



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche
How to Work for the Benefit of Others. Part 2
5th Chapter, Stanzas 91-96



December 15, 2012
Transcribed by Carolyn Dong
Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra

So now we have come to the third point on how to work for the benefit of other beings. And that is not to do anything that would disappoint people, any actions that would create disappointment, annoyance, or which brings unconventional disturbance to people's mind. Whether that is something useful or not so useful, but which brings irreverence or disappointment, or is regarded as bad manner in society. Those things one should not do. So this is explained from stanza number 91.

*When you spit and throw away
Your tooth sticks, you should cover them.
And it is wrong to foul with urine and with other filth
The fields and water fit for public use. [5:91]*

"When you spit and throw away your tooth sticks, you should cover them." This is said from the point of the Indian culture of that time. If you want to spit, then spit. But cover your mouth, or spit in a place which is safe, not a public place, or on the green grass, or on the street, or on the wall.

And then, the tooth stick. In India, they used to have sticks growing, that you cut. And then you chew that. That used to be like a toothbrush. So after using that, you have to throw it out. If you throw it anywhere, that is not good.

"And it is wrong to foul with urine and with other filth the fields and water fit for public use." You have to be mindful. It is talking about hygiene. It is talking about cleanliness. It is talking about good human behavior. Not only that. These things can be very much used nowadays in terms of protecting the environment, ecology, and things like that.

*When eating, do not gobble noisily,
Nor stuff and cram your gaping mouth.
And do not sit with legs outstretched,
Nor coarsely rub your hands together. [5:92]*

These are very minor kinds of manners. But those manners like table manners, manners in sitting, or manners in walking, manners in whatever you are doing, should be according to the noble or gentle person, the gentleman or gentle woman's way of doing things in that particular society in which you live. Because I think the society is very important. Vinaya is very much based on society, social behavior, and the society's social norms. And what is regarded as right or wrong, or decent or indecent, is very much based on different cultures and different societies.

*Do not travel, sit or stay alone
With women of another house.
And all that you have seen, or have been told
To be a cause of scandal – you should avoid. [5:93]*

"Do not travel, sit or stay alone with women of another house." This is true if you are a monk. And even if you are not a monk, you can have different kinds of allegations, or people might have different kinds of doubts. Because of that, I think, don't sit with a woman alone, without another man, especially if that woman belongs or is in a relationship with somebody else.

"And all that you have seen, or have been told to be a cause of scandal – you should avoid." You should avoid scandals. You should act and do things in a way that would not cause a scandal. I think this is important, because as we know, even nowadays, there are lots of scandals, even with lamas and people like that. It may be that they have done something wrong. But it could be that they didn't do anything wrong; but they were not careful enough to keep their actions in such a way that people would not have different kinds of doubts, and misunderstandings. And then scandals happened. Again, this is as said before, it is not to say that a man or a teacher can never sit with a woman. Otherwise you can never have any private interviews. So this should not be taken too literally and too strictly. Otherwise, it would be again, too much restriction, too much like you cannot communicate, or you cannot have any kind of teacher-student relationship. But it is something one needs to think about in the case of avoiding scandals.

*Not rudely pointing with your finger,
But rather with a reverent gesture showing
With the whole right hand outstretched –
That is how to indicate the road. [5:94]*

This is being respectful. So if somebody says, *"Which way is to the kitchen?"* or the dining hall, or the toilet, you don't say roughly, *"Go this way."* You kindly and respectfully come out and show the way. I don't know; this also may depend from culture to culture, but in the Indian or eastern way, you show with not just one finger, but with all the fingers, [indicating] *"It is that way"* or *"It is this way."*

Once I was told by some people who visited Sikkim. They came to Sikkim, and they were very happy because, they said, "*You know, Sikkim is very nice. When they give you the change, they give it to you with both hands. So it is so nice. They are so kind.*" Giving you the change with both hands doesn't make much difference, but it is a gesture. Sometimes that kind of gesture helps, kind of creates an atmosphere; [it is] a body language that shows respect and attention.

Do not wave your arms with uncouth gestures.

Express yourself instead with unobtrusive signs,

With gentle sounds and finger snaps.

For acting otherwise is impolite excess. [5:95]

Really it is all about your body language. Use your body to express your gentleness, your kindness, your respect for the other people. [Show] you are interested in them, that you are considerate, that you wish them well, that you are not totally ignoring them but are really trying your best to help them. Even if you call somebody, you just don't make a very big sound, or something like that. But I don't know. Finger snaps, I think, are sometimes not a good way of calling in some societies. But make some signs, the gentle ones, so that there is no impoliteness, but politeness, care and attention and mindfulness. In either what you are doing yourself, in carrying yourself, or when you are communicating with others through different means, you show respect and caring. That I think is the main thing.

I think it is not very useful just to go through the instructions one by one, and say you have to do this, you have to do that. That doesn't work, because different cultures have different ways of doing things. And if you don't understand them, then it is not very useful. For instance, in some places, you have to shake hands. If you don't shake hands, then it is considered impolite. In some places, you can't shake hands, especially with a woman by a man, otherwise it is considered impolite. Some places, you have to go and kiss on the cheeks, otherwise you are not very polite. And in some places, you cannot. If you kiss somebody, especially another woman who is not related to you or not your wife, it is a big scandal. All these things are just social norms and cultures. So it is according to that, I think, that is important.

*Lie down to sleep in the preferred direction,
In the posture of the Buddha when he passed into nirvana.
And first with vigilance decide
That you'll be quick to rise again. [5:96]*

"Lie down to sleep in the preferred direction, in the posture of the Buddha when he passed into nirvana." So when you lie down, lie in the preferred direction. When Buddha died, he laid down with his head to the north. That is one way. Or sometimes, people recommend lying down with your head towards the east. But doesn't matter those things. In the Amitabha prayer practice, you lie with your head towards the west. So these things don't matter, but lie down nicely, in a preferred direction, in the posture of Buddha, that is, lying with your right side on the bed.

"And first with vigilance decide that you'll be quick to rise again." So, you want to relax. You want to rest. You need to rest. Everybody needs to rest and take a good sleep. But when you go to sleep, you sleep with a peaceful mind, without too much thoughts, worries, and negative things going on, but with intention that I will get up early tomorrow and I will live tomorrow in a positive and useful way.

Also, sometimes it is said that you try to look at day and night as a whole life. When you get up, it is as if you are born. Then you go through life of a young person, youth, middle age, then old age. And when you go to sleep, it is like dying. Dreaming is like bardo, and when you wake up it is like another birth. So [live] every day as something useful, and [live it] purposefully.

So if you act like this, if you live in this way, if you live each day positively, truthfully, purposefully, and usefully, then you have lived your life in a very good way. So therefore, a day is very important. And also, doing something that is good for you, not doing something that is negative and bad for you and others, doing more and more that is good for you and for others, especially with intentions of being useful and helpful to everybody, directly or indirectly. "Directly" means you do something that would really help somebody directly, like now or in the near future. "Indirectly" is you do something, like a practice, or meditation, and then you dedicate it for all the beings. So that either you train yourself to be able to do something good for others, or you do something positive and you dedicate it for a very big purpose and for very many people. That is

indirectly. So either directly or indirectly you are doing something good for the other people, for everybody. And not only for other people, but yourself also. So this is stanza number 96. So I stop here.

©Ringu Tulku Rinpoche

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.