



Bodhicharya

AWAKEN THE HEART BY OPENING THE MIND

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The Nine Points of Practicing Virtue
5th Chapter, Stanzas 54-55



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Teachings on the Bodhicharyavatara for the Bodhicharya Online Shedra

So, we had a long break in the web teachings of the Bodhicharyavatara for quite a few weeks. I have, as you know, been to Europe and travelled to over 25 places, in about 12 countries in Europe and had a very nice time meeting my friends and having a good time together. It was like a long holiday - like a picnic - and I'm very grateful to all of the people who received me with so much love and respect. Always it has been like that. I think I always say this - you know when I first went to Europe, I think it was 1989, I had no wish to go there. I was requested or asked by Akong Rinpoche and Sogyal Rinpoche, together

actually, to come just for a visit and I did that one winter at Christmas time. I didn't like it. But then I went again and again, because I felt that the people liked me. People seemed to get some benefit from the teachings. I thought there was some need of dharma in the West and that's why I went there again and again. And now it's almost more than 22 years that I have been travelling to Europe every year, and it has almost become, it has become my home. But now I am back in Sikkim - this is my home as well.

And so we will go on from where we left off - chapter number 5. Chapter number 5 on *Vigilant Introspection* or in Tibetan *sheshin*. We were in the middle of the chapter. And I think there is nothing wrong with having a gap. This course - we call it 'shedra' but it is not really like the proper shedras where you go and study very strongly and then you have exams and you pass and all those things. This is more like a practice study. So we go slowly - we reflect on each stanza - we study again and again - we read them again and again - we reflect on them and then try to use them in our life. And if we can use even one or two stanzas, one or two really good instructions from this, then I think it would be very useful. So we are now on stanza number 54 and it says that:

Examine thus yourself from every side.

Take note of your defilements and your pointless efforts.

For thus the heroes on the Bodhisattva path

Seize firmly on such faults with proper remedies. [54]

So, we need to look at our thoughts, our emotions, our speech and our actions, and see whether we are acting or reacting with negative emotions and doing something that is harmful to ourselves and others, now or in the long run. And if we are doing that, we understand it, we see this. Then we understand the uselessness of doing that. We understand how unnecessary and how harmful those actions are. So therefore they are absolutely no use – there's absolutely no need to do that, because it neither benefits me, nor benefits anybody else. And by understanding that, then we see the pointlessness. As well as that, if by doing something that's not very useful - we are doing something where we are spending lots of effort and using lots of emotions and lots of our energy - but it's not achieving any real useful purpose - then you also understand that and think about the path of the great Bodhisattvas, my heroes, my examples. I think

about those heroes – what they would do, how they would act, how they would react - and then I should be firm with myself and try to act in those ways - the proper ways to remedy those faults and those actions. If I do it myself, then it's not so difficult, because I am in charge of myself. How I do, how I react, how I feel, cannot be decided by anybody else but myself. So I can decide how I should act, I can decide how I should react - I can decide and react the best way that is good for me and for others - which is what I want. So therefore, I will try to use that method. And so I should try to practice in the following way - the nine points that Shantideva has laid out as a guideline.

So these are the nine points:

With perfect and unyielding faith,

With steadfastness, respect, and courtesy,

With conscientiousness and awe,

Work calmly for the happiness of others. [55]

The first is *shin tu nges pa*, the Tibetan word is *shin tu nges pa* - I think here the English translation probably is **perfect faith**. But *shin tu nges pa* means very certain, very clear. Now I need to first understand how to practice - what to do in the beginning, what to in the middle and what to do in the end. I need to know how to practice very well. If I don't know how to practice, I can't practice. And that's why we are studying Bodhicharyavatara to learn how to practice. Bodhicharyavatara is an instruction on how to practice, and all else, everything - instructions on dharma, all the teachings from the Four Noble Truths to Mahamudra and Dzogchen - are all on how to practice. So we need to learn how to practice very clearly. That's the first one: perfect understanding, clarity - maybe you can say perfect faith.

An **unyielding faith**: When you are very clear about how to practice things and why you practice this - you have faith, you have clarity - you need to have devotion. You know why you are doing this and how you need to do this. So therefore faith - unyielding faith that is not with lots of doubt or lacking in clarity. So once you have these two - you have clear understanding of what the practice is, how to practice - and then because you have this clarity, you have faith in it, you have certainty about things, then – steadfastness.

