

Dear Dharma Friends,

Below are parts of the teaching excerpted from H.E. IX Kyabje Drukpa Choegon Rinpoche's Dharma Book – Cloudless Clarity, Volume I.

The full contents of the book are as the Table of Contents stated as follow:

- I) *Understanding the Foundation of Tibetan Buddhism*
 - a) *On Dharma – the Teachings of Buddha*
 - b) *On Vajrayana - the Secret Mantrayana*
 - c) *On Vajrayana Lineages – the different schools of Vajrayana*
 - d) *On some common “title” - the salutation in Vajrayana*
 - e) *On some common terms in Vajrayana - Bodhisattva, Daka, Dakini and Dharma Protector*
 - f) *On Refuge - the doorway to Buddhism*
 - g) *On Guru - the master*
 - h) *On Samaya - the vows of Vajrayana:*
- II) *On Proper Conduct – the right attitudes during Dharma related activities*
- III) *On Buddhist practices – The 6 Paramitas*
 - a) *Transcendent Generosity (dana)*
 - b) *Transcendent Discipline/Morality (shila)*

Choegon Rinpoche's Dharma Q&A – Part 5

On some common terms in Vajrayana - Bodhisattva, Daka, Dakini and Dharma Protector:

- 1) **Rinpoche. What are the differences between Bodhisattva, Daka/Dakini and Dharma Protector?**

A: Bodhisattvas are those who follow the practice of Bodhicitta, and have developed it. Ordinary Bodhisattvas are yet to attain ultimate Bodhicitta, they are Relative Bodhisattvas. Ultimate Bodhisattvas are those who have realized ultimate Bodhicitta, and have thus attained any of the ten bhumis, or spiritual levels. These are real Bodhisattvas. In order to be a real Bodhisattva, you have to realize ultimate Bodhicitta.

Daka is the male and Dakini is female practitioner of Vajrayana. Daka are the higher male and Dakini are the higher female beings; higher in the sense that they have realization and therefore are not ordinary beings.

Furthermore, Daka is equivalent to Deva or deity and Dakini to Devi. In Sutrayana we speak of Bodhisattva, while Deva is a Vajrayana Bodhisattva.

They are in the same level. All male deities are dakas or devas and all female deities are dakinis or devis.

Higher level Dharma Protectors are like Mahakala. Ordinary Dharma Protectors are those who possess much power, and after Guru Rinpoche and many great masters taught them Bodhichitta and Vajrayana teachings, they use their powers to protect temples, Vajrayana teachings, and help Dharma practitioners. They are called Dharma Protectors and they protect Dharma practitioners and temples.

2) Rinpoche. Why are there so many different Bodhisattvas and Dharma Protectors in Vajrayana?

A: There are many many Bodhisattvas; they are countless. You can become a Bodhisattva through practicing the Dharma and realizing the true nature of mind, at which time you reach the first bhumi. At that point, you really become a Bodhisattva. There are countless people who are getting enlightened, so there are countless Bodhisattvas.

Renowned Bodhisattvas like Manjushri and Avalokiteshvara were disciples of Lord Buddha and obtained high realization.

Sometimes Bodhisattvas also manifest in the form of Dharma protectors. In which case, they would be the higher level Dharma Protectors. So, there are also countless Dharma Protectors.

There are also a great number of Ordinary Dharma Protectors because there were numerous powerful beings who were tamed and bound through oath to act as protectors. Sometimes even very powerful evil spirits and ghosts, who were tamed by Guru Rinpoche, abandoned their evil deeds and became Dharma protectors. They developed Bodhicitta, but they possess these powers, so they serve as Dharma Protectors. They are like us but the difference is, they are powerful. They have the power and ability to protect. They are tamed, and they are given the name Dharma Protector; they do their work, protecting temples and Dharma.

3) Rinpoche. I see some statues/thankas of those very fierce-looking or wrathful Deities and Dharma Protector. Why are they appearing in such a form?

