



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche: The Right Conditions of the Mind

BA6: The Right Conditions of the Mind. 1st Chapter, Stanza 5.

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Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra

So now we come to the fifth stanza of Bodhicharyavatara. And last time we talked about the right conditions that we have in our life, the precious human life, to generate bodhichitta, to work on ourselves and for the benefit of others.

Now today we come to the right conditions for the mind – sometimes it's called the supporting basis of the mind. The translation of the stanza reads like this:

As when a flash of lightning rends the night

And then its glare shows all the dark black clouds had hid

Likewise rarely, through the buddhas' power,

Virtuous thoughts rise, brief and transient, in this world.

Now, what he's talking about is that when we have - we find that we have - a virtuous thought, or a positive intention, or positive motivation, or a good heart - a good thought arises in us, we need to take it in a very big way, we need to say that 'This is great!' Something really good is happening to us. We should not take

it lightly. We should really appreciate it and we should take that chance to do some very good things and we should follow that – we should not let that kind of positive thoughts just go, as if they're very usual. Because we need to understand how difficult it is, and how uncommon it is, to have virtuous and positive and benefiting positive motivations and really wanting to do something good for myself and for others in a big way. It's not easy.

He says our mind is a little bit like the night with no moon and with very thick clouds. Then we don't see anything. It's not just night - we don't have the enlightened mind, we don't have the wisdom. We don't see things. The Buddhas are not there around us. And then, not just that, but there's no moon also. It's not a moonlit night, it's a very dark night - a moonless night. So we don't know what is good for us and what is not good for us. We want to do something good for us all the time but we don't know what is the good one. So therefore we always make mistakes. Everybody wants to do something good for themselves but, because of this ignorance, because of not knowing, lack of clarity, without wisdom - they do things which actually harms others as well as ourselves also - so it's like that. And it's not just like that, but then even in that darkness, it's not just dark, it's totally covered with clouds so that you can't even see little bit.

In the same way our mind is full of negative emotions, habitual tendencies, negative habitual tendencies and things like that. And that's the way our samsaric mind is, and especially in the degenerate time and in this kind of world where there is so much aggression, so much greed, so much intolerance, so much ignorance. So there's very little positivity and it's not common to have so much positive things. And in this kind of a situation when I see this, and then I see that I have a positive thought coming – a kind of bodhichitta type of experience or thought coming – I should really appreciate that. I should say that 'This is really wonderful! This is a great thing! Now I must not allow myself to let this thought or let this motivation just fade away without doing anything. I must hold onto that. I must take that up. I must take

it as the most important chance and then act on it'. And through that way, I should use the opportunity - this flashing of light.

When there's a flashing of light in the darkness then you see things. But that is not always there. So whatever light you get with that you must really use that light and then find the way. So in the same way when we have these positive thoughts and aspirations, then we should take it like that – like if we've kind of lost our way and are in darkness and it's very kind of misty. We can't see anything, and there's one flash of lightning and then we see something and then we should really take that opportunity to follow it. In the same way for even a little bit of positive thought, positive motivation, that we get – I should take it as something really important, really a good kind of opportunity - to use it and then follow that.

Therefore it's important to appreciate that, to appreciate our thought. And appreciate – this is very, very important – appreciation is something extremely important whether it's something happening in me, or whether it's something happening in others. If somebody does something good, or there's good motivation you can see, or some good action, even a little bit of positive speech, or says something a little bit nice and kind – if somebody shows some little bit of kindness we cannot take it as if it is nothing. We should take it as if it's really great, very good – wonderful! It's something that really needs to be appreciated very clearly and strongly. In the same way, in ourselves also, if there is a positive thought, positive emotion, positive aspiration, or a generation of a little bit of bodhichitta, we really need to appreciate it and really be joyful because of that and work on it and really acknowledge it because this is the way to learn.

The way we learn is through appreciation. We don't learn too much through punishment. We learn through appreciation. If somebody, if I learn a little bit something - and then somebody says 'Oh that's very good, you're very good, you've learned very well' - that encourages me to learn more. If somebody appreciates some of my positive qualities then that enhances my positive qualities. I want to show those

qualities more and more. I want to bring out those positive qualities more and more. But if somebody just points out some negative qualities in me I just don't like it and that doesn't help me to bring out my positive qualities too much. So in the same way as we do it to others or others do it to others or others do it to ourselves we can do it to ourselves also. When I see some positive qualities or some positive thoughts and emotions in myself I need to really appreciate it and I need to rejoice in it and acknowledge it, and really feel very good about it. And then use that.

So if I do it like that then I increase my positive thoughts and emotions and motivations - and that's the way to learn. How do we generate bodhichitta? I mean, there's no miracle. I don't know, maybe there's a miracle, but it doesn't come just like this. If I understand a positive thought, a good intention, positive motivation, and then I know that this is really good – very good for me and very good for others –that is appreciating, that is acknowledging, that I understand the value of that. And then, when I understand the value of that, then I kind of want to keep it, I want to generate it again, I want to have it more and more because I know it's good. The more I appreciate it, the more I value it, the more I think it's good for me and others, the more I experience it again and again and want to experience it again and again. And then when I experience I feel good – I feel worthwhile and useful and purposeful so therefore it's kind of natural that I want to do something good, so therefore this I know is good and beneficial so therefore it becomes important to me and it becomes something that is really valuable and worthwhile. And the more I understand that and the more I use it, the more it becomes stronger. And that's how I generate bodhichitta. And then the more I have this way of thinking, the aspirations, the thoughts, then it becomes slowly my action also because the way I think comes out in my speech, and in my body also, and so therefore the actions of speech and body follows our thoughts and our attitude and our aspiration and motivations - and therefore we've become that. We've become how we think, how we experience, how we work with our emotions and habitual tendencies. Therefore this kind of appreciation of even a little bit of our positive thoughts and emotions and aspirations becomes very important and that's the basis to work on.

And this is also to say that it is not easy to have these positive emotions and positive thoughts and positive aspirations all the time. We need to realize that. When we know how rare, how difficult, how uncommon this kind of bodhichitta is, positive motivation is, then, even if there is a little one we appreciate it and we value it more. And this is very, very important for ourselves, in ourselves, as well as in other people.

So that is, I think, more or less, the meaning of this fifth stanza. The English translation is a little bit hard I think – I can't understand it very clearly. But that's the meaning. So 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 edited lightly and is meant to be used within the Online Shedra study context.