



# Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

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**Questions and Answers 6**  
**Chapter 5**



February 1, 2013  
Transcribed by Carolyn Dong  
Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra

I am very sorry that there was a gap because I was travelling and lots of things, so it was not possible to record and send videos. Now I am in Nepal, and will try to send some of the videos. First of all, I would like to answer some of the questions, actually from Chapter number 5, the concluding questions of this chapter.

To start with, the first question is:

*“Please, can you help me to understand which is the best, or several ways to help properly people the way they really need and not so much the way I think they need? Or how to avoid too much mistakes? As you have always helped me so much, and I can also see that your teachings and support are powerfully helping all the sangha and much more than our sangha, I am asking you*

*please, to give us an advice about how to properly develop the skill to help others, just the way they really need and not to give the wrong tool, the wrong commentary, or too much or too less? I suppose it is a matter of our own practice and how much my practice is a genuine one. But maybe there are also ways to improve the communication, the “output” for the students and be more helpful as a teacher?”*

This is, in a way, a very difficult question because there is no one way or several ways to help people. As far as teaching the dharma is concerned, I think what we can do is try to explain the dharma as it is, not making it polluted or un-dharmic, really the teachings as they are. But then, try to explain it as much as possible that would be understandable to the people. Or that the people who are the audience, or the people who might be helped, would actually be able to practice them. So trying to do that, I think is important.

And how much? I think there is nothing called too much or too less. It is more about how to make the people understand clearly about the practice, and the need of the practice, and why it is done like this. So this clarity is, I think, very important.

Also, as we always say, we should not try to impose anything on others. We should try to teach, try to lead, or try to help as the people want or ask us. So I think this is very important, as far as I can see, that we try to see and communicate with the people as much as possible what they are interested in and what they want. And accordingly, we try to guide them, or help them, or share our knowledge or experience. We don't try to share our experience or knowledge that the people are not interested in, or do not want to know, or do not have any kind of interest or connection. Sometimes, people have aversion to such things. So we should not talk about those things. I think that is more or less the main thing – to try to put yourself in the place of the person that you are trying to help. And from that angle, or from that point of view, you try to work with them.

The next question:

*“My question is about verse 75. That is wonderful to be in a state of mind in which you can praise others, and not be deflected from this by the envy, jealousy and competitiveness that can arise. But if these negative emotions do arise, do you then do your best still to act in a positive way, praising others, and just acknowledge privately to yourself that you have to struggle with these habitual*

*tendencies?”*

Yes, I think so. You know, when envy, jealousy, and things like this arise in us, of course, that is normal because we are samsaric beings. Then we tell ourselves that this is not something good for us or good for others. So we don't need to hold on to this, or we don't need to keep these emotions. We can let them go.

If you want to praise others or not, that is another matter. If you are not in the mood to praise others, or acknowledge, or rejoice – if you cannot do that, that is okay for the moment. But actually, if you know clearly and deeply that it is better to rejoice, that there is nothing wrong with rejoicing, and that there are lots of things wrong if you do not, then maybe you would like to yourself. So the changing of the attitude, I think, is the important thing. And there, you need some reminding of yourself, and maybe also a little bit of training. Training means reminding again and again to make it clear to yourself. Of course, sometimes – no, not sometimes – negative emotions **do** arise. So that is okay. When they arise, it doesn't mean that it will not go away. It will go, if you don't hold on to it. So let it go. That is it.

So the next question is:

*“Thank you for those teachings which sound so practical and helpful in daily life. But sometimes under stressful conditions I find it hard to remember to put them into practice. Is it best to have a firm and strong resolve to accumulate positive deeds? Or is it better to be more relaxed about it, and to hope that in time it will get easier?”*

Well, I think it is like this. You need to accept that we are not perfect. So we will have negative emotions. We will have problems to apply all the good things that we want to experience or react. So when negative thoughts or negative emotions come up, we don't have to become too guilty, or too stressed, or too fed-up, or anything like that.

But we also should know clearly that if I too much act on those emotions, that it will be very bad for me, and very bad for others. And some of the emotions could be very disastrous. So, when you know that, you have to become that much more clear, much more stable. And then try to be also relaxed. Because you cannot take it like, if I have one negative emotion, I cannot say, *“Ahhh I*

*have negative emotion, ahhh!"* It is nothing like that.

Negative emotions will be there for a long time for us, I think. So we should not be shocked; we should not be stressed; we should not feel guilty that we have negative emotions. We should keep working on that. At the same time, let it come, let it go. If you react with that, sometimes it is okay. But be mindful because it is not good of us and for others. So this is, I think, how we should be – kind of ready to work on it in a long term basis, in a relaxed way.

