



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche

More on the Faults of Negative Emotions
4th Chapter, Stanzas 33-35



BA4_33-35 More on the Faults of Negative Emotions
4th Chapter, Stanzas 33-35
February 19, 2012. Transcribed by Albert Harris.
Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra

So, this is the fourth chapter and stanza number 33 onwards. Three more stanzas to finish the point that we were discussing: that we need to be careful, we need to be aware how important is the necessity to get rid of our negative emotions.

So here it says:

*All other foes that I appease and wait upon
Will show me favors, give me every aid,
But should I serve my dark defiled emotions,
They will only harm me, draw me down to grief. [4:33]*

So what he's saying here is that [compared to] any other enemy, the mind poisons or the negative emotions are regarded as worse than any of our most hated enemies. Because, if it was another kind of enemy, the human being enemy, or any enemy of other beings, then, you know, if you really surrender to them, if you give in, and then if you do everything that they say, if I just appease them and do whatever they want then eventually they can become like a little bit like my friend or protector. They will also show me some favours and they will also give me some aid or some help. They will not always be my enemy. They can become changed or, even if not my total friend, they can treat me not as an enemy any more. That's possible. But, our negative emotions, the nature of them is such that it always harms me, it always gives me trouble and to other people, it brings suffering to me and others.

However much I do what they want, however much I appease them, however much I submit to them, they only harm me and never help me. So therefore, if it is such a negative thing, such a strong kind of negative, harmful enemy you can say if you like, then that enemy which can never ever turn or become into your friend or something that doesn't harm you, then it is impossible for me not to try to let go of them or to free myself from them. So it's extremely important, this understanding how important it is to work on my negative emotions. That's the only thing I have to do as a practice of dharma.

But how to do that is another matter: I have to be aware; I have to be careful, I have to relax. Just being angry or just being emotional is not the answer because I can be a little bit impatient but I cannot be angry at them. In a way, sometimes it is said that if you have to be angry with anybody you should be angry with your negative emotions. It's true, but the way to deal with them has to be done step by step, slowly, with understanding, with intelligence and wisdom.

So then the next stanza, number 34:

*If thus my ancient and unceasing foes,
The wellspring only of my growing pain,
Can lodge so safe within my heart,
How can I live so blithe and fearless in this wheel of life? [4:34]*

So this, my negative emotions, my ancient [foes], because it's been there all the time as far as I am in this kind of samsaric state of mind from the beginningless time, I am with this negative emotion. So therefore, it's an ancient foe, ancient enemy, and not only ancient, but also unceasing. It has harmed me continuously, unceasingly, always; always when I submit to those negative emotions. It gave me pain, it gave me problems life after life: therefore it's "*my ancient and unceasing foe / the wellspring only of my growing pain.*" These negative emotions which are my foe, my enemy, and have been there for so long and unceasingly harming me, is the wellspring, is the source of all my pains, all my problems. As long as I don't do something to free myself from it it's not going to reduce, it can even grow, my pains can become worse.

But, when I have that, when I cherish this negative emotion in my heart, keep them so safely and so securely and then can lodge so safely within my heart, within my mind, within my own experience, really leisurely there, and when I notice, when I know that it is always there, it's always controlling me, it's always putting me into trouble, then "*How can I live so blithe and fearless*". I must act very urgently, I must be very aware, I must immediately take action. If there is an enemy just waiting for you with the weapons in ambush and you know that, you wouldn't just rest or you wouldn't [just do nothing] and not make any proper kind of ways or arrangements to get rid of them. But I do it like that, and then that's not good. Therefore, I have to be very concerned, I take it as a very emergent problem and act on it. Why I don't do that, it's surprising.

*And if the jail guards of the prisons of saṃsāra,
The butchers and tormentors of infernal realms,
All lurk within me in the web of craving,
What joy can ever be my destiny? [4:35]*

So, all these negative emotions: if there is a hell, that's because that's created by my negative emotions and my strong habitual tendencies, that I cling to these negative emotions like a drug

and so I'm overcome by all these negative emotions. That's why all these negative realms and all these negative actions, results, painful results, life after life.

