



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche *Questions and Answers 7 (Chapter 4)*

BA4Q7: Questions and Answers 7 (Chapter 4)
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So, you know, I have finished the teaching, the text of the chapter number 4 but I have not finished answering the questions for the chapter number 4 of Bodhicharyavatara. So this could be Q&A number 7 of the fourth chapter.

Now, the next question is:

“Dear Rinpoche, it has been very helpful to have your Brussels teachings on the Two Bodhicittas alongside the Shedra teachings. I think I begin to understand with regard to bodhichitta that it has nothing to do with trying to be nice all the time to everybody and much more to do with trying to overcome the kleshas so that I am in a state of mind where I am genuinely benignly disposed towards everyone. Is that a correct understanding?”

I think so because, you know, when we look only outside — because how we react has to come from within ourselves. It's about the way we react. It's not just about outside things. There can be people, circumstances, situations, sometimes positive, sometimes not so positive. But then, if we can look at ourselves, at the way we react, at our own mind, at our own way of seeing things, then it's not about trying hard to please people, trying hard not to get angry, but it's from within. So when the change comes from within, then things outside become less strong, less effective, less overwhelming. So I think it's important to try to work from within yourself. I think that's important.

Then the next question is:

“If a person practices very often a particular sadhana, Chenrezig, Tara or any other, will this help that person to work on his or her afflicted emotions?”

It depends on whether you practice that properly or not. If you are practicing a sadhana, Chenrezig, Tara or anything, that sadhana is mainly, most importantly, a remedy or a training on how to work with your emotions. With yourself, with your mind. So you need to understand. Actually, to understand how to practice a sadhana is mainly to understand how this practice can be used to work on myself, on my mind. If you understand that, a sadhana can become a very useful practice and also it becomes a real practice. Otherwise, not so sure whether it's really a practice.

The second part of this question is:

“Could it be a good practice to remind oneself continuously during daily activities the promise, in case where one made a promise, to work to generate bodhichitta and to take care of others?”

Yeah, that's the practice. Practice is to understand first, what is the important thing, what is the right thing, what is the beneficial thing to do and react. And then to remind yourself of this because we react with our habits, our habitual tendencies. So we need to remind ourselves again and again. So that's the practice.

Next question is:

“This life shows me that the best thing to become is a Lama. So I would like to ask you how to become a Lama. How did you become a teacher? How much does one need to rely upon a guru or teacher for close guidance in this? What does one need to do, not only the vows, but also the work with one's mind and heart, and one's actions in the world? What study is required, shedra, books and texts? What importance is three years retreat on this path? Where should one go to do this and to become a Lama? What does one need to do before three year retreat?”

In Buddhism there are three trainings: training the wisdom, training meditation and training on discipline - how to act, proper action. So these are the three trainings. Lama is somebody who is genuinely doing this or has been able to do some significant training in this.

Of course, Lama actually in a way means teacher. So to teach you have to know what to teach, the subject. Therefore you have to study. So, the more you understand the Dharma, the better. Then, just intellectual understanding sometimes is not enough for you and also for others. So therefore you need to use those understandings on yourself, that's the practice, that's meditation. And then, you need to try to live a life, you need to actually live these teachings, those practices. You can have lots of degrees, you have done a lot of retreats or things like that, but then if you don't really live those teachings then you are not a really good Lama. So this is the most important thing.

There is no real thing that if you do only this, this, this then you become a Lama. The true Lama is not something that you kind of pass through a degree or exam and then you become a Lama, it's not like that. It's the whole, the totality of the person's advancement. So therefore it's not just one, kind of a step-by-step thing. Of course if you do a degree, like Acharya examinations and three year retreats, then you can be somewhat called Lama, but how good a Lama that's difficult to say.

Then the next question is:

“What is it that is so difficult about the tantra texts? Is it the semantics or the syntax, or the depth of the message or something else?”

Tantras are difficult because first we have to understand the sutras, because tantras are very much based on sutras. If you don't understand the sutras then you don't understand the tantras. And therefore tantras are also very deep teachings, it is about the whole thing described at a very deep level, so therefore it is more difficult to understand and also because it is very deep and it talks about everything in detail, so therefore it has to be understood very clearly. Otherwise if you misunderstand or misuse that, then it can be not good. Therefore it is important to use the understandings of the tantra in a clear and kind of un-misunderstood way.

Then there is another question, which I don't understand so much:

“Evil is a concept we have when something becomes very bad. Emptiness applies to all phenomena. Thus can you clarify my understanding for your commentary that bodhichitta is the only thing that can overcome evil? If this is so the draft referred to many times in Shantideva's text must exist on both ultimate and relative level of experience, being a physical one. Would you kindly share your own experience, bringing the absolute and relative level of experience of bodhichitta into one understanding as it overcomes evil?”

Well, I mean, evil is a word used sometimes to indicate something that is absolutely bad, or absolutely negative. In a way, we don't have that word in Buddhist terminology. There is nothing called absolute bad or absolute negative. So therefore in a way there is no evil. The concept of evil from that point of view is not there. We have the concept of negative and positive. And negative and positive is also very relative. Negative because it is harmful. We don't like it, it gives something that is harmful or gives pain and problems, now or in the long run. That's why we call that negative. Now, positive and negative is not on the thing. Positive and negative is about how I experience it. There is nothing called negative as such. Something can become negative, something can become positive. And that depends on how I experience it. So therefore the way I experience, the way I react to, is the most important thing, from the Buddhist point of view. So therefore, if I react with the understanding or experience of bodhichitta, with compassion and wisdom then I cannot react in a negative way to anything. Anything I react will become something positive, something with compassion or with wisdom. Then there is nothing evil, there is nothing negative. Therefore it is said that bodhichitta can turn everything into positive because that's the way I react, with wisdom and compassion.

I don't know, maybe that will be enough. Now there are two more questions but I think I will answer later on because there is an urgent call.

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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.