



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

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Looking at the Nature of Things
6th Chapter, Stanzas 22-33



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Now we go back to the Chapter number 6, stanza number 22, and we discuss the points of looking at the nature of things, looking at how the things are that we also need to practice patience with.

Stanza number 22 says:

*I am not angry with my bile and other humors—
Fertile source of suffering and pain!
So why should living beings give offense,
They likewise are impelled by circumstance? [6:22]*

When I say that I'm angry or I hate, not because there are circumstances, not just because these circumstances brings suffering, but [because] the people – beings who have consciousness – they intend to harm me, they want to harm me, they have that bad intention, and therefore I am angry at them. If I say like this, and I am not angry with my bile and other humors that make me sick and bring suffering, all this kind of suffering, problems and pain they bring – but these people really want to harm me, and they are offensive, so therefore I am angry [with them], then we have to understand that it is not like that.

Even people who are trying to harm me, trying to do something wrong or to prevent all the things that we discussed before, or they are saying or doing bad things – they are also created by circumstances. It is not that they are born with this intention to harm me, or to make me unhappy, or bring suffering to me. It is not that. Some of my very good friends can sometimes become my problems. They are not like that right from the beginning. They are also created by circumstances, by how things happened. Sometimes, these people themselves have no control over these circumstances. It's the same thing. If I fall down and hurt myself, then I can't be angry at anybody. So in the same way, even people who harm me, you cannot say they are the only bad one. They are not necessarily bad but they have been in those circumstances, all the circumstances, causes and conditions created so they are compelled to do what they did. So it's created by conditions. It is the same as inanimate things causing me trouble. There is no really good reason to get angry with them, because they are impelled by circumstances.

*Although they are unlooked for, undesired,
These ills afflict us all the same.
And likewise, though unwanted and unsought,
Defilements nonetheless insistently arise. [6:23]*

So there have been [times when] we don't want negative things, but negative things happen. Like we don't want to be sick, but sometimes we get sick. By doing something that usually is meant to help, say like I eat food, I need to eat food to sustain my life, but then if I eat something wrong, if I eat too much, or something like that, I can get sick – not intentionally but because of these circumstances. So in the same way, people don't have a pre-planned intention to harm me or do something bad to me. For instance, they have not planned to have negative emotions. It happens

because of certain situations and certain conditions. So these defilements and negative emotions also come out of, they arise with causes and conditions, and are not intentionally created to harm me.

Never thinking, "Now I will be angry,"

People are impulsively caught up in anger.

Irritation, likewise, comes

Though never plans to be experienced. [6:24]

So, people don't come to be with you, or to meet you, or to be around you, thinking "*Now I am going to come and meet this person; and then I am going to get angry; and then I am going to harm him; and then I am going to be his enemy and try to do everything wrong for him.*" Nobody comes like that. If we meet people, out of all different causes and conditions, we meet them. And sometimes we become good friends. We help each other with a good relationship. Sometimes certain things turn up and then the relationship goes bad. And then we become enemies, and then we harm each other. There is nothing pre-planned. Everything happens because of causes and conditions.

And these causes and conditions, we need to learn how to change them or how not to let them deteriorate, because everything has two sides. We cannot clap with one hand. Maybe I don't have all the conditions and causes of power, but I have some, a little bit even to change the situation. Some elements can be in my hands also to create that situation so it doesn't happen negatively. But if not, at least I have to see that I am not reacting in a very bad way so that the situation would become even worse. These are, I think, important things to understand.

All defilements of whatever kind,

The whole variety of evil deeds

Are brought about by circumstances:

None is independent, none autonomous. [6:25]

So, it is like that. All the defilements, or kleshas, or negative emotions, they all come dependently, interdependently, [under] conditions, because of circumstances and situations. And because of

those emotions, then all the negative actions, like stealing, killing, all sorts of negative actions that I do, also come interdependently – with the wrong kind of negative conditions and circumstances coming up. And because of that, then I accumulate negative karma that will bring lots of pain, suffering, and problems for me and others. All these things are not independently, but dependently coming, interdependently coming. They are not independent. They are not autonomous. They are interdependently coming. So this is very important to understand. Nobody is acting with pre-planned intention. The circumstances create these things.