Now, next question is:

*"I have a question about stanza 87. When you say that we shouldn't give anything that could possibly harm us, or that we could regret. As I am limited in money, like almost everybody, I was happy to find out that I could practice giving with the cells of my blood and my bone marrow. A donation of platelets is unpleasant, but the donation of bone marrow is said to be potentially really painful. Moreover, a general anesthesia can be dangerous, though problems are rare. Until now, I was convinced it was totally okay. Something unpleasant to me to save the life of someone else. But a doubt has appeared with your comments on stanza 87. Could you please say a word about that?"*

So, it is like this. If you are really ready. But first, I think you should have to see what are the consequences of doing this. It is not good to do something without knowing. We have to be clear about the consequences. And if you are happy with the consequences, if you are really ready to go through with the consequences, and will not feel bad, or regret because your wish to help others is stronger, or more important, then there is nothing wrong with going through with it.

Otherwise, there is no obligation that you have to do that. You should not feel as if you are forced. You should not feel that because I have taken the Bodhisattva vows, because I am practicing dharma, therefore, I must do this. Because I don't have money, so I have to donate my blood. I need to this because otherwise I am not a good Buddhist, or anything like that. That is not the way. That should not be the way. You should yourself decide whether you are really ready for it or not.

Next question is:

*“When referring to stanza 97 and 98, you talk about the importance of purifying our mistakes as soon as possible. I think that when I make mistakes, it is usually because a deep-rooted fear or anxiety is activated. Is it better to accept that this will inevitably happen sometimes and try not to worry about it too much, or should I be actively dealing with it, doing my best to understand it, and be very vigilant in this respect?”*

Well, it is like that. Of course we all make mistakes. And when we make mistakes, if we can try not to do it again, that will be the best. If not, then we try to do it a little bit less, or even change a little bit. We cannot practically think or expect that we will completely transform all our mistakes or negative things in a very short time. It is a life-long practice; so therefore, we have to accept our short-comings. We have to take them a little bit lightly, I think.

The next question is:

*“How can one maintain any confidence that one's positively motivated actions will bring about actual benefits, and not simply get caught in the mess of cultural and conceptual barriers, so potentially causing more harm than good? So often others do not receive things as one intends. And the simplest of things can cause offense.”*

Well! This is possible. But I feel that what I **can** do, if I have the right motivation, then I will **try** to do my best to make things right. And since I am not an all-knower, I cannot say that I never make mistakes. I can make mistakes, I can do lots of things which are not right, or useful, or beneficial, or even harmful maybe. But I cannot do anything more than that, because I am the way I am. So, practically, this is the idea. You cannot do more than your best. And this is something we need to accept.

And after accepting this, it does not mean to say that if I have good motivation, then I can do anything. It is not like that. If I have good motivation, then I have to **try** my best, to learn and see if what I am trying to do to help is really helping or not. I don't need to just do things. Sometimes, may be doing nothing is best help also, sometimes. So therefore, it is not that I have to do something all the time. That is not necessary. If I feel that what I do would really be useful, then I should do it. If I feel that I don't know whether it will be useful or not, then I don't need to do it. And if I feel that it is not useful, or may not be useful, then why do it?

Next question is:

*“Regarding stanza 102. How much contact and interaction does one need to have with their virtuous friend or teacher in order to progress swiftly? Is the level of contact required different in each of these 3 yantras? Can one genuinely work on the path while relying on more than one teacher?”*

This is, I think, person-to-person. I think this is person-to-person. There is no one way. There is no one kind of rule or procedure, or anything like that. You cannot say this. I don't think there is a different requirement of how long or how much contact one should have with one's own teacher, according to this yantra or that yantra. It is not like that. Actually you need to learn, you need to receive teachings, you need to practice. And then, how much, it will depend on person-to-person, teacher-to-teacher.

But there is, I feel, no thing as "only one teacher." That I don't believe in. I believe that we need to learn from many teachers, as much as possible, as many as possible. And not only teachers, but from everything, from books, from other people (not teachers), and also, of course, from yourself, and then from teachings. The main source is the teachings of the Buddha. And of course, the commentaries by great masters also.

Next, the question is:

*“Stanza 109. It is said, “What is to be gained by mouthing syllables?” Although not directly related to prayers, this brings up the question. While practicing Vajrayana, is it best that prayers be recited in one's native language or the language of the composer? In other words, should one understand fully and have the possibility to actualize the prayer? Or should one stick to the Tibetan, even if it means one will struggle to understand or actualize their full meaning? If practicing with a group, is the most useful language the commonly understood language, or is a different approach useful for a group practice?”*

The prayer is a prayer. So you have to make the prayer from your heart. So if you make the prayer from your heart, I don't think it matters in what language you do it.

Mantras are usually in sanskrit. Mantras are supposed to be in its original form. The blessing of the mantra is on the words, or the sounds. So therefore, it is not too much with the meaning. Of course you should know the meaning, and you should know how to recite it, and things like that.

But the prayer should be from the heart, so therefore it doesn't matter in what language [it is spoken]. And even if you recite the prayer in another language, but if the essence of that is in your heart, then it is the same thing. The language is not a problem. From Buddhist point of view, all languages are equally good. Any language is good, as long as it is the language of the heart.

Thank you. I think these are the questions so far. 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.