

Dear Dharma Friends,

Below are parts of the teaching excerpted from H.E. 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 descriptions 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)*

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## Choegon Rinpoche's Dharma Q&A – Part IV

### On some common “title” - the salutation in Vajrayana:

- 1) **Rinpoche. I always hear about the word “Enlightened Beings” in Vajrayana. What does that actually mean?**

A: Enlightened Beings are Awakened Beings. Awakened beings are beings who do not remain in delusion or in the samsaric karmic world. They are awakened from this karmic world, awakened from the sleep of ignorance.

So how does one get enlightened? When we understand our true nature of mind as it is, the Dharmakaya, we are awakened. There is no karma, there is no delusion, and we perceive all appearances and everything around us as they truly are, free from all confusion regarding their nature.

For example, our house is filled with rubber snakes and we live in fear because we think that the snakes are real and may bite us anytime. But when we realized that they are only rubber snakes, we are awakened from

the delusion that the snakes are real and all the fear is gone. We are free from fear.

Another example is when we are suffering from a nightmare in our sleep. When we wake up from the sleep, all the dreams disappear, and we realized that all the frightening nightmares were only illusory dreams.

These are some examples to explain the meaning of having become enlightened or awakened. However, there are larger and broader descriptions of the meaning of "enlightenment." In a more simple way, through our meditations and practices we become more aware of everything in us and around us -- our mind, our emotions -- and then we experience a clearer understanding of the nature of sickness, the nature of the world, the nature of fears, the nature of emotions, etc. As we understand their true nature, we are awakened and all these then become not serious, not threatening, not frightful to us anymore. That's the meaning of being awakened. However, from the beginning until enlightenment, awakening has many levels.

**2) Can Rinpoche please explain what's the different between 'Lama', 'Khenpo', 'Tulku' and 'Rinpoche'? I really have no idea what those titles means?**

A: I would prefer to use the word 'description' rather than 'title.' The original meaning of these descriptions may be different from what we actually understand nowadays.

Strictly speaking, the term 'Lama' has a very high meaning. In traditional Tibetan Buddhism the highest accomplished people are called Lamas. That's why we say Lama Marpa, Lama Tsongkapa, Lama Longchen Rabjam, etc.

However, nowadays 'Lama' is used in some places of the Himalayan Region as a general name for ordained monks. So the custom today is to regard the Tibetan monks as lamas.

'Khenpo' refers to those lamas who have completed 9-10 years of training in buddhist institutes of higher studies, where they learn, among other subjects, Buddhist Philosophy, in addition to the basic preliminary courses. After serving at least three years as a teacher in an institute of higher studies, they are conferred the title Khenpo. The Khenpo title is equivalent to the Doctor of Philosophy, PhD of modern educational system. However, the requirements to obtain the title 'Khenpo' can be different among the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

'Tulku' basically means a reincarnated lama. In ancient times, reincarnated lamas were seriously checked, accurately verified and properly recognized. Unlike those self-proclaimed Tulkus or family-made Tulkus, authentic Tulkus are quite few. Today there are far too many Tulkus, and Tulkus have become a little controversial in Vajrayana. What I am saying is not new; it's true, and I

am saying this here not with the intention of hurting anybody. That's why for a Vajrayana follower, it's important to properly investigate the background of each Tulku, the lineage he holds, under which masters he has learnt, how much of profound teachings he has received, and other considerations. Despite generally accepted perception, old aged Tulkus may not necessarily mean they are genuine Tulkus.

'Rinpoche' means the precious one. They are higher than a reincarnated lama, and therefore they are considered precious. Within the Tulku circle, there aren't so many Rinpoches. When a Tulku becomes senior or he has done lots of practices, people will start calling him such and such Rinpoche. Or traditionally very high-ranked lamas who have contributed a lot to the lineage or the monastery, as well as main lineage holders, are called Rinpoche. Again, many Tