



# Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

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

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Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra

So I'm starting to send some videos on Bodhicharyavatara [again]. I'm sorry that I was absent for some weeks because I went to receive the Kagyu Ngag Dzod teachings and empowerments from Gyaltap Rinpoche in Ralang - and Ralang Monastery is in a very remote place of Sikkim and does not have any access to the internet. And after that I went to visit Asia. I went to Indonesia, Hong Kong and Taiwan. In some places there was no internet connection and in some places there was, but I was too busy eating twenty one course meals and so therefore I had no time. And so now I have come back to Sikkim and I would like to start [again] as regular as possible. I'm really sorry it was not regular for some time. And now first I would like to answer some of the questions that were put forward on the last teachings of Chapter 5. So I'll go through them without too much introduction.

The first question is:

*“My question has nothing to do with the subject, but I need to be reminded. My practice is often strongly polluted by subtle distraction, and I can't remember the cures to this problem. Could you please advise?”*

Distraction, subtle distraction - this is very normal and of course we will all have distractions, subtle or not subtle, for a long time. So whenever you find that you are distracted, then you relax in it, you focus very lightly on whatever [it is] you are meditating or practicing on. And I think that's enough. There's no need to do too much. There's no need to over apply the instructions as well.

So therefore, just be aware - and then relax. No need to do too much.

Then the next question is:

*“My question is about how best to cultivate the 9 virtues? In stanza 54, I feel that I am only too familiar with taking note of my defilements and pointless efforts, but in stanza 55, I am not so familiar with taking note of positive qualities. Is it just a matter of keeping these qualities in mind and aiming to cultivate them at every opportunity?”*

I think that's very natural, we are all very much habituated to focus on negative things in others, as well as in ourselves. So therefore that comes up very easily and regularly. So, we need to learn to cultivate, to look for positive qualities. I think we can start with others [first]. You know, to look for positive qualities in other people and appreciate that, and rejoice in that, and then learn from that. That's the first thing. And if you see some positive qualities in yourself as well, then rejoice in them, be happy with that and relax in it. So therefore, whenever you see negative qualities or negative things coming up you just understand that there's negativity and that's normal. It's nothing special, nothing extraordinary. It is bound to be there as we are all samsaric beings. You don't have to be too unhappy about it, but you need to let it go as well. You allow that to go and try to focus on something more relaxed and peaceful and positive. So I think that's the way to go forward. And I think it's not realistic to expect too much from ourselves so this is important I think.

Then the next question is:

*“My question is about the 13th stanza of Chapter 1, but it could be a general question too, and it is not on theory but about real life, how to really put bodhichitta into practice in a very difficult context. Currently, I work in a hospital with a person who is annoyed with the world and with everybody in general. So she shouts at the auxiliaries, at the patients, at me, and everything looks wrong to her... in fact she caused me an emotional blockage despite my efforts to be kind, to not react and to try to help her. My motivation was to put bodhichitta into practice. I tried different approaches: the Christian one of love and kindness - to love your enemies - to see them as Christ himself - and the Buddhist one - and everything together - but I failed. Rinpoche, could you advise me? Which one would be the right approach to help that person, and also to help those around her, including me? I really fear for my psychological balance.”*

I think first of all we have to understand, that sometimes we can help - sometimes we can help somebody a lot - and sometimes we cannot help. Sometimes, what we do or say, or our influence or our help is not seen immediately and we don't know how the effect of whatever we are doing would be on that person in the long run. So therefore, the most important thing is just to try our best and then let it be. Not to make ourselves annoyed or sick or disappointed because we cannot do something. We cannot expect to be able to do miracles. We cannot expect that everything we do will be 100% successful. That's also important. We need to know and accept our limitations.

But also very important is that we should learn how not to be affected by what's going on around us. Because whether it's this person or somebody else you know, there will always be someone in the world around us, in our society or in our community who is not perfect or who is doing something wrong, or who is making something a little bit of a problem. We cannot get rid of all the problems. So therefore it is extremely important to learn very, very [clearly the] first thing - that I do not allow myself to be completely disturbed by what is going on. That's very, very important. And the first thing about that is to accept that there are difficult things, there are difficult people because it's possible - it's samsara - that's why we want to help, that's why we want to transform it. If it was all good then there is no need to do so. So therefore we really have to accept that there are very few places - there's almost no place we can go and have absolutely no problem - that's very difficult to find. So therefore we have to expect that, we have to understand that and accept that. And then once we can accept that deeply, I think we are less affected by that.

I told this before, I actually [noticed] it myself, that people come here to Sikkim, many people from the West and they are very much disturbed by the barking dogs because here there are lots of dogs and they bark all night. And then they cannot sleep because they're barking all night. Now here I don't hear them. I don't hear the barking dogs at night. It's not that I can't hear because my ear is bad. If I listen, I can hear. But, I don't hear, so I go to sleep, I have no problems sleeping, even if the dogs are barking - because I don't hear it - because I think, I don't mind it. I don't focus on them. So therefore I accept them, I don't focus on them. I know it's there but it doesn't matter. So therefore I don't hear. I don't hear barking dogs and I am never disturbed by them. So I think we can learn how not to be disturbed by disturbances that are around us. And that's the most important thing for us to learn. And that starts with accepting. Accepting means that - I'm

not saying [what's happening] is good and I endorse it or anything like that - but that there are things like that; sometimes I can try to change them but some things do not change. Some things change - that's very good. So I can't expect everything to be perfect all the time. So therefore that's very, very important I think. That's my answer.