A: Peaceful deities are for purifying. The ones in yellow color are enriching deities. Magnetizing deities are slightly more wrathful; they are red in color. Wrathful deities are destroyers of evil and dispellers of obstacles; they are in dark or blue colors.

Buddhas and Bodhisattvas manifest in many different forms to help sentient beings. These manifestations symbolize inner strength, inner realization. Their anger is not ordinary anger like ours, but is the strength of Buddha's power.

One such example is Vajrapani who symbolizes the strength that cannot be destroyed or affected by anything.

On our path to enlightenment, we face countless challenges, so manifestations such as Vajrapani, are symbols of Buddha's strength and power. When we practice Vajrapani we will not be affected, carried away or taken over by these obstacles. The wrathful manifestations are just appearances, but these appearances are manifestations of Buddha's inner power, inner strength. They are not the ordinary forms.

So by practicing wrathful deities, we are not practicing anger, but actually practicing Bodhicitta. Particularly if we have anger and hatred, and we practice wrathful deities, our anger will be totally destroyed.

It is like the principle of homeopathic medicine, called 'similia similibus curentur', which establishes the way the system cures. It is believed that substances that produce symptoms similar to a given disease should be used to treat that disease. For example, if you have diabetes, they'll give you something sweet; if you have poison, they'll give you poison to cure you.

In the practice of Vajrayana when anger arises you don't abandon it but you look at the anger itself. By this the anger eventually is liberated. If there is no anger, then how can anger be liberated? There would be nothing to be liberated.

So, when anger arises, anger is liberated into mirror like wisdom. The five wisdoms are the realization aspect of the five emotions. When there are emotions, there is something to liberate. That doesn't mean we need to have emotions to get enlightened. But these samsaric emotions are just illusions. When we see their true nature, we understand it is the enlightened form. When we don't realize it, it is the negative form. It is one and the same thing.

We can look at it in two ways: anger as ordinary anger or anger in the form of the deity. If it's in the form of deity, then it's the form of enlightened beings; anger as ordinary anger is a ghost. That's to say, ghost and deity are just two different aspects. If you realize, it's deity. If you don't, then it's ghost. If you realize, it's nirvana; if you don't, it is samsara. If you realize, it's mirror like wisdom, if you don't realize, it is anger.

4) Rinpoche. There are also some Bodhisattvas seen in a union form. What is the true meaning of a consort and what is the reason they appear in such a way?

A: The union symbolizes compassion and wisdom, method and wisdom, "Thab" and "Sherab" in Tibetan. These are all inner symbols of our enlightened form. In earlier times, thankas or paintings were not made. Whatever forms the deities have are within the practice of visualization. They are symbols, totally symbolic. Inner symbols cannot manifest in the form of a painted picture; at best they may be merely represented by the drawing.

Nowadays, thankas have become art. They are found everywhere; hanging on walls. They become like fantasies, and this is wrong. Thankas were not made to be shown but to be kept hidden. They were very rare, and statues of union were even rarer. They symbolize inner essence, the Vajrayana inner practices.

But today, when we look around, thankas are everywhere, on every wall, for sale for a few dollars. Then, they become misunderstood.

The actual meaning of these thankas and statues is very deep and profound. It symbolizes inner wisdom and compassion. You have to understand the entire notion of Vajrayana's true path, the mind part, the energy part, the visualization part. They are all symbols of inner insights which are extremely profound.

In this short session, it's very difficult to fathom its true meaning. It needs long and thorough explanations. Method and Wisdom, Bliss and Emptiness, these are the terms for the symbols of what is. The female part is emptiness—wisdom— and the male part is form—appearance—; their union is appearance and emptiness indivisibly united. Form is emptiness, emptiness is form, form is no other than emptiness, and emptiness is no other than form. Form and emptiness are represented by deva and devi. They are inseparable, it's a union. That's what it symbolizes.
