



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

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Maintaining Mindfulness and Introspection
5th Chapter, Stanza 23



BA5_23 Maintaining Mindfulness and Introspection
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So now we come to stanza number 23 of the fifth chapter of Bodhicharyavatara; and because most of the positive things come from the mind – and also most of the negative things also come from the mind – and it is the state of the mind, whether you are in a happy and positive state of being or you are creating the situation where you have lots of sufferings and pain and problems and [then this becomes a] very difficult situation.

So therefore, it is very important to train our mind and guard our mind: and now we come to the point on how to do that. So this has two points: first, to briefly summarise, or to make a request for doing that and then to explain it more.

Now stanza number 23 is this brief statement. So what he says is:

*All you who would protect your minds,
Maintain your mindfulness and introspection;*

*Guard them both, at cost of life and limb,
I join my hands, beseeching you. [5:23]*

So therefore, Shantideva is saying that all those who have understood the importance of guarding the mind and who would like to protect your minds, they should maintain these two things – mindfulness and introspection – or mindfulness and awareness.

Mindfulness is knowing what is the right thing to do and what is not the right thing to do, not to forget what are the things you should follow and what are the things you should let go and not follow: to kind of not forget that, that's mindfulness.

Introspection or awareness is that, in order [to be mindful], you are introspecting or being aware of what's going on in your body speech and mind, what I'm doing with my body speech and mind that I am aware of: I introspect or I know what's going on or I am vigilant or aware of what's going on. These two things are the most important tool or medium through which we train our mind. Therefore, it is very, very important, even at the cost of your limb or even at the cost of your life, we should try not to lose these two things.

Shantideva is saying this, he actually wrote this book mainly for himself as he said in the beginning also. Therefore, when he's saying you should do this you should not do that, he's asking himself, in a way. "*I join my hands, beseeching you*" is kind of I'm asking myself, I am really advising myself to follow this understanding, follow this action, because it is so important for me, but it can also be understood that it is all those who want to really transform themselves, who really want to bring wellbeing for yourself, I also fold my hands and request, humbly to all of you, to be very clear about this and to take this into your practice because if that is there then every practice goes well, and if you have no mindfulness or you have no awareness then no training will actually happen so it is important; I beseech you, I pray, I ask you to follow this.

Now here is something very, very important for everybody to understand while studying this text and all other Buddhist texts as well. Many people say that Shantideva is very strict, he's very "*do and don't*" and things like that. It's not like that, and it doesn't come out like that if you read the Tibetan also. But, it's a way of understanding; we have to understand it like this. Shantideva,

or Buddha, is finding out what are the ways, what is the situation, what are the right things to do and what are the ways to bring us more happiness, [something] more positive and really out of all the sufferings; and they have come to know there is a possibility to end all our problems and sufferings and they also understood how to do that. And also, therefore, they try to teach that. And also they try to give that message, try to instruct or try to tell us that these are like that so therefore if this is done like this then this is going to happen: if we do like this then this is going to happen. How much I do is up to me. This is what I thought when I was receiving teachings from my teachers and when they were telling all those things whether it is from this or from the book of three precepts, things like that. What I understood was that I never thought, *“Oh, my teacher is too strict, my teacher tells me to do this and to do that”* and therefore I cannot do that or how he is so strict or how he is so terrible. I never thought like that because it’s not like that. My teacher is telling me that these are the possibilities, these are the ways. If one can do most of them – positive things – then that will be more positive. And then I know this, I understand very clearly, if I do all those positive things I will be very happy and everything will be very nice: and if I do all these negative things then I can understand very clearly that they will bring more problems and things like that.

Now there is no question that my teacher is forcing me to do this and forcing me to give up those things. That’s up to me. He’s just showing me the way and it’s up to me how much I want to do. There’s no force, there’s no compulsion from the teacher what I do and what I don’t do. So when people think the teacher is forcing you to do this or he’s forcing you not to do this, that’s absolutely the wrong approach, the wrong way of seeing. There’s nothing like that. Even the teacher cannot, even if he wants to, cannot force me to do or not to do things. This is my own responsibility, it depends on my own decision, you know. If I do this, this, this it will be very good for me; if I do this, this, these negative things it’s not good. Now, how much I can do, how much I cannot do, how much I like to do, how much I don’t like to do that’s up to me. I can work on it very slowly, very leisurely, very little by little and it will take me a long time to change myself, to transform myself and if I like that, then I can do that. That’s no problem. It’s like if I want to study for a course and I just want to study little by little, one point every year or something like that, and then I need to get many points and then it will be many years to pass the exam. But it’s up to me. Or if I want to do it very quickly and I have to clear all these points in a very short time. That’s also up to me. There’s nobody to say to me you need to do it or you have to do it. So in the same way, I need to

understand this. So therefore, what Buddha is trying to tell us is just the facts, this is how it is. If you do this, these are the trainings; if you actually behave like this, if you are this much mindful then you will get this much advancement but if not then that's up to us. That's why Buddha said I'll show you the way, it's up to you.

So this understanding is very important. Never ever tell that your teacher is too strict on you. Never ever think that your teacher is forcing you to do this or forcing you not to do this. This is absolutely up to us. So that's the understanding I need to explain here. Maybe I'll stop here this time. Thank you!

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