



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche ***Questions and Answers 4 (Chapter 5)***

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Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra

So these are some questions. The video number 4 or the question set number 4 for chapter number 5.

The first question is:

“I am very interested to know in more depth what you have mentioned regarding cutting of grass. I understand monks and nuns should not do this. But I am a householder, and am wondering if it is okay to cut my parents' grass for them. I do not really want to do this as I do not want to kill insects. But from what you say, it is okay for me to cut the grass for them mindfully.”

Of course it is very okay for you to cut the grasses. If you don't cut grasses, then it will overgrow, and then your garden will be not a garden any more. It is not completely true that even for the monks and nuns, they can never cut grass. It is said very clearly in Vinaya that when it is necessary for them to cut grass, they should cut grass. But they should not do it just like that, or unmindfully, or without purpose. They should do it only if it is necessary, if there is need to do it, then they should cut grass. That is how it is said in the Vinaya. I think, especially for the householders, that Buddha has even permitted for them to make all necessary things for a householder, because it needs to be done. So yes, it is good to be mindful and careful, and take care that you don't kill or disturb animals or beings as much as possible. That is the understanding, I think.

Then the second question is:

“Dear Rinpoche, thank you for your very clear and helpful explanation of these stanzas with all the subtle differentiations of the negative emotions. I have a question about pride. Because I think in other teachings you have indicated that when westerners become very self-critical and experience ourselves as being bad and unworthy, there is actually an underlying, unconscious over-estimation of how good, or important we are. And we suffer when we feel we have failed to live up to this. I hope I have understood this correctly, so this question makes sense. My question is whether it is the puffed-up or haughty form of pride that would work here, that is to say, an inflated sense of self?”

It is possible. I think it is possible. I sometimes feel that when people say "I don't feel like [I am] worth anything," "I have no self-confidence," or "I don't see any worth in me," I see there is a little bit of, a kind of pride, involved in that. That I expect myself to be so good, that when you are not up to that level, you feel "I am nothing." So I think it is very important to accept the way you are. You are not the best. You are not the worst. You are the way you are. That doesn't mean you cannot improve. That doesn't mean that we are bad. That doesn't mean that we should not try to improve ourselves. But it does not mean that we are nothing or nobody. I think this is important.

Then the next question is:

“Yesterday, I went to work with the intention of remaining like a log. If I found myself about to react in a negative way, I did manage not to react, but yesterday night, I had a dream in which I was extremely angry and threw water at someone. I think this has happened before. That is, stopping myself from reacting in a negative way in the daytime, being followed by the dream at night in which the negative emotion is experienced very intensely. My question is about how to understand this. Is it that the dream is just showing me that the habitual tendency is still very strong, or could it be something more positive, like the beginning of a purification process?”

I don't know exactly, but I think we should try to exercise the same thing in the dream also. Because the dream state of mind shows your deeper level of your reactions. So maybe you have that very strongly, you have that habitual tendency very strong, to react immediately in a kind of strong way negatively. And I think that is what the dream is showing. So therefore, I think you need to work on it, kind of persistently, lightly but persistently. And I think if you can do that in

the dream also, I mean remaining like a log, then it means that you have attained some experience in that. So try to do that in dream also. Thank you.

Then there is:

“Dear Rinpoche, I do not have a question, but just wanted to express my immense thanks for all the teachings you have been posting every week. It is such a privilege to be able to receive your frequent teachings from so far away. (This letter is from Capetown.) Especially for those of us not fortunate enough to be able to share in your teachings in person this summer. It is as though you are sitting here, in person, in my lounge, imparting your words of wisdom, which are always so pertinent to modern day living. And always remind me of how much I still have to work on myself and my habitual reactions. So thank you, thank you from the bottom of my heart. With love, as always, Annie. “

So, thank you very much. Thank you very much for listening to me and the teachings. I think Bodhicharyavatara is a very important teaching. And if it helps me to go through it and try to explain, I am sure it helps everybody if you listen to that or if you read this text. I try to present it, as much as possible, so that it might be useful at this time. These texts are written more than thousand years before, and actually they are as relevant now as they were at that time. But of course, the circumstances in which it was written, the social structure of that time, the way people used to be, some things may have changed, so we have to just put that in the right perspective. And then, I think it is very relevant. But I think it is important to do that also, because that's what Buddha always said, that the teachings have to be according to the people, according to the time, according to the need of the persons and how it might help. It is not just as I understand it or as the different levels of teachings, or different types of teachings. It has to be according to the need of the people. So thank you for doing this. I am actually doing this especially for those people and for those places where I have some people or some friends and students, who would like to receive teachings -- not only from me, but dharma teachings. But they don't have the right conditions, or sometimes they live very far away, and in the places where the lamas and teachers do not come or cannot come, and there are not very many opportunities. So I am giving these sets of teachings especially for them. So please, yourself and all others, for those who do not know this is happening, please inform them so they can take advantage of this. I met another of my old student and friend from another part of Africa. I told her, but she did not listen to it. She said,

"Oh, it is not the same that you listen to a video than if you listen from person-to-person." Maybe it is not, but maybe it is. Actually, if you really listen to the teachings and whether you listen directly or from the video, I think it is more or less the same. And then, if you have questions you can ask me. You can ask any number of questions, whether it is on that very subject or on something else. If you have some questions which are not necessarily related exactly to the teachings, also you are most welcome. Thank you.

Then another question, or another comment:

"I very much echo the feelings of immense gratitude for the shedra teachings as expressed so beautifully by Annie in her comment above."

Thank you.

Then Van Hoorn Marlou:

"Thank you, Rinpoche. Some people have an almost natural talent to remain as a piece of wood. Especially, when I, with my ego-clinging emotions, come along. This is not just a joke. To my shame, it is true. I blush and sweat by listening to the details of this teaching on Shantideva's incredible guide to Bodhisattva's way of life. But I liked your comments on stanza 45, that in case of paying attention to someone sick or lonely, one may engage in more social behavior without too much of clinging to it or becoming just habituated to it. I'd better try to follow the good examples of those who don't let themselves go with any negativity, like insinuations, complaints, accusations, etc. And remember these teachings well and apply them. Please accept the little offering for the Rigul people in Tibet in return, whereby at least a dharma friend and I can make some merit more easily. With love and prayers for your good health and long life, Marlou."

Thank you very much. Thank you very much for listening to the teachings and also for some contribution to the people in Rigul. The school and clinic in Rigul are actually doing very well. There was a little bit of a rumor that maybe the Chinese government might close the school. But this is just a rumor, so far; and I hope nothing will happen. They are doing very well there. At the moment they are building toilets – the first time toilets being built for the school in Rigul. I don't know how good those toilets will be, but they are building it. And last year, they built a dining hall. So far they have been eating in the classrooms or outside, so now they have a proper dining hall

and tables where they can eat. And those people who also pass out [graduated] from the school, many have joined shedra as monks; I think about 40 of them. And many others, including the girls, many girls have gone for higher studies, higher schools, middle, secondary schools elsewhere, a little bit far. So it seems the school is very helpful. Also the clinic is being used quite a lot. Lots of people come for their checkup and for medicines. So thank you very much, you and others who have contributed and helped in these projects. As you can see, we have been now helping them for a long time. Every year, around £30,000 are needed for the school and clinic. So far we have been able to make them through your generous contributions. So hopefully, we will be able to continue. 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.