



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

Ringu Tulku Rinpoche Questions and Answers 6

QA6: Questions and Answers 6 (after the teaching BA9)

December 12, 2010

Transcribed by Pat Murphy

Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra

The first question is,

“Would the way to generate and develop bodhicitta in my everyday life be to remember the bodhicitta aspiration whenever I find myself in contact with other people, at home, at work, everywhere?”

Yes, in a way, it’s very good, but it’s not necessarily [only] when we are in contact with people. I think when we are not in contact with people, like when we are alone in our own room, and we are just thinking about what is the purpose of my life, in what direction I should direct my life, I think I can think and find out what is the best way to for me to go and [how] to act and how to see things clearly. So I think it’s not only when you are in contact with people. And that’s what I wanted to say.

The second question is Maribel Gonzalez.

“When one wants to give birth to precious bodhicitta in their mind stream and for it to develop and increase, will listening to the teachings and studying the Bodhisattvacaryavatara text be enough? Or is training the mind with analytical meditation also needed? I have heard about a practice called ‘training the mind in generating bodhicitta’. Is this practice the only method? Are there different methods related to different Buddhist schools? Is it also possible to generate bodhicitta

spontaneously as the result of merit accumulation in the past, or only as a result of receiving blessings from a highly realised lama?"

I think that listening and studying the Bodhicharyavatara is the training the mind in generating bodhicitta. I think what people usually call 'training the mind in generating bodhicitta' is very much related to these Bodhicharyavatara teachings and all of them, more or less, are based on this. But you first see why it's important to do things for yourself and to do things for others, and what is actually doing good things for you. That's the important thing to find out. And in finding that, I think that to use your mind, to use your analytical mind is extremely important. In Buddhism we always use analytical mind. We should use analytical mind. We should think, we should reason and then do what we find is the most useful and most beneficial thing. We should also try to understand and study and analyze what's the right thing, what's the wrong thing, what's the truth, what is the nature of myself and others. So therefore all this is part of our progress, part of our bodhicitta. Because bodhicitta, you know, can increase. We talked about the different stages of bodhicitta: relative bodhicitta, ultimate bodhicitta, the twenty-two stages of bodhicitta, ten bhumis, five paths. All these things are the different stages of how much our compassion and wisdom grow, so all these things are very good.

And then the different methods of Buddhist schools: I think all Buddhist schools are actually not very different, actually very [similar]. They all based on the teachings of the Buddha. It's not that they are totally different. Sometimes there's absolutely no difference. Sometimes it is [like] I choose to work on one Sutra or one Tantra and you choose to concentrate more on another Tantra or another Sutra, or another set of Sutras or Tantras. But all the Sutras and Tantras of Buddhism come to the same thing. There is no very big difference. In some Sutras, some aspects of the teachings are more elaborate. In others, some other aspects are more elaborate, but all the aspects are there too. So therefore it is very important to understand that.

And then, the accumulation of positive deeds, the accumulation of merit, is regarded as one of the main ways of generating bodhicitta. So therefore it's regarded as very important. But you cannot say that this is the only way and this is the only reason [to generate bodhicitta], because from Buddhist point of view, everything has many causes and conditions, and when all the causes and conditions come together, then that happens. So therefore, we have to try to generate more positive actions. We try to analyse and think properly. We try to also receive the blessings. Receiving positive influences from realised beings and their association is also very important,

because a blessing actually is a positive influence. Therefore it's also good. There's nothing wrong with that.

The next question is from Ole. It says,

"I am puzzled at the wording in the 10th stanza, 'Let us grasp it [bodhicitta] firmly.' In my limited experience, compassion arises only in a state of acceptance and letting be, whereas trying to grasp wholesome states of mind while they occur make them disappear. Is the use of the word 'grasp' a weakness in the translation, or is there some pedagogical reason for its use? I remember having read something along the lines that since we have a grasping mind, Shantideva says that we should grasp bodhicitta if we are to grasp at something. But I'm not sure about the recollection."

You know the main understanding is to see how valuable, how precious the bodhicitta is and therefore I need to try to keep it as much as possible. I should not allow it to degenerate and go away. I should do everything to influence myself, to encourage myself, to inspire myself to generate this bodhicitta. That is what we call 'grasping' [here], I think. It's not that you just kind of wait to get bodhicitta without doing anything. Just kind of, "When will bodhicitta come to me...?" Not like that, you know. Do whatever you can to study, analyse, listen to the teachings, read inspiring books, and think of other people. Many different kinds of things can help. And also, as we said before, getting good friends, association with positive people, bodhisattvas, that kind of people, also helps us. To study important and deep teachings also helps us, and many other things. So it's not something that you just have to wait. You can do something. You have to try. You can concentrate, you can make efforts. I think there's nothing wrong in making efforts. You have to make efforts.

Then, next question is Christian.

"By perceiving the differences between samsaric activities and bodhisattva activities, I conceive that the activity of a Buddha is limitless, a permanent and universal action to help all beings. Is this right and is that the whole activity of a Buddha?"

I think so. You know, the main understanding is that we, with our samsaric state of mind, want to do something good for ourselves, but we don't know how to. We think we are doing good things for ourselves but if you look deeply, we are not really doing something really good for ourselves. So when we see this – that if we do things with compassion, with kindness and if we don't keep so much of this aversion, attachment and all these negative emotions and negative ways of thinking, then it is much more beneficial for ourselves and for others –then that understanding is the basic thing. That kind of understanding makes you a bodhisattva. So when a bodhisattva has understanding and the intention, motivation and activities become very, very advanced, with limitless compassion and limitless wisdom, then of course there is nothing that you need to do. There is nothing you want to do other than doing positive things that would be helping other beings. There's nothing that you need to help yourself because you find yourself totally liberated, so therefore it's very correct.

Then the last question is from Margaret Richardson.

“Can you say something about the practice attitude that we adopt to generate awe and reverence before, and as we listen to the teachings alone on the computer? I refer to The Nectar of Manjushri's Speech on page 26. Here he talks about the yoga of listening.”

So this is the quotation she gave:

*“Begin by cultivating bodhichitta
And in the form of Tara visualize yourself.
Consider your right ear a lotus flower
And meditate upon your teacher as Manjushri.
Think from your guru's mouth come rays of light
That sink into the lotus blossom.
Meditate upon all beings as Tara.
And at the end, just for two instants, meditate
On emptiness devoid of thought.”*

This is a skilful means of transforming yourself into wisdom, the most compassionate and wisdom state of being, and not only yourself but all others. This is the Vajrayana way of working, using the

result as the path, as we say. So this is also very good. You can do that if you want. I didn't mention these things too much because these are not really part of the text of Bodhicharyavatara. These are in the commentary. There are many things talked about how to listen to the teachings. There's also the three poisons you should not do, then six ways of listening to the teachings and also the six paramitas while receiving the teachings or practicing the teachings. Therefore there are many things about this. You can read the book, the commentary, I think it's not so difficult to understand and so you can read them and use some of the things. This kind of visualization also you can do while receiving the teachings and it is said it's very good and it's very powerful, so that's also very nice. Thank you very much. So I'll stop here this time.

©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.