



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche
Having Patience When Our Loved Ones Are Harmed
6th Chapter, Stanzas 64-66



June 8, 2013
Transcribed by Carolyn Dong
Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra

Now we have come to stanza number 64 of the chapter on patience of Bodhicharyavatara. One of the most difficult things to be patient about is if people harm or destroy things that are related to our faith and also if they harm our dear and near ones. So when that happens, what we have to think is like this:

*Even those who vilify and undermine
The Sacred Doctrine, images, and stupas
Are not proper objects of our anger.
Buddhas are themselves untouched thereby. [6:64]*

So if somebody destroys our sacred books or canons, our images – like buddha images and things like that – and stupas, then I feel that I cannot forgive them because they destroy something that is the source of lots of good for the world. So therefore, I must not be patient with them. But here, from the bodhisattva's point of view, even those people are not the object of our anger. They are objects of our compassion.

Now, this is not to say of course that we should be happy that they destroy them. We should try to do whatever we can so that they don't destroy those things. But if they do, then [understand that] *“Buddhas are themselves untouched thereby”*. Actually, if somebody destroys the image of the Buddha, it doesn't really harm the Buddha because buddhas are not harm-able. The images of the Buddha, the statues of the Buddha, or stupas of the Buddha are not really the Buddha, so therefore, it would not hurt the buddhas anyway. Also, the buddhas are untouchable by any kind of hurt and sufferings. So we do not need to be so angry about those [destructions].

We have to feel compassion because those people who are doing those things are doing very negative things out of ignorance, out of hatred, maybe out of greed, and so they are committing a negative deed, the results of which will be very painful for them in the long run. So they are not the objects of anger and hatred, but compassion, because they are creating causes for their own sufferings and problems. Of course we should try to stop them from doing those things, but not with anger, and not with hatred, but with compassion. Because, if I have too much anger and hatred, then I am, myself, committing the same kind of mistakes or wrong-doings that they are doing, and so I become the same as them.

This is from the Buddhist point of view. Even if somebody is destroying the buddha images – this is what happened historically. Sometimes people say it was a big mistake when foreigners attacked the Nalanda University and destroyed the university, and all the Buddhist institutions, and killed all the monks, and burnt all the literature – which they had to burn for more than one year – that at that time all the monks [did nothing]. They say that if each of the monks took out a brick and threw it at the enemy, they could have vanquished them, because the population of the monks was so big at that time, and the number of the attackers was much less. But they didn't do that. They didn't commit any violence. The monks sat in rows, and were beheaded one after another, one after another. Nobody fought with their attackers, nobody did any violence against anybody.

In this way, Buddhist institutions were destroyed in India. But the Buddhist principles remained in the world. That is the fact of the history. I don't know if that was the right thing to do or not, that is another way of looking at things, but it is not good, it is not right, to create too much hatred and anger. Even if you try to do something to stop this, you have to do it with compassion.

*And even if our teachers, relatives, and friends
Are now the object of aggression,
All derives from factors, as we have explained.
This we should perceive and curb our wrath. [6:65]*

"And even if our teachers, relatives, and friends are now the object of aggression." Another very difficult thing to be patient about is that if people attack our own teachers, our own very dear relatives and dear friends, then what should we do? This says that even then these are not objects of our aggression.

It is not to say we should not do anything. That is very clear. We should do everything that is possible to protect our teachers, our relatives, our friends, but brooding really deep hatred and anger is very harmful for my side and for others' side.

We have seen this kind of [situation]. Hatred begets hatred, love begets love. When one side hates, and does an aggressive action, then the other side does the same, with hatred and more aggression. And this goes on like ping-pong, this way with more aggression, that way with more aggression. And in this kind of exchange of aggression and exchange of harm, all people connected with this get hurt, get harmed, for generation after generation. We have seen wars and conflicts going on, for generation after generation, for hundreds of years, for sometimes even thousands of years. And what good is this? What good does it do?

Hatred does not bring love. Hatred does not bring peace. Hatred brings only hatred. So we need to stop this hatred if we want to bring peace; if we want to bring justice; if we want to bring peace and well-being.

If somebody does something wrong, and then I respond to that with the same kind of wrong, or

with aggression, or with hatred, then we will have started a long kind of unending cycle of aggression and hatred. So therefore, if we can think a little bit more wisely, if we can be a little bit wiser, we would have to be patient and try to stop that kind of on-going aggression. Somebody has to stop it. So if I can do it then I should be very happy with that.

Also, when someone does something wrong, something negative, something harmful, whether it is to me or my dear ones, the reason why that happens is not just that that particular person is bad. *"All derives from factors, as we have explained."* Everything has long sequences of causes and conditions. So therefore we cannot blame just one person or one incident. There are lots of causes and lots of conditions. Some of them could be due to our own doings; sometimes it can be also something in our own negative actions of the past. So it is not correct, it is not right [to blame] the person who is at the end of this, who is the immediate cause of this problem, who might actually be doing it out of compulsion.

Like when the Chinese attacked Tibet and lots of people died. Most of the soldiers who came were very young, like children. They had to do this because they were forced to do it. So should we hate those young people, who themselves suffer so much? And if we kill them, [we are killing] just other young individuals who were forced to come, many of them unwillingly actually, and were forced to do those things. So it is no use killing them; it is no use hating them. Even if you kill many of them, it would not help to stop those [attacks].

There are lots of causes and conditions. Just the immediate cause or immediate agent of the harm or problem, may be not really responsible, or may be responsible only to some extent. There are so many pressures, so many strong unavoidable causes and effects, that this person is like a victim. So it is not useful; it is not right to hate them too much. So therefore we have to understand this and be able to think a little bit more spaciously and more widely. Then we feel more patient.

Beings suffer injure alike

From lifeless things as well as living beings.

So why be angry only with the latter?

Rather let us simply bear with harm. [6:66]

You know, we always suffer injuries; harmful things do happen. Because of lifeless things like earthquakes, floods, landslides, fires, or things like that. And then we can be harmed by people, living beings, whether animals or human beings. Usually we are not angry at nature. We don't get hateful because there is nothing we can be angry at. We cannot be hateful at the water, or hateful at the mountain, or hateful at the clouds. We can't because they are lifeless things. They arise from causes and conditions. But we actually are hateful to those living beings [who harm us]. So why be angry only at the latter?

These natural disasters also are caused by all kinds of consequences of causes and conditions. A particular disaster happens, and I or my loved ones happen to be there at that time, and so we are injured. We go through these difficulties. In the same way, even the negative things done by the living beings also have long consequences of causes and effects. And at a certain moment, when all those causes and conditions ripen, this action happens. So it is not just that person to whom we have to be so hateful about because that person or the person's action is also compelled by many causes and conditions. So we have to understand this. And we have to see that if somebody is doing a negative thing or a harmful thing, he is also somebody who is compelled by consequences or sequences of causes and conditions. So we have to see that that person is also like a victim. And therefore we have to be patient.

So if I can see like this, if I can understand like this, then I would feel more patient and able to forebear the problems with more tolerance. And our mind can be a little bit more patient, more relaxed, and we can think properly, and take action. It is not that we should not do anything; we should do things. We should try to make things better. We should try to bring harmony; try to end suffering, try to prevent harm not only to our near and dear ones but to everybody. But then that would not just happen through hatred and anger, and intolerance and impatience. So we have to be clearer and think long term, and think with more clarity.

So I think I will stop here. It is stanza number 66. Thank you.

©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.