will make mistakes, you will have accidents and you will do things completely wrong. So therefore, it's not about time, it's just about being mindful.

*"Dear Rinpoche, this wonderful teaching leads me to aspire to deepen the study and encourages me to reflect and practise. I'm so grateful to receive your teachings. Here are two questions that have arisen in my mind:*

*In the commentary of Khenpo Kunpal the word 'heedfulness' is used, I'm a little bit confused about this and many words. Should I see this as an assembly of explanations that leads to the real understanding?"*

In the translation of the root text they have used "carefulness". In the commentary by Khenpo Kunpal they sometimes use "heedfulness". So whichever word you feel is most appropriate, you can use. I cannot really comment on which word is better because whichever you use, if you understand as I have explained, then that's enough. There's no need to be to be confused. I have tried to explain very carefully what it means, so actually "heedfulness", "carefulness," I think is very same.

*"In this teaching you say that you don't like the explanation of, 'we are the children of the conqueror' Why? Would you please give a little commentary?"*

It's not that I'm not happy to say that we are children of the conqueror, no. This is my personal thing, maybe. I don't like the translation of bodhisattva as children of the conqueror.

"Child of the conqueror". It sounds kind of, small kind of a baby. Maybe it's just something in my mind, but some people like it so there's nothing wrong. It is, in a way, the translation of the *jinaputra*. It is a little bit like a child, or an heir or something like that. So if you like it, that's very good, no problem.

*"I'm sorry for burdening you with my question. I found your book about Chenrezig. I would like to ask you if this sadhana needs an empowerment to practice. I'm very drawn to Chenrezig practice. I have experienced many things by reciting the six syllable mantra".*

You don't need any empowerments to recite the six syllable mantra. You can also practice the Chenresig without receiving anything special. But if there is an opportunity to receive an empowerment of Chenresig at any time, then it is good that you receive it. If there is a chance to receive the reading transmission, not the empowerment, the reading transmission, then you receive it. But you can practice without receiving them as well.

I think that's all for today. 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.