



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

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The Disadvantages of Not Having Awareness
5th Chapter, Stanza 24-28



BA5_24-28 The Disadvantages of Not Having Awareness
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So now, on how to train in vigilant Introspection or awareness - really the ways and means how to do that - to explain this in more detail there are two points. First, to consider or to reflect on how bad it is, how needful it is to generate this awareness, and then, the actual ways in how to be mindful or the how to create the awareness or the vigilant Introspection. So the first one is from stanza number 24 to I think stanza number 28.

Those disabled by ill health

Are helpless, powerless to act.

The mind, when likewise cramped by ignorance,

Is impotent and cannot do its work. [5:24]

So if we are sick, if our body gets disabled by ill health, then we cannot do anything. We cannot sometimes even get out of the bed. Our body becomes totally incapable of doing anything. So in the same way, if our mind becomes totally affected by distraction, ignorance, and it's out of control, then we cannot do anything. Our mind also cannot do anything that is useful, that is good for us, that is good for others and so we get totally disabled, we get like sick, ill health.

*For those who have no introspection,
Though they hear the teachings, ponder them, or meditate,
Like water seeping from a leaking jar,
Their learning will not settle in their memories. [5:25]*

And also, if one doesn't have this kind of awareness, introspection; if we cannot be aware of what's going on in us and we cannot concentrate, we cannot be aware, we cannot look at ourselves, we cannot introspect; if our mind is so kind of out of control and we don't know what is happening, distracted, and deluded and dull, and if there is no kind of awareness – then any good things like even if we hear teachings, we may hear them but [afterwards] we will immediately forget and sometimes even we don't get fully what we heard, we can't kind of remember anything. So the teaching doesn't seep in deeply, our mind is kind of somewhere else. And also we hear but then afterwards what I heard I don't know, I don't remember and even if I try to ponder, I try to kind of reflect on them, it wouldn't work because immediately it kind of goes away and I can't concentrate on something, I can't keep it, I can't kind of meditate. Meditate here not only means sitting in meditation, of course we cannot do it without awareness, but also that I cannot get habituated in something positive. It's because immediately, you know, the thing comes and is lost and then your mind is kind of wandering everywhere and you don't know what is happening, you're just kind of going absentmindedly. So all those things do not settle in and we don't remember very clearly. And even if we sometimes remember little bit it will go away immediately. So the training cannot happen properly.

*Many are endowed with joyful diligence.
They're learned also and imbued with faith,
But through the fault of lacking introspection,
They will not escape the stain of sin and downfall. [5:26]*

Sometimes when people have lots of diligence, they are very diligent, they have also lots of faith or dedication or something like devotion in doing positive things. But if you don't have awareness, if you don't have this introspection or being aware what's going on. Here introspection or *sheshin* is more like being aware what's happening. So the 'vigilant introspection' is what is translated here. I don't know whether it's that necessary to be so elaborate – 'vigilant introspection' is a very strong word. Here, awareness is a little bit lighter. *Sheshin* is not necessarily too much always introspecting, but just being aware what's going on. Aware what's going on in me, aware what's going on outside so you're kind of clear-minded and not absentminded, not totally distracted, not distracted. So when that is not there, then all sorts of problems can come. You can be distracted and then you do something that's totally wrong or that's carried away by your negative emotions and then, you know, you've done it and you cannot redo it or you cannot go back to before you have done those negative things. So therefore, say like you are really nice person good person, but then suddenly something happens and that brings a very strong emotion like anger and then you go and do something, like fight or something that is really negative. And then, then you will become aware that *"Oh, I have done such a bad thing"*, but then it's very difficult to repair that, because it's already done. But if your mindfulness, if your awareness was more present, then you immediately when that awareness, when that anger or negative emotion or that thing comes up, you immediately get the signal, *"Oh yeah, this is happening to me so I should not,"* you know, *"I should be more careful"*. I should not act haphazardly, I should act with understanding and with thinking and with mindfulness. I should not do things.

