



# Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

**Ringu Tulku Rinpoche**  
***Forbearance of Suffering***  
***6th Chapter, Stanzas 12-21***



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Transcribed by Carolyn Dong  
Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra

Now, after having an understanding of the objects of patience, we consider how exactly to meditate on or practice patience. First, we look at how to practice patience towards those who do things that I don't like, or I have aversion to. And then secondly, how to meditate on patience towards those who stop or obstruct me from getting what I want.

The first section has 4 subsections. First, how to meditate on, or how to practice patience on those who have given me pain or problems. Second, how to meditate or practice patience towards those who have insulted me. Third, how to practice patience towards those who harm my friends or my dear and near ones. And fourth, how to practice patience towards those who help my enemies. So these are the four parts.

Now, for the first one, those who have given me pain, trouble or problems, there are three ways of working on this. First is to really be patient. That means to generate patience, to forbear the sufferings – how not to be overpowered by the pain or problems, to forbear them, to tolerate them; how to be patient by developing forbearance and tolerance.

Second, by understanding the dharma, by understanding the nature of things, then you generate patience.

Third, that you don't mind. You create a state of mind where you become unmoved, or unharmed, or you change your way of reacting, so that you don't hate or feel bad towards those people who have done negative deeds. So, in these three ways.

The first one starts with stanza number 12.

*The cause of happiness is rare,  
And many are the seeds of suffering!  
But if I have no pain, I'll never long for freedom;  
Therefore, O my mind, be steadfast! [6:12]*

*"The cause of happiness is rare, and many are the seeds of suffering!"* This is something general. I think we have to understand that in this world, in samsara, there are so many causes of suffering. There are lots of things that can bring suffering, problem, pain, discomfort, dissatisfaction, bad feelings, and things like that. So many. And there are not many causes of that can bring happiness. So we are bound to have lots of problems.

As we say, life is a sequence of trying to get rid of problems, so there are always problems coming. You cannot say, *"Now I have had my problems, and it is finished. Now it will be all good all the time. There will be no more problems."* If you say that, then you are bound to have lots of problems because you don't understand the nature of the world. So this is something very important to understand. As long as you are living in this world, as long as you are in a samsaric state of mind, there are bound to be problems and problems and problems. So you cannot say that now this is the end of all my problems and from now onwards I will never have any problems.

So this is something very important to understand, because otherwise you get totally overwhelmed. You have one problem, you solve it, and then feel that now it is over; and then you have another problem; and after a third problem, you go mad. This is a fact; it is a reality that we need to accept. It is the first thing.

But then sometimes the pain has some good sides also: *"... if I have no pain, I will never long for freedom. Therefore, O my mind, be steadfast."* Having some suffering or some problem can have some positive sides also. It can create an opportunity. Because of the sufferings that I feel of the world, of samsara, renunciation is born. It will make me feel that, *"Okay, I need to do something about it. I need to find the lasting peace and happiness"* – and to find what the real causes of suffering and real causes of problems are, and to find the way out of that. So in that way it at least makes me think, at least makes me find a solution. It can help me to concentrate my mind, or focus my mind on renunciation. So that could be a good thing.

When I start to have that feeling of renunciation, and start to find that I need to do something about this in a more general way, a more basic way, then I will learn what the causes of suffering are, and then I will be able to improve myself. And I will be able to transform myself. So it helps me to do positive things. The pain is the cause that actually makes me a better person, makes me change my way of doing things. Actually, that pain or suffering brings the conditions or the causes for ending my suffering, and maybe also the suffering of others. So therefore, it is the beginning of the end.

And then, if I actually work on that – if I actually do what I find and am really affected by that suffering, pain, and problems, and really commit myself to work towards the end of my suffering – then it will be like the one that really clears all my negativity. So suffering has that good side. It is not that I have suffering, and there is nothing positive about it. It is not like that.