*Conditions, once assembled, have no thought
That they will now give rise to some result.
Nor does that which is engendered
Think that it has been produced. [6:26]*

So in the same way, conditions, once come together, they have no thought that they will now give rise to some result. The causes and conditions are causes and conditions. When these causes and conditions come together, then the result just appears. It is not that each of these causes and conditions has the intention "*I want to produce this.*" Not necessarily. And then the causes and conditions, the result that is engendered doesn't have necessarily the idea that "*I am the product of those causes and conditions, so this is my mission.*" Or something like that. It is nothing like that.

These [verses] are coming from certain philosophical ideas, they kind of answer to some philosophical ideas which I don't think we need to discuss too much because I don't think we have this kind of philosophical [discussion here]. Like for instance, if somebody says, "*No, it is not that everything is just happening because of causes and conditions and that they happen interdependently. But there is one cause – that somebody, like a Creator intentionally created in this way, so that it happens like that. There is a pre-planned thing right from the beginning.*" If you say like that, it is not like that. That is the understanding from the Buddhist point of view. Anyway, no need to discuss too much on this.

*The primal substance, as they say,
And that which has been called the self,
Do not arise designedly,*

And do not think, "I will become." [6:27]

"The primal substance." Some philosophies have this primal substance –there is a kind of primal substance, or a kind of *atma*, Self, that is always there, that is the kind of precondition for all the things to happen, and things like that. But they do not arise designedly. *"I will become like this." "I will do this, to harm this person." "I will become enemy of this person." "I will become friend of this person." "I am supposed to make some obstacle to this person."* It doesn't come like that. If there is a soul, or even if God has created, or if there is a Creator and everybody is created, the God has not created only so that I have this enemy, and that enemy is going to harm me, and I have to be angry with him. There is nothing like that. These things happen due to different conditions.

*For that which is not born does not exist,
So what could want to come to be?
And permanently drawn toward its object,
It can never cease from being so. [6:28]*

"For that which is not born does not exist, so what could want to come to be?" If you say that the cause was there right from the beginning, like the intention to harm somebody or become my enemy is already there, even before this person happened, then this person cannot have the intention to harm, because this person is not there. When this person is not there, how can there be intention to harm? *"For that which is not born,"* cannot think, or *"does not exist."* Not born, does not exist. So what could want? So what is it? Something that is not existing cannot think that *"I will harm that person."* So therefore, there can't be a pre-planned thing. I don't know whether you understand this logic, but there cannot be something pre-planned because before that happens, there cannot be an intention. And before something that is there, there cannot be intention for that.

"And permanently drawn toward its object, it can never cease from being so." If that is the case, if there is something like, if there is an intentional thing, and if there is a kind of pre-planned thing, especially created to do that, if somebody is especially created to harm me, then this person would have nothing else to do but to harm me. But then this "harming me" is something you can never

change. This person has to be always like that. He is created for that. But this is not how we see it. This is not what happens. Things always can change. A person is living by his own causes and conditions. He is not just there to harm me. So if you think this person is only there to harm me, that is not possible.

*Indeed! This self, if permanent,
Is certainly inert like space itself.
And should it meet with other factors,
How could they affect it, since it is unchanging? [6:29]*

So then, if it is something that is really from the beginning there, like that, and this self is permanent? Maybe this kind of things we will discuss later, in Chapter 9. But if that self [is permanent], or if there is something permanent, then it cannot change. This is the Buddhist logic. It is like space. Space is permanent because there is nothing there. So therefore it is permanent. If there is nothing there, that can be permanent, because there is nothing. So that nothingness cannot change.

But if something can change, then it is not permanent because it changes. So therefore, you cannot say that something that is changing is permanent. If it is permanent, then nothing can affect it. And it can affect nothing. There cannot be chemistry. There cannot be cause and effect. It cannot produce anything. It cannot have any action, or reaction, or activities. Because if there is activity, if there is reaction, if there is effect, if it can do something or become something, then it cannot be permanent. So this is the Buddhist logic.