Therefore, when I'm under this power, this negative power, how can I just sit and rejoice myself, or enjoy, just relax and things like that. So, what we are saying here is that we have to be aware of how negative these negative emotions are, because they are the source of all our pains and problems and troubles. So, when I see this very clearly: my unhappiness, my dissatisfaction, my pain and the problems are created because of my negative emotions and the actions caused by them – so therefore, if I want lasting peace and happiness in myself, the first thing I have to do is to work on my negative emotions, and that's the practice of dharma. There's no other thing to do. Because we usually think that my happiness comes from something outside there: my happiness comes from wealth; my happiness comes from popularity; my happiness comes from pleasure; my happiness comes from power; my happiness comes from a good companion, my girlfriend, my boyfriend, my job or something like that; and if I'm unhappy it's because I don't have them or I don't have the right one – that's not true. My happiness has to come from within me.

The cause of my unhappiness is not because something outside is there or not there, but mainly because I am under the power of my negative emotions so therefore I react in a very negative way and therefore I'm unhappy. My happiness has to be cultivated within myself, by myself, alone; it is not something I can get from anywhere else.

It is very, very important to understand this and know what it is that I am to practise on, to find the target or the object of my practice. If I know this, then if I can work on my fear, my aversion, my attachment, my confusion, ignorance. We all have so much of aversion: aversion, basically, is fear. We have so much fear of pain, we have so much fear of changes, we have so much fear of insecurity, this we all have. And because of these fears, we always run away, we try to get rid of something, we are always kind of...but actually, this is the problem, this aversion is the main problem.

And because of that we have too much craving. *"This might save me from this fear. If I have this maybe I have less fear; if I have this maybe I have less pain; if I have this maybe I have less insecurity"*, things like that so you run after, run after and run after but actually none of these

things help, so I actually have to work on my fear, aversion, attachment or craving – running after something – and that can be only [through] understanding. So far, we are so confused, we don't know what brings the true happiness – true freedom from suffering.

So when I know that my mind can be in peace, in joy and relaxed only if I can slowly let go of this fear, aversions and craving – running after something – then my mind can be more relaxed, more joyful, more free, more kind, also. So therefore, it becomes so important to try to cultivate that and work on my negative emotions. I have to understand how careful I have to be, how necessary it is for me to be aware and be focused a little bit, be consistent on working on this, be careful, be mindful. That's the main understanding, this deep understanding.

Sometimes we do lots of things, lots of practices, you can say, and it's called dharma practice, but whether it's really dharma practice or not...we can do lots of things just for the sake of doing. That's why Gampopa said, "*Don't do the dharma practice as work, as something [to do], do the dharma practice as transformation.*" What it means to say is this: I do something just doing – I'm meditating, I'm reciting things, I'm doing prostrations or I'm doing this or I'm doing that – but then, what does that do? If I meditate, does that really change something in me? Does it work on my negative emotions or not? If it doesn't, it doesn't work. It's not really dharma, it's not really transformation. If I meditate and if I can through that change my way of reacting, let go of my negative emotions, then it's true dharma practice, it's true meditation. That's why whatever I'm doing, whether I'm meditating or not meditating, whether I'm doing some mantras or not, whether I'm doing lots of recitations or prayers or whatever or not, if it is working on this, on my mind poisons, then it's actually doing dharma practice. If it is not then you don't know whether it's really dharma practice or not.

Therefore, it's extremely clear, it's extremely important because we're not just following a belief system, we're working on ourselves. Buddhism is about transforming ourselves, training ourselves, it's not a belief system, just following a culture or a tradition or anything like that, it's about how we transform ourselves.

Therefore, to understand what is the real practice, where is the real target of our practice is extremely important to understand and really become extremely clear about that.

So, I think I'll stop here. Thank you very much.

©Ringu Tulku Rinpoche

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.