



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche *Questions and Answers 1 (Chapter 5)*



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BA5Q1: Questions and Answers 1 (Chapter 5)
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So I would I would like to answer some of the questions for Bodhicharyavatara chapter number 5. There are 3 questions here, and first is a personal question, and the others are on chapter number 5. So the first question is:

“Is it possible for the heart to race like mad in panic and the body to break out in a sweat when the mind is peaceful and confident in its view, resting in bodhichitta and stability? I was in a small MRI machine for a medical test. I decided to forego my usual sedative, and quite happily had no problem resting in my usual practice. While in the machine, the strangest thing happened. My heart began to race uncontrollably, while my mind was quite okay. Having a heart issue, I stopped the test, not because my mind was upset; it was very peaceful. But I reasoned it would be quite stupid to end up with a heart attack or stroke because I was going to maintain my meditation. I

reasoned that this might indeed happen during death. The mind could remain quite stable and content while the body went through all sorts of sensations that normally would be considered extreme. Is this possible? My understanding of effective meditation and what to expect while dying was affected by this. Can you kindly advise from your own wisdom experience?"

I cannot give a complete answer to this but what I assume is this, that in order to have the effect of the peace of your mind on your body, it needs a lot more practice. First, your mind becomes more peaceful. And then, when that becomes very strong then it affects on your body as well. Usually, it is said that to get rid of mental problems, like suffering, takes less time than to get rid of, or to transcend the physical suffering. It is said that when your mind becomes, when you understand the nature of mind or when you understand the nature of things, a little bit more kind of strongly, or when you have some stability of your meditation, then your mental agitation can become less and you can have peace of mind and not much or no suffering in the mind. But if there is a kind of pain inflicted on your body, you will feel the pain. You will feel the pain but you will not feel that it is too painful. You don't feel the mental agitation, but you feel the pain. Only if you cross the samsara, if you attend the first bhumi then your physical pain also you don't need to feel, you don't feel it, so that the physical sensation can also be transformed or eliminated. But until that stage, the physical pain will still be there. So from this point of view, I think it says that your mind can be quite okay, but still your body can react as it used to react. Maybe this is something to do with that, but I cannot say very clearly what happens.

There is a kind of continuation, I think this is an expression of gratitude, the continuation of this question:

"New life experiences with teachings are presenting themselves to me because of your rich caring commentary on the Shantideva text. In some cases, a deep understanding from heartfelt listening simply makes an error in understanding how things really are evaporate on the spot and the negativity refuses to function from that moment on. My gratitude for your help has become inexpressible."

Thank you very much.

Now the second question:

“Thank you for this very helpful commentary. My question is whether or not it is possible to be spontaneous and to maintain vigilant introspection at the same time? I can appreciate that it is very important to be constantly aware of what is happening in our minds in order to follow this training. Perhaps there can be a very brief moment of awareness just before being spontaneous.”

I think we need to kind of practice this. One example is like driving a car. When you are driving a car, then you have to be vigilant, you have to be aware. If you kind of slip your awareness for a few seconds, then you might make an accident. So you have to be totally aware all the time while driving the car. If you are not aware, then it is very dangerous. When you are a new driver, when you just learned how to drive, it is very difficult to be spontaneous; it is very difficult to be relaxed and be aware at the same time. But once you get used to it, once you've become trained in driving, in being aware of what is going on, then you can be aware but you can also be relaxed at the same time. You know, when we are walking also, we are vigilant, we are aware of what is going on, but at the same time we can be spontaneous also. I think we have to train ourselves to be a little bit like that. That we are aware, but at the same time, we are also relaxed. So if we can take it a little bit "relaxedly" then awareness can also be spontaneous. It is not one or the other. We can be aware and spontaneous because actually the more aware you are, the more spontaneous you can be. Because the more, what can you say, the more innovative you can be. You can decide, you can be in the present. And when you are present, then you can also react, you can judge, how to react in what situation. And you can be flexible. I think it is something like that.

Now this is the last question, or third question, on Chapter 5 and this is for stanzas number 2 to 8, BA5_2-8 How All Harm Comes from Our Mind.

“My question is about stanza 5 that refers to the mind being the source of all anxiety, fear and pain: if I feel anxious about something that seems to me to be external to my mind, for example a family member, a work situation, does this stanza mean that it is the distorted image inside my mind of the external situation that is actually the cause of the anxiety?”

No, it is not like that. What it is saying is that we could have a problem with one of our family members and with that, how much my mind is agitated, how much it affects my mind: I can have a little problem and I can have a big problem to my mind. I can really react in such a way that I kind of go out of, I am completely affected by that situation. Or I can have a work situation, say like I lose my job and then I can be totally devastated. But I can also have a different way of seeing, a different way of looking at it, and even if I lose my job I don't need to be completely devastated. I can understand that, yes, the job is important, but there are more important things than that. So, maybe I'll get another job, maybe I can get a better job, maybe I cannot get a job for some time, but somehow I will survive. So therefore, it is not the end of the world.

So the way I react is the deciding point on how I feel. It is not the problem itself. The problem is a problem, yes; but how much the problem affects me is how I react to that problem. So even in a negative situation, in a very difficult situation, if I learned, if I knew, if I had the training, or the know-how, or the view to look at it in a certain positive way, then I could be not very badly affected by that situation, but I could maintain peace, I could be okay. So that is the understanding, that's why it is not just the external situation, or the happening.

External situation/happening is not saying external situation/happening is not of any consequence. It is of course lots of consequence, of course it affects. But the question here is, can I completely do something that I will never have any problems in the external way? None of my family members will be giving any problems for me, none of my work situation give any problem for me, everything in the world, everything always goes the right way. Is that possible? That is not possible, because that doesn't happen like that. It is not in my control. So therefore, I have to do something. The question is, if it is like that then does it mean I cannot, I will always be unhappy when these things happen? I will always get devastated when these things happen or not?

Now this is where the main instruction is, that even if these things go wrong, it is basically your attitude, your way of looking at it, how you react to it. That is the more important factor: how you would feel, how you would react, how you would maintain yourself. How stable you are, how peaceful you are, how strong you are is not only depended on the situation outside, but on the situation in your mind.

So therefore, it becomes very important to train your mind, so that even if we have lots of terrible things happening in the world, to us, around us, we can maintain a kind of a certain stability and certain peace. That is extremely essential, to maintain peace and stability within ourselves. So to understand that how I react is the more fundamental thing, more important thing. Because that is where I can really find peace and stability. Yes, I think that is like that. Okay.

Thank you, 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.