So, it *"is certainly inert like space itself. And should it meet with other factors, how could they affect it, since it is unchanging?"* But if you say, *"Well, if it is permanent on its own, but it can have other factors."* But then if there are other factors, then it is not permanent. It is changing because there are factors and the factors are changing. So this is philosophically wrong. That's the Buddhist understanding.

*If, when conditions act on it, it stays just as it was before,
What influence have these conditions had?*

They say that these are agents of the self,

But what connection could there be between them? [6:30]

So this is the same thing. When conditions act on it, even if there are conditions, then these conditions cannot change something that is permanent. The permanent has to remain as it was before without changing anything, even if there are conditions. So therefore these conditions cannot have any influence on it, if it is permanent. But, *"They say these are agents of the self, but what connection could there be?"* So there cannot be a changing phenomena. Or, conditions that are changing cannot have anything to do with something unchanging and totally permanent. There is no connection, because the changing thing cannot affect the unchanging thing. And the unchanging thing cannot affect the changing thing, because unchanging thing cannot be affected and cannot affect. Otherwise it is changing itself. So therefore you have a relationship. If there are two things, one totally unchanging and one totally changing, then there cannot be a relationship between them. This is a kind of logic. So therefore, there is nothing which is totally unchanging and permanent. Everything is conditional.

All things, then, depend on other things,

And these likewise depend; they are not independent.

Knowing this, we will not be annoyed

At things that are like magical appearances. [6:31]

"All things, then, depend on other things." Everything that happens in the phenomena, in the world, in the cosmos, is because of interdependence. They dependently arise, depend on other things. *"And these likewise depend; they are not independent."* So there is nothing independent, they are always dependent on something, and made because of causes and conditions and circumstances.

"Knowing this, we will not be annoyed at things that are like magical appearances." So there is nothing really, because all are conditionally, dependently and interdependently arising. So there is nobody who is totally doing it only through pre-planned intention to do something that is bad for somebody or something like that. So everything is a little bit like magical, illusory. Because when things are created dependently and conditionally, there is nothing existing on its own. So what is

there that you need to be angry or upset with? What is there, in you, that would be consistently upset and angry? So, everything is conditional. Everything is changing. Everything is moving. Everything is dependent. Everything is emptiness. Everything is illusory. Everything is magical. If you understand this, then there is nothing to be too much affected.

*"Resistance," you may say, "is out of place,
For what will be opposed by whom?"
The stream of sorrow is cut through by patience;
There is nothing out of place in our assertion! [6:32]*

"Resistance," you may say, "is out of place, or what will be opposed by whom?" [If you say that] in this case then, you cannot even practice patience. [In that case,] by practicing patience, you cannot get rid of anger and hatred, and things like that, because resisting is not possible; it is all conditional. If you say that, then [Shantideva continues,] *"The stream of sorrow is cut through by patience; there is nothing out of place in our assertion!"* Because everything is magical, everything is conditional, so when I feel anger, then if I understand the circumstances, and the way things are, then I don't need to feel anger and hatred. Because that reaction is, of course, a conditional reaction, but that was a wrong way of reacting. So therefore, when I understand that, and then really understand and learn how to do so then I can change that reaction. There is nothing wrong with that. There is nothing impossible with that. If I can understand the situation, if I can see this through, then the way I react would be different.

*Thus, when enemies or friends
Are seen to act improperly,
Remain serene and call to mind
That everything arises from conditions. [6:33]*

So this is kind of the instruction at the end, this stanza number 33. When enemies or friends are seen to act in an improper way, then you know that is not the time to become angry and upset and hateful. But remain serene, and then you call your mind or remember that everything arises from conditions. Everything is arising from conditions, so if you can change the condition then things will be different. And if you cannot change the outside conditions, you can change inner

conditions. So, your way of seeing things, your way of reacting, you understand that it is all interdependent arising. They are not totally in charge of their emotions, or things like that. And in all different kinds of circumstances, there are series of causes and effects to everything that is happening. So there is no one solely or independently responsible for anything that happens, because it is created by so many causes and conditions. So when you see this then you cannot be totally angry and upset, really hateful, on one person. So this is the understanding.

So, this is stanza number 33. We will stop there.

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