Then next question is:

*“Thank you very much for this teaching on stanzas 59-70. It makes me think a lot about my attitude to my body in terms of hatha yoga practice; that is, whether my attitude is based on attachment to my body and therefore is narcissistic (an over-concern with exercise to make my body in better shape), or whether it is disciplining my body so that it is better able to carry out beneficial work. I think it is probably a mixture of the two. Would a good way to lessen my attachment to my body in hatha yoga practice be to dedicate the practice for the benefit of all sentient beings and keep this in mind during the practice?”*

Well. I think it's okay - there's nothing wrong. Of course it's good to have a healthy body. It's very important to have a healthy body. In order to do that, it's very important to have some exercise. And there's nothing wrong in making your body fit and looking good - there's nothing wrong [in that]. So therefore, in order to make use of your body for some good purpose that would help you in the long run as well as others, a very healthy and nice fit body is extremely necessary - so you need to do hatha yoga for that. And then also, don't just do hatha yoga and look beautiful, but also, do something that's useful for yourself in the long run. Work on your emotions as well, work on how you feel, how you react and how you think. And also do something that might help other people. So then there's no problem - it's very good.

And the next question is:

*“Thank you for this very useful teaching. Never before did I see my body as I do after this teaching. It is good for me, useful for me, to treat the body as a servant. It is a good technique, very simple and quick, but...I do have a problem too. Every time I start to apply this “new technique” I feel very happy and cheerful, but then a sad feeling appears. It is like - “I am so lazy, that my mind needs a servant”. So I finally do things, but I feel so sad. So now, Dear Master, I need another “technique” to transform the sadness into another thing. I am doing things for others and me - but I am crying a lot too. It's not good.”*

I don't understand why you are sad, because I don't see there's any reason to be sad. Of course we have a body, we should keep it fit, we should keep it healthy, we should keep it pleasant - we don't need to torture our body - we have to respect our body, we have to use our body in a good way, in a right way, in a skillful way - we don't need to overburden it or torture it or anything like that, but we have to direct this [life] in a positive way and then, because that's good for us, that's good for the body as well. If we pamper it, it's not good - we know that. If we do not do any exercise, let it sleep all day long, it's not good for it. We [might] feed it with all kinds of sweets and food, over eat and over fatten it - that's also not good for the body - it's not good for the body and it's not good for anything else so therefore we understand that.

And so I don't see why you are sad. But if you are sad then relax - you relax. Use the sadness. Sometimes when you are sad, you can write very nice poetry because sometimes you need the emotion to make you write very nice poetry - so take the opportunity to write a poem when you are sad. So you can use it in a proper way. I'm not saying that you should always write poetry but do whatever [is possible] - use that and then relax in that. You know, sometimes a little bit sad is also okay. It's nothing like "Oh I cannot be sad - if it's a little bit sad, I will... it's so bad you know". Not like that. You know [how] the mind is - sad thoughts will come up, happy thoughts will come up. All different kinds of thoughts will come up. That's okay. There's nothing wrong with it. It will come and it will go. You will let it come and let it go. You don't have to have too much aversion to the sadness. And then I think it's okay. So like that. So if you feel like crying, cry - but once you have cried, then laugh also.

The next question is:

*"While reflecting on Rinpoche's [teaching] about precious human rebirth and how this relates to the body, I sort of realize that when Buddha speaks about precious human rebirth, this mainly must concern our mind and its qualities - even though it's good to have a human body, because with it we can relate best to other human beings and other sentient beings. But how wonderful and precious would it also be if human beings could fly like birds, swim like fish, run like antelopes, and roar and jump like lions - a bit like in the movie Avatar. If we compare our fragile body with some animal bodies, it's quite limited, maybe this is why we see in Vajrayana Buddhism deities have heads like lions and bodies like bulls, elephants, eagles and so on. Rinpoche and sangha friends,*

*what do you think, is this to represent other strengths and possibilities? Is it interesting to strive for a more complete body, with more possibilities? Could Shantideva in a way have set out a goal for that too, in order to benefit as many sentient beings as possible?"*

I think we human beings also have a body that has lots of positive qualities. Although we cannot fly like birds, and we cannot swim like fish and we cannot run like an antelope we can do lots of good things. We can use our hands [skillfully], we can use our speech, we are much more adroit. So it doesn't matter. It's not always about what I don't have, that I have to get. I have to use what I have in a good way and that's when I find, and the most important thing is, that I find peace in myself. I find joy in myself. I can feel completely okay in any situation and circumstance in the state I am in. I'm not always running after something I don't have. So don't look at what I don't have but look at what I have and then use that and appreciate that. I think that is more important. I don't know – it's a different subject – the different heads and hands some deities have but this is just a technique and not really related to this so I can't answer.

Then there are some comments that I think have already been on the internet probably and there's nothing [further] I need to comment on. So thank you very much. Thank you.

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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.