Steadfastness is very important, because every time you want to change, thinking: "*Maybe there is something better than this, maybe there is something other than this - something more, better, different*", you always jump from one place to another – that isn't going to give any result. So therefore when we are clear about a path or a way to practice then we stick to it. There is nothing which is like 'instant buddhahood'. Everything needs to be practiced and practiced and practiced. So therefore we need to be very steady - steadfastness. When we understand clearly what the practice really is, and understand it deeply, then we have certainty that all different kinds of paths and all different kinds of ways are the same. There's nothing [through which] 'you do this and in two days you have the result' - that wouldn't happen. So we need to have this steadfastness.

Then **respect** – fourth I think. Here respect means happiness - the joy - you are happy – *gus pa*. *Gus pa* is respect but also kind of inspired. You have the inspiration. You are very happy to work on this respect. You have respect for that path - you have interest in it, you have inspiration for that.

Then **courtesy**. Because you have this respect and interest in the practice, in the dharma, so you also have gratefulness, you have courtesy. You value your teachers, and all the things that brought you these circumstances and understanding of this practice. That's courtesy - the fifth.

Sixth is **conscientiousness**. Conscientiousness is that I can kind of look at my mind and know what is right and what is wrong. If I do something wrong, I feel ashamed of it. If I do something good, I feel good, I feel grateful, I feel joy, I feel proud of myself. So I have that conscientiousness - I have that feeling of what is right and what is wrong - and when I do wrong, I feel not good. That's conscientiousness.

And then **awe**. That means I have awe, or I feel I know how the great beings do it - and I feel humble - I feel humble in front of the great Bodhisattvas and great beings. I don't feel afraid - afraid is not really the Tibetan word here – *jigs pa* is like afraid, but here it's not about afraid - it's awe or feeling humble myself because I see the qualities of others in a very clear way. I have the capacity to look for the positive qualities of others and due to that I am humble and I respect - I value, I see the greatness. So I feel awe of the

great Bodhisattvas and masters and teachers and qualified people - the great - there are many people who are very good. So I feel, there in front of them I am humble, I am nothing, so I have to act, I have to study, I have to practice, I don't have to be arrogant and proud. So this is very important because otherwise if I do a little thing and because I don't see any better qualities in others - I don't see others good qualities or their hidden qualities - so I feel I am the best or nobody knows more than me or nobody is better than me or I am the best or something like that. Then it doesn't work. So therefore I need to cultivate that understanding and seeing the positive qualities of others.

Then work **calmly**. So one of the most important needs is to calm my mind, because the main practice is to make my mind calm and at peace. To bring peace to my mind - that's the main practice - to bring calmness to my mind. So when there are negative emotions - when there is too much negativity in me - then it's not peace. I can't be calm. And if I am too affected by what's going on around me - if I feel too hurt, or too much affected by other's actions or reactions, or things like that, or if I have gained or not gained - if I'm praised or not praised, if I'm having respect or am not respected - if I'm too sensitive, then I become too disturbed. So I decide not to be disturbed so much. So therefore I bring calmness, bring peace. Nobody else can do that for me - I have to bring my own peace of mind. I have to calm myself. If I don't do that, nothing can do it. And it is not possible to find a place or a situation or a society - anywhere, anytime - where everything around me, everything that happens, is perfect. So therefore if I need to be happy, if I need to be calm, if I need to bring peace in my mind, I need to do it by myself, within myself, in spite of everything not being perfect and everybody not necessarily doing the right thing.

Then ninth - the last but not the least is **for the happiness of others**. So for all these things why do I do it? The main reason is for the happiness of others - for the happiness of all of us. I feel that only to say it is for others is good - yes, that is what it says here - but sometimes I think it gives a sense this is only for others and not for me. It's not like that I think. It's for all of us. And if everybody is happy that makes me happier. If everybody becomes better, then I also feel better. If everything, everybody around me becomes peaceful, then there is no reason why I shouldn't feel peace. If everybody around me becomes wealthy and prosperous and happy then that also creates happiness for me. So therefore this is for me, this is for others, this is for everybody - so this is for all of us. I have to do this for me, for others, for my family,

for my country, for my world, for all the beings, because that's how it should be. So with that kind of understanding, then we practice. We practice with this nine point guideline.

So I think I'll just do these two stanzas this time and then we will continue. 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 lightly edited and is meant to be used within the Online Shedra study context.