So this is the idea. The understanding is that when that awareness doesn't catch, then it's very easy for us to be overpowered by our habitual tendencies, negative emotions, our provocations and things like that. And then we only find out what we have done after we have done it, and then it's very difficult to get rid of it or to change that or to fix that. So therefore it is very, very important to be aware what's going on in ourselves. And if we make a habit of that, then that habit will come up again and again. So, even before we act or before we react, I can see what's happening and when that happens then I have the choice how to direct my thoughts and emotions and reactions. And if that happens then it becomes extremely useful and also in a way easy to work on myself, to control my emotions, to direct my reactions. So that's why it is

extremely important and this is the key practice. It's a medium, it's the tool we have. This only tool that we have for training ourselves is mindfulness and awareness. Stanza number 27:

*Lack of introspection is a thief;
It slinks behind when mindfulness abates.
And all the merit we have gathered in
It steals; and down we go to lower realms. [5:27]*

So, if we are not aware, unawareness or lack of introspection is like a thief. The thief is there just looking for a chance, and when people are not aware, when people are not looking or when people are not careful or when people just leave things around without watching, then they go from behind stealthily or quietly and then they get the things, they steal the valuables and then they disappear. And then in one moment it's gone. So if we have something really very valuable, we have to be aware where we keep it and how we keep it. We can't just put it somewhere and forget about it. We can't do that. So in the same way, our positive actions, our mind, our right attitude, positive emotions, and things like that, right way of reacting – these are really positive things, these are merits, these are very valuable things, and we should protect them. We should not leave them everywhere, unmindfully and unprotected. Otherwise then this mindlessness, negative emotions and distractions, all these negative habitual tendencies and all kinds of provocations come, and immediately those kind of valuable things in us are lost. And then we find that we have done something wrong, we have created reactions, or actions or speeches or thoughts that would bring lots of problems for us and lots of problems for others as well. So therefore, it says it can even bring us in the long run to lower realms or bad rebirths, so therefore, how important it is to be aware of ourselves.

*Defilements are a band of robbers
Looking for their chance to injure us,
They steal our virtue, when their moment comes,
And batter out the lives of happy destinies. [5:28]*

So, all these defilements, all these negative emotions, disturbed emotions, defilements are the kleshas. These kleshas are like band of robbers, they are also looking for a chance to injure us,

to attack us. So whenever our awareness and mindfulness kind of slacks, we become unmindful and unaware, we're not vigilant and not introspective, then they come and attack us and then they even sometimes destroy positive things in us. They destroy, they take away positive actions, reactions, emotions and then leave us with lots of problems, pain and trouble and things like that. So therefore we need to understand this. We have to be very clear why we have to be aware, why we have to keep this awareness and why we have to be mindful. The more we understand that, then the more we will naturally keep watch of ourselves. Like if we have something really valuable, something really valuable and then we are traveling, like in a train or in a bus or something like that, in a place where there are lots of thieves and robbers and things like that, then we have to be extremely vigilant, and we have to be extremely aware and mindful of what we do, where we keep those valuable things so that we don't lose them. Otherwise it is very easy to lose them and once we have lost that, then it's a great problem. So in the same way, how to train our mind in a positive thing is also the same way. Our mind has lots of positive capacities, we can bring happiness to ourselves, we can bring joy, we can bring lasting kind of peace and lots of good for others, you know. But there is also this side of ourselves: the defilements, the negative habitual tendencies, all sorts of reactions that can kill those things. So therefore, if I am more aware and more mindful, then I can maintain. Because it's a kind of a training or a struggle within ourselves, how I am and how I live and how I react. So this is very important and when I understand this clearly and I am really mindful of this, that it is so important to keep a certain amount of mindfulness of what's happening within myself, what emotions and reactions are happening, then that is the half, half the practice is that. Because once I know what is the right way to do and what is the wrong way to do, that's the mindfulness, how to act and how not to act, then I just have to be aware what is happening to me. So, once these two things are there, then I cannot really make a mistake. Therefore it is important. To understand this importance is the first active practice, active instruction on how to become more vigilant introspection. So I stop here. This is from stanza number 24 to 28 of the 5th chapter. Thank you.

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