



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

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Maintaining the Purity of Our Actions
5th Chapter, Stanza 34-44



BA5_34-44 Maintaining the Purity of Our Actions
5th Chapter, Stanza 34-44. June 9, 2012. Transcribed by Carolyn Dong.
Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra

Now we come to the stanza number 34 of the 5th Chapter of the Bodhicharyavatara. This is on vigilant introspection, or sometimes we call awareness. Now, how to train our mind on our actions with mindfulness and awareness. Now the action, or the discipline, is presented in three types, you can say. The first, refraining from doing negative things, to not do negative actions. And second, to accumulate or to do more positive things, to accumulate positive actions, to increase the positive actions. And then, third, is on how to help other beings, or the training on how to help beings. So these three, what we call three shilas, three sections or the shilas in the Mahayana shila way or discipline.

Now first, refraining from doing negative things, the shila of that. It is two things: 1) how to maintain the purity of actions of body, speech and mind, all of body, speech and mind activities; and then 2) how to maintain the training of abstaining from doing negative things. There are two things.

So first is now from this stanza number 34 to maybe 44. So the first is:

*If at the outset, when I check my mind,
I find that it is tainted with some fault,
I shall be still and self-possessed,
Unmoving like a piece of wood. [5:34]*

This is kind of, when I introspect, when I look at myself, and when I check what is going on in my mind, and if I find that my mind is something negative, some mind poison is the way it is reacting with, then at that moment, what I should try to do is to kind of stop reacting to that state of mind. Like, "*I shall be still and self-possessed.*" I see that in that state of my mind, if I react, if I say something, if I do something, possessed by this negative state of mind, by this negative emotion that is going on, then I will do something wrong. I will say something that is not good for the other people, not good for me, and not good to solve this situation, so the best way of action is not to act at that time. So therefore, I kind of allow myself to an inactive state. That is why it is said, "*unmoving like a piece of wood,*" a log. A tree, when it is growing, when the breezes come, the leaves are moving, the branches are moving, things are flowing and moving. But if you cut the tree, and the log remains on the ground sideways, then it is not moving. Even though the wind is blowing, or if there is a hurricane, or whatever is happening, the log remains there without any action or movement. So in this way, I refuse to act to the reactions of my negative emotions, my negative thoughts. If I can do that, then, because the emotions change, thoughts change, my mind changes so quickly, that in a very short time, I would be reacting in a different way, and different emotions, or different thoughts would have happened, then I don't have to act according to the state of mind that was there before. So that delaying my action by becoming inactive is very useful technique. It is very useful because now I prevented myself from doing something wrong. I prevented myself acting in a negative way, either with my body, or speech. And I would be very happy afterwards, because I know then that if I did what I was about to do, or what that moment of emotion or state of mind was pushing me to do, then I would have created a problem. I would

have created a negative action. I would have created something that I would have regretted afterwards, or that would have put me into a situation which would have caused problem or suffering for myself or for others. And sometimes, that one action can totally destroy lives. So therefore, this is a very important thing, and is very important instruction, and very important thing to think about.

Thirty-five:

*I shall never, vacantly,
Allow my gaze to wander all around,
But rather with a focused mind
Will always go with eyes cast down. [5:35]*

I should try not to be totally going around, completely distracted, my mind all over the place or totally distracted, so that I am just looking around, and not seeing anything or not being aware of what is going on inside me or around me; but I should try to be aware. Not that I should not look. I can look around. I can see things. I can be very relaxed. But I should also be a little bit aware what am I doing, what is happening with my state of mind, what is happening around me in connection with other people. So I will also go with eyes cast down, looking in front of me. Not that I am so distracted that I will step on something, a dog shit, or an animal or something like that. Or getting myself into an accident or something like that. I have to be aware of where I am going, what I am doing, even when I am kind of looking around. So I have to put my eyes down in front of me and see what is going on.

*But that I may relax my gaze,
I'll sometimes raise my eyes and look around.
And if there are some people standing in my sight,
I'll look at them and greet them with a friendly word. [5:36]*

So, it is not that I have to be so intent with what is going on around me that I have no time or no chance to relax. I have to be very relaxed. I can be relaxed. I can look around in a very leisurely and relaxed way, relax my gaze. And then I look at people, I look around me, and when I see people, then I have to look at them in a friendly way. I should greet them respectfully, friendly, openly, and

say some friendly words, because they are like me, they are like my friends, they are like my family members. They are for whom I am trying to attain enlightenment, with whom, and for whom, and by whom I am trying to attain enlightenment. So this is an important way of looking at people, they say. When you see other people, you say they are very important, because for these people I am trying to get enlightened, to help these people. And if I am going to get enlightened, if I am going to become wise and compassionate and free from suffering, it is because of these people. All my practices are on them, with them, around them, so therefore, if they are not there, I will not progress in my practice. So they are the objects of my practice; they are the means with which I am practicing, so I am extremely grateful for them. So therefore, I need to be grateful to these people. And also, the people are the cause; we are all integrated, interrelated. I am here because of these people; these people have been sometimes my parents, sometimes my children, sometimes my friends, sometimes my family members. So in all these different lifetimes, the people have been all different kinds of things to me. So they are not unrelated, they are all related. And especially, if they are around me, I must have a very strong karmic connection with them, so I must accept that, I must respect that, and I must use this moment to be nice, and kind, and continue a positive relationship with everybody. So with that understanding, then I need to feel close and kind and grateful to the people around me.