When I'm suffering, I have to say, *"Okay, there is suffering."* It is a reminder that I have to do something about it in a bigger way. So I can forbear this, but I really have to think about how to bring a kind of state of being where I can be completely free from suffering, not only for myself, but also for all the sentient beings.

Instead of becoming totally overwhelmed by the suffering, one needs to create a very strong [sense of] *"Now I don't want this suffering, I don't want suffering for all the people; now, how to work on that so that it would make my mind steady, courageous and brave"* – for a long-term agenda.

And then, there are a lot of people who actually go through a lot of suffering for no reason. If I go through suffering with that kind of a reason, or that kind of intention, then I have a good reason or purpose. This is the 13th:

*The Karna folk and those devoted to the Goddess,*

*Endure the meaningless austerities*

*Of being cut and burned.*

*So why am I so timid on the path of freedom? [6:13]*

There a lot of people who, out of ignorance, out of their own beliefs, and things like that, go through so much suffering. I don't think it is now done, but at a certain time, there was a school where people used to cut their heads, or jump on spears, and things like that, and feel because of that they will end the suffering. Through some kind of religious belief, or just through hatred, people still do that now. People still fight with each other, kill each other, and go through all sorts of pain and problems, and in the end, what does it serve? You kill, you create lots of pain and suffering on others, and they do the same to you and to those on your side, and in the end, when the war ends, nobody is the winner.

This kind of useless pain people create for each other, and that causes so much pain and problems for no real good reason. So if I am going through some pain or some problems, and if that is for a good reason that at least I am trying to do something positive for myself and others, to try to get freedom from all the sufferings and pain, if I have that intention or understanding or am on that path, then I should be not timid, not overwhelmed. This is just a temporary thing. I have to go through this, but I am actually working towards the end of this constant cycle of creating pain and problems. So, I should not do something that will create more pain, and more problems, and more suffering for others and myself. So therefore, I should not give in to my anger, my impatience, hatred, and all those kinds of things. But I should be stronger, courageous, and do more positive

things. In this way, I can be more patient.

*There's nothing that does not grow light  
Through habit and familiarity.  
Putting up with little cares  
I'll train myself to bear with great adversity! [6:14]*

So, if you say that this is too painful, this is too difficult, I cannot be patient because I cannot do it. I get so angry. I get so upset. This is just a matter of familiarity. If you have a problem, if you are going through a painful thing or difficulty, then if you say, "*Okay, I have to go through this difficulty whether I like it or not. So I better go through it lightly.*" And if you have that understanding, and take it lightly, then it will become lighter; it will become easier. But if you say, "*Oh, it is so difficult,*" and you breakdown with that suffering, or pain, or difficulty, then it will become very difficult. So it depends on how you do.

So, you can train and even the difficult things can become easier. You can learn to forbear difficulties and problems in a lighter way. We need to do that because difficulties will happen, because there are lots of causes for suffering, lots of causes for pain and problems. So we need to train in that.

*Don't I see that this is so with common irritations:  
Bites and stings of snakes and flies,  
Experiences of hunger and of thirst,  
And painful rashes on my skin? [6:15]*

All those kinds of things. The more you are sensitive to that, the more you have aversion to that, the more suffering you will have because of that. If you take it more lightly, these things will become a little bit lighter. So,

*Heat and cold, the wind and rain,  
Sickness, prison, beatings—  
I'll not fret about such things.*

*To do so only aggravates my trouble. [6:16]*

If I have to go through some difficult time, then the less aversion I have, the more lightly I take it, the more I take it easily, the easier it becomes for me. The more I fear, the more I have aversion, the more I dislike it, the more I hate it, the more painful it becomes. I need to understand this and to forbear some problems, sufferings, and pain, and to take them lightly. It is very important also. This is the way we learn. And then, if I can do that, I can be patient. I can be patient if there is somebody or something happening that is not so nice. I can say, *"Okay, there are a lot of things of these kind that can happen, so there is no need to be too irritated by that."* And then I am not irritated. So then that pain or problem does not become a big problem for me. And then I will also find a solution.

