

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 - Boddhisattva, 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)*
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Choegon Rinpoche's Dharma Q&A – Part 6

On Refuge - the Doorway to Buddhism

- 1) **In almost every Vajrayana 'event' that I attended, there is a “Refuge taking Ceremony.” Can Rinpoche please explain what the essence of refuge taking is?**

A: I don't think every Vajrayana event has a refuge taking ceremony, but the master will give you refuge prior to empowerments. Taking of refuge, generating Bodhicitta and visualization as 'triyana' is completed in one practice of Vajrayana.

Refuge is the Theravada aspect, Bodhicitta is the Mahayana aspect, and visualization and meditation are the Vajrayana aspects.

Vajrayana practices always include the other yantras, so they must have an element of Theravada and Mahayana. Refuge is like the basic ground, like the foundation, Bodhicitta is like the house and Vajrayana deity visualization is like the beings that live in that house. That's the three yantras. Refuge and Bodhicitta always come in these aspects.

But regarding the refuge taking ceremony, it should be conducted only when there is somebody who wants to take refuge under that particular master. Otherwise, one just repeats after the master the refuge and Bodhicitta verses as part of the practice or requirement during the empowerment.

Without refuge and Bodhicitta, Vajrayana cannot be practiced. Refuge is the door to Buddhism. If you don't take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, you have not yet committed yourself to practice what Buddha taught, you have not opened your heart to the Three Jewels. And so there is no way to practice. That's why refuge is needed.

Bodhicitta is included because we cannot do everything just for ourselves; we have to always engage others, to benefit others. So, that's Bodhicitta practice.

Finally, understanding and transformation of everything around us, self, body, speech and mind through the practice of knowing the nature of everything as Dhamakaya is the practice of Vajrayana.

2) I heard some masters saying that refuge is taken only once in a lifetime. But I have seen many people taking refuge many times under different Rinpoches? Some say taking refuge under a particular Rinpoche is to make "connection" with that Rinpoche, so that we will be able to meet him again in the future or next life.

A: That's true! You can take refuge if you feel a particular devotion to a particular master, even though you have taken refuge before. You're actually taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. The master is the one who is giving you the refuge.

So, if you have a particular feeling for or devotion to another master, you can also take refuge again with him, but not in the sense that you have not obtained refuge before. You had it. But you are taking it again. This means you can take refuge again and again, and receive the blessings again and again from various masters. You recite the refuge prayers three times, and you are receiving the blessings from the masters.

Just as you can receive empowerment again and again, you also can receive refuge and Bodhicitta vows many times. That doesn't mean that when you receive once, you have the Bodhicitta. Where is our Bodhicitta? Bodhicitta can never be received and obtained. It's has to be cultivated by us. The more you receive it, the more the blessing is.

But, that doesn't mean you can take refuge everywhere, from any teacher, at any time, because there are also samayas to keep. That master becomes your master, you must respect him, and you must follow him. That's why

refuge is not taken from every master you meet, but not only once as I've mentioned. You have to understand, you have to follow and you have to listen to your heart. You have to know.