Then it is 37:

*And yet to spy the dangers on the road,
I'll scrutinize the four directions one by one.
And when I stop to rest, I'll turn around
And look behind me, back along my way. [5:37]*

So, I have to be mindful, and I have to look around, and I have to be aware. So what is going on? Is there some danger on my road? If I am walking or driving, in that case, I look in front of me, I look behind me, I look on my right side, left side, be aware of what is going on around me. Not only inside me, but also around me and in all four directions, one by one. And when I stop to rest, then I also turn back (I just don't look back like I missed something in front of me – not like that) and see what is behind me also.

*I will survey the land, in front, behind,
And carry on or else retrace my steps.
In every time and place therefore
I'll know my needs and act accordingly. [5:38]*

So this not very difficult to kind of understand. You know, it is a little bit like a driving lesson. You need to be aware of what's going on around you all the time. And then:

*"My body shall remain like this."
Embarking thus upon a given course,
From time to time I'll verify
Inquiring how my body is disposed. [5:39]*

So, like if you are sitting, or standing, or walking, or meditating, then you see, *"I'll let my body in this state or position, and then do what I am doing"*, and then again and again, sometimes I see what is going on with my mind. And in that same kind of desired position, whether it is sitting or walking, or whatever way, or not. And then if by some kind of distraction, my body is in a situation which it should not be, then I can change that, or bring back the situation or the state I want to be or I need to be.

*This rampant elephant, my mind,
Once tied to that great post, reflection on the Teachings,
Must now be watched with all my strength
That it might never slip away. [5:40]*

So, my uncontrolled mind, my distracted mind, my mind that is addicted with negative emotions, is like an elephant which is not only wild, but little bit rampant. So I need to tie this mind, which is like a rampant elephant, with a post, with a strong and steady post of reflection, or of the teachings, mindfulness. And then I should see that it does not run away, break from this post and run away, and then it will create havoc.

*Those who strive to master concentration
Should never for an instant be distracted.
They should always watch their minds, inquiring,
"Where is my mind now engaged?" [5:41]*

So, in a very light way, in a very relaxed way – I think this is the technique we have to learn. That we should be mindful, we should be aware, but not with the stress, not too much concentration where there is no relaxation; then it cannot go on for a long time. So when you are relaxed and then a little mindful, then it is not tiring. It is not a stress. But you need be also aware, and constantly remind yourself of what is going on in your mind. Otherwise, it is not training.

*When this becomes impossible,
In case of danger or festivity, I'll act as it seems best.
For it is taught that rules of discipline
May be relaxed in times of generosity. [5:42]*

So sometimes you can also relax; and not only relax, but really let go of all these disciplines. Maybe you have rules, or set certain kind of rules or set of discipline on yourself [of what you] should do or not do. There are also things like that. In the precepts also, there are lots of do's and lots of don't's. But also, these do's and don't's you can sometimes relax. Like if there is a festivity, then it is okay to enjoy yourself. Sometimes you should not sing or you should not dance. But if there is an occasion that requires that you sing or dance, or something like that, then do it. It is not a big deal. In the same way, it is said here, even the Buddha said that the rules of the discipline can sometimes be relaxed in order to become generous. Because if you really need to do something that is to help other beings in a big way, then you don't say, this I cannot do because I have this discipline, or I have this rule. The more important is to see that what you do is something that is important and needed, and things like that. So you should not be so much addicted, or too fanatic about the rules of discipline as well. Because it is not about the rules; it is about the awareness that is the most important. It is not about the rules or the discipline, but about how your mind works. So therefore it is very important not to be fanatic about the small details of do's and don't's as well.

*When something has been planned and started on,
Attention should not drift to other things.
With thoughts fixed on the chosen target,
That and that alone should be pursued. [5:43]*

So this is very important. Generally when you have started to do something, you should concentrate on that, and then do that, and finish that. After finishing that, then you do the next. Even if there is something interesting coming in between, it is not that you stop this doing and do something else, because then you will never finish anything. You get this habit of not finishing, so it is important to complete one, do that whatever you are doing, whatever task you have on, to complete that, to concentrate on that.

*Behaving this way, all tasks are well performed,
And nothing is achieved by doing otherwise.
If thus we act, the secondary defilement,
Lack of introspection, will not grow. [5:44]*

The defilements, or negative emotions or negative thoughts and negative actions grow if we have less awareness or lack of introspection. So if we do like this, then that lack of introspection or lack of awareness is not there. So therefore, everything, whatever we do, will be accomplished. And our discipline will be good, and whatever we work, whatever we target on, whatever we want to achieve, we will certainly achieve. And in this way, we will be able to maintain a very positive state of mind. And then we will be able to abstain from doing anything that is negative. So that is the idea.

So thank you very much. It is from 34 to 44 stanzas.

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