*There are some whose bravery increases,  
At the sight of their own blood,  
While some lose all their strength and faint  
When it's another's blood they see! [6:17]*

This is also a matter of training, actually. Some people, when they see blood, their own blood, like in a battlefield, they become even braver, even more courageous, even stronger, and steadier. But some people, when they see some blood, not their own, but another's blood, they just faint. They can't take it. Why this happens? This is just a matter of reaction. It is how they react, how they trained their mind, how familiar they become towards difficulties and problems. So, one can train one's mind to be brave, to be tolerant, to be patient, to be forbearing.

*This results from how the mind is set,  
In steadfastness or cowardice.  
And so I'll scorn all injury,  
And hardships I will disregard! [6:18]*

*When sorrows fall upon the wise,  
Their minds should be serene and undisturbed.  
For in their war against defiled emotion,*

*Many are the hardships, as in every battle. [6:19]*

This is stanza 19. "*When sorrows fall upon the wise,...*" here *the wise* means the bodhisattvas. When problems happen to the bodhisattvas, their minds become serene and undisturbed, because this is war against negativity, against defilement. When you are making battle, you are bound to have hardships, you are bound to be injured and you are bound to have difficulties or pain. Also the battleground is not only for victory, where only good things happen. It is not a kind of place where we have nice massage or a spa. So you have to become more forbearing and more patient.

*Thinking scorn of every pain,  
And vanquishing such foes as hatred:  
These are exploits of victorious warriors.  
The rest is slaying what is dead already! [6:20]*

This is real battle, real work, real training. Whatever pain or difficulty you have to face, you face it, you forbear it. Because the most important thing is to vanquish the true enemy that will bring myself and others into an endless kind of suffering – and that's the hatred. In order to get rid of hatred or negative emotions in order that I do not become a slave to them, then anything, any negative things, any problems, sufferings and pain is what I need to tolerate, to forebear.

When somebody sees it like that, or acts in this way, or trains in this way, he is or she is a true warrior. Just killing another person who is weak already, who is in the process of dying already, then you are not really that brave. It is like shooting a person who is already dead. Because that person is dying anyway, why kill him? So you are not really brave; to kill people is not brave. Real bravery is in killing your own negative emotions; then you are really brave.

*Suffering also has its worth.  
Through sorrow, pride is driven out  
And pity felt for those who wander in samsara;  
Evil is avoided; goodness seems delightful. [6:21]*

As stated before, having problems, having pain, having sorrow has some goodness. And that

goodness is that when I have a lot pain, problems, suffering, and difficulties, I can't have too much pride. So my pride is driven out at least, and that is a good thing also. If I am not too puffed up with pride, and all negative emotions, that is also a good thing.

And secondly, when I have pain and problems, I also know the pain and problems of others. As much as I don't like my pain and problems, I also see that others don't like it. So I also feel compassion, or at least sympathy, for others who also have pain and problems. My difficulties can generate compassion, understanding, strong feelings that I would like to bring an end to suffering and of samsara to all sentient beings.

And because of this understanding, I can slowly avoid evil deeds. I can avoid doing negative things that bring suffering and pain to me and others in the long run. And I will be more delighted, happier, to cultivate the positive sides in me, positive actions and positive emotions in me.

So if you understand it in the right way, and if you use it in the right way, then even some suffering and pain can bring something good for you.

It is not that everybody has to suffer; that it is very nice, and it is all good. It is not like that. Suffering has no good, but if you understand it in the right way, if you take it in the right direction, if you use it in the proper way, then it also can be of some use for you and for others. It can bring good opportunities also. This, I think, is very important to understand, and to clarify. Otherwise this may become a source of misunderstanding: that people need to suffer because it brings them good things. That is not the idea. That is not the idea.

This is stanza number 21, and I will stop here. This is the first one, the training in forbearance of suffering.

Thank you.

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