



# Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

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***Resolving to Guard the Mind***  
***5th Chapter, Stanzas 18-22***



BA5\_18-22 Resolving to Guard the Mind  
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So, now that we understand that all our negative things, the sources of our sufferings and problems and pain, are also our mind itself and the way we react and how our mind is; and all the positive things are sources of our happiness, our peace, and liberation, is also our mind, so therefore, it is so important that we train our mind, we guard our mind and we put our mind in the right direction.

So there it starts from stanza number 18 of the 5th chapter 'Vigilant Introspection'. So it says:

*Therefore I will take in hand  
And well protect this mind of mine.  
What use to me are many disciplines,  
If I can't guard and discipline my mind? [5:18]*

So because of that, because I understand that all good things and bad things come from my mind, if I guard my mind, if I put my mind in the right direction, then it brings happiness and otherwise unhappiness. So, I must take this, my mind, in my hand: I have to remind myself, I have to be mindful of what is the positive thing, what is the negative thing, what's the right thing to do and not the right thing to do, in different circumstances. And also, by that, not only understand what to do and not to do, but then to constantly be aware of what's going on in my mind, by being vigilant and thus protect my mind from going into the wrong direction. This is the discipline. When we talk about discipline, this is the discipline, this is the *shila*, this is the practice. Other than this discipline of guarding my mind, putting my mind in the right direction and being aware what's going on in my mind, no other discipline is important. And no other discipline is really needed in a way – that is all that I need to do. And this I must remind myself, I must understand.

*When in wild, unruly crowds,  
I'm careful and attentive of my wounds;  
Likewise, when in evil company,  
This wound, my mind, I'll constantly protect. [5:19]*

If I have a wound or some kind of open infection, then I have to be especially careful that my wound is not touched or disturbed. And especially if I am together with lots of people who are really unruly, who are very wild and unruly and [there are] lots of them, then I have to be especially careful that I protect my wound. So therefore it's like this. We have lots of mind poisons, lots of negative emotions and reactions and habitual tendencies. It's like an open wound that can easily get infected or I can easily get lots of pain, very sensitive. And then I am living [with] all the people around me. Most of the people around me are actually people who would knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, disturb the wound, like provoke

in me all sorts of negative emotions, anger, too much desire, attachment and jealousy, pride and all sorts of things. So therefore I have to be especially careful of this and be mindful and aware.

*For if I carefully protect my wounds*

*Because I fear the pain of minor injuries*

*Why should I not protect the wound that is my mind*

*For fear of being crushed beneath the cliffs of hell? [5:20]*

This is the stanza number 20 and this is what we do, even if we have a minor injury. Because I don't want to get hurt, I take lots of care and am really mindful and aware and conscious that this little wound is not touched or disturbed by people around me, because I don't want to suffer. So if I take that much care for a minor injury, then why not for my mind, to prevent me from falling into deep, deep problems and deep, deep sufferings, because if I allow my mind to go into the direction of negative emotions and negative habitual tendencies, then it can cause great suffering for a long time. Here it says, "*crushed beneath the cliffs of hell*" – whether you believe in real hell or not, it is very clear that if we allow our mind to go into the negative direction it can certainly create lots of pain and lots of problem for myself for a long time and also for others. So therefore why should I not be very careful to protect my mind from going into that direction.

*If this is how I act and live*

*Then even in the midst of evil folk,*

*Or even with fair women, all is well*

*My steady keeping of the vows will not decline. [5:21]*

So therefore it's not about who are around me. It's not about other people. It's about myself. If I have this mindfulness, if I have this vigilant introspection, if I have some kind of mindfulness and awareness, then it doesn't matter who is around me or what people do or don't do. Even if there are lots of people, evil people around me, that cannot necessarily disturb or take my mind or take me into the wrong direction. That cannot bring hatred or negative feeling or negative experience or negative way of reacting in me. Even if there are lots of provocations of my lust and attachment, even then they cannot do anything. If I am disciplined, if I have the awareness, then I cannot blame people outside. I cannot blame people who are making me angry or making me

attached, they are not to be blamed – I have to be blamed if I get involved in that. So therefore if I am really aware and if I am really mindful and I protect my mind and I guard my mind and I put my mind in the right direction, with the right reactions, then actually nothing can disturb me. And therefore, you know, it's just an excuse, if I say that I was in that situation because I have wrong kind of friends or because somebody kind of made me do this or that. That's not right actually. So if I am myself really mindful and aware, then nothing can actually harm me or nothing can actually negatively influence me. So therefore I cannot blame anybody else but myself if I get into the wrong path.

*My property, my honor—all can freely go*

*My body and my livelihood as well*

*And even other virtues may decline*

*But never will I let my mind regress. [5:22]*

That's why I, Shantideva, would now like to make a decision, make a promise to myself, that if my property is lost it doesn't matter. The things, the material things come and go anyway, there's nothing permanent, even my honor. If they go, it's also okay. They can go, they are free to go and I have to let them go if the circumstances arise – my property, my honour, even my body. I have to die anyway, sooner or later and if I have to die at this time, then it's okay. And also my livelihood. My livelihood is the way to earn my living and if I don't have livelihood, then I'll be poor, I will be hungry, maybe I'll even die and that is also as important, but even if that has to go, there's nothing I can do about it. But even other virtues and other positive kind of things or actions or positive deeds, if they go, if they are not there with me, it's okay. I have to let them go.

But, I will never let my mind regress or go into the wrong direction.

Now what it means to say is that all these things, actually – my property, my honour, my body, my livelihood, and even many of my other virtues or other positive things – it's never always under my control. If the right circumstances, if all the positive circumstances come together, then I will get lots of property or richness or honour, and then I will live long or I have lots of positive kind of income and all positive things will come. But if one of these causes or conditions is not there or does not come together, then I will lose them anyway. So there is no use that I have to be too

much worried or too much feeling bad about them because, you know, there is very little I can do to really control them myself.

But I can control my own mind. My own mind, if I really want, has to be in my control. I just have to be more aware, more mindful and that is in a way very, very important. Because how I will fare in the long run, tomorrow, next life, all the lives to come, what kind of person I am or I become, totally depend on the way I react and how I guard my mind, how I train my mind. So therefore it is the utmost important thing for me that I don't allow my mind to totally kind of go wild or regress or become bad or go into the wrong direction. So this is the resolution of Shantideva and this is something extremely important for all of us, that we try to understand what is the right thing, what is the right way, right direction and then we try to put our mind in that direction. And then we remind ourselves through mindfulness, knowing what is the right thing, what is not the right thing, what is the positive, and then we try to be a little bit vigilant and aware what's going on. Even in a very kind of a simple way, we just see what's going on with our mind. Whether we are too much angry, too much negative, too much upset, too much tense, too much stressed, too much negative emotions, too much attached or too much craving, jealous – and then see that if it's like that, we say that's not the way that should be. This is not the right way to react because it doesn't bring anything good for me and others. So we learn how to relax, learn how to let go, how to be natural, we breathe in and out, let things be. We learn to relax and then we kind of put our mind into the right direction, in a peaceful way, in a tranquil way, in a kind way, positive way and then, if we do that again and again, that's only thing we need to do to practice dharma. There's nothing else. That's the discipline, that's what we call discipline, that's what we call practice or training. So therefore this is the important thing.

So this is stanza number 22 of chapter 5. So we stop here.

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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 lightly edited and is meant to be used within the Online Shedra study context.