



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

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How to Practice Vigilant Introspection

5th Chapter, Stanza 29-33



BA5_29-33 How to Practice Vigilant Introspection
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So now we go to the next [point] on actually how to maintain the vigilant introspection or awareness, and that is stanza number 29 onwards, stanza number 29 to 33 of the 5th Chapter of Bodhicharyavatara. So, here it says:

Therefore from the gateway of my mind

My mindfulness shall not have leave to stray.

And if it wanders, it shall be recalled

By thoughts of anguish in the lower worlds. [5:29]

So, by understanding and by clearly seeing how dangerous it is if I lose my awareness or vigilance and then when I find that I have lost my awareness or vigilance, I try to immediately bring it back. Like for instance, if I am driving a car, and then I suddenly find that I have been distracted, I have

not been vigilant or aware of what is going on around [me], then I know that if I get distracted I could cause an accident, I could hurt other people, I could hurt my own passengers, and I could hurt myself and my car. So, by knowing that, I immediately bring back my concentration or my awareness. So in the same way, because if I act and react in a negative way, then it will cause problems for myself and others, and it is possible I would do things that are dangerous and negative, so I bring back. So this is the real practice. The practice is whenever I find that I am totally distracted or I am not aware of what is going on, then I just bring back my mindfulness and my awareness.

*Through fear, and by the counsels of their abbots,
And staying ever in their teacher's company --
In those endowed with fortune and devotion
Mindfulness is cultivated easily. [5:30]*

Fear here is not like, you know, "*I am so afraid.*" Not like that. But I have a certain kind of awareness that if I don't do the right thing, it will not be good. So I have certain kind of, you can call it fear, or you can call it conscience. You know, that kind of fear. And if I have a guide, a teacher, an abbot, a *khenpo*. *Khenpo* is like if you become a monk, then you have your *khenpo*. Then your *khenpo* is the one with whom you work directly. He is your direct supervisor. So therefore, he tells you what to do and not to do. So if you are living with that *khenpo*, then, because he is seeing what you are doing and how you are doing, so you are always little bit aware of how to act, how to walk, how to do things. Whether you study or not. How much you are sleeping or not. You know, how you are acting. So you have a certain kind of, you can call it fear, you can call it whatever, but you have a certain consciousness that you cannot be totally unaware. You cannot totally let yourself [be] without any restraint. You have to be little bit aware of what you are doing. You can be relaxed, if you are doing nothing wrong. You can relax, but you have to be little bit aware. So therefore, to have such a person, to have this kind of a teacher, or a company to whom you have devotion, you have trust, then this mindfulness and awareness can be cultivated much more easily. So that is why when you train, you live with your teacher sometimes for a long time, especially the monks or nuns do that. But it is the same with everything. Because it is not just the learning of the information. In this kind of spiritual teaching, spiritual training, it is not just the information. Like you go to school, there also you have to behave. And if you don't

behave, then there is somebody to check, and somebody to say this is not the right thing. So, it is not only you get information but you also get training in how you live your life, how act. And then, once you get used to that proper way of talking, walking, doing things, acting, then it becomes your way of life. So that happens even if you are not, you don't have to be particularly aware, you don't have to be really conscious, really restricted. You can be very relaxed and you can be very spontaneous. But you will naturally or habitually act in this way. So therefore, that is a very easy way of training. So therefore, to have this kind of situation is like a teacher who lives with you, or you live with a teacher, or somebody whom you have trust and respect is a good way of training. That is what it is saying.

Now stanza 31st:

*The Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas both
Posses unclouded vision, seeing everything:
All lies open to their gaze,
And likewise I am always in their presence. [5:31]*

In case you don't have that situation, that you are kind of living next to, or in front of, or under the guidance, or under the constant guidance of a teacher or what we call the *kalyanamitra*, a positive friend, or spiritual friend, then you can also have this kind of understanding, that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, through their wisdom, can see what is happening anywhere in the world, anywhere in the universe. So therefore, they are also aware of what I am doing at this moment, what I am thinking at this moment, how I am reacting in this moment. So if you feel the presence of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas like that, then it would be little bit like the same as having a teacher all the time. So this is another way of training yourself in awareness. That I feel the presence of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and their kind of wisdom, knowledge, the presences of their wisdom and their unobstructed seeing what is happening. So, if I am doing something wrong, I immediately become aware. I am in the presence of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and I should not act like this, or think like this, or things like that. So this is one way, another way of a little bit training. It is not, I think I said this before also, the concept is not that I am doing something wrong and if it is found out by the Buddhas they will punish me. It is not like that. The Buddhas never punish you. It is also not that the Buddhas will be angry with you. It is not like that. But still, you don't want to act badly in

front of them, because you will be ashamed. So that is why it says, 32:

*One who has such thoughts as these
Will gain devotion and a sense of fear and shame.
For such a one, the memory of Buddha
Rises frequently before the mind. [5:32]*

So this is why these two things, *ngo tsha* and *sheshin*, are important. *Ngo tsha* is not really fear. “I am feeling a little bit like ashamed of myself” is *ngo tsha*. And, “I feel ashamed in front of others” is *de Itar*. These are two different words. That others will look at me in a negative way, I feel, that is *de Itar*. Here it is translated as shame. And *ngo tsha* is that I am a little bit ashamed of myself. That is what we call *ngo tsha*. And here it is translated as fear. So I am aware of myself and what I am doing. So when I am feeling like that, then this is like the reminding of the Buddha, the feeling of the Buddha all the time, memory of the Buddha. We have the 6 mindfullnesses. Mindfulness of the Buddha, mindfulness of the Dharma, mindfulness of the Sangha, mindfulness of the giving, or the generosity, mindfulness of the *shila*, the conduct, mindfulness of the devas, or the positive people, and things like that. So this is the mindfulness of the Buddha because you feel that the Buddha's presence is there. So immediately you know that your actions and your thoughts are being kind of... you are doing things. You can't hide anything. So feeling that kind of being able to be transparent. So if you are able to be transparent, then you can't be doing anything that is really wrong. So that brings the training of awareness much more clearly.

*When mindfulness is stationed as a sentinel,
A guard upon the threshold of the mind,
Introspection will be likewise there,
Returning when forgotten or dispersed. [5:33]*

So in this way, when you put this mindfulness as a sentinel, as a guard in front of your gateway of your mind, then this introspection or vigilance will not be lost, will be there. And even if it is lost, you can regain it very easily. So this is the idea. By understanding that how you react, how your mind works, how your mind thinks and does things creates your future, your habit, and therefore your happiness and unhappiness. Whether your life goes into a miserable way, a negative way or a

positive way, depends on that. How you actually experience will go in this way how your mind reacts. So it is very important to catch that and to accordingly direct your mind. When you say that your happiness and unhappiness depends more on your mind than anything else, or your mind is the source of all positive things and negative things, what it really means to say is that what happens around is important, but what kind of reaction you will have, how it affects you is basically depending on how you react to it. Because somebody can go through a very difficult time, and he can come out even stronger. Another person can go through the same or even less problem, and is totally devastated. So that depends on how this person's mind works, and how this person sees things, and reacts to things. And that is the mind. So therefore, mind becomes important.

I think we will stop here. This is stanza number 33, 29 to 33. Thank you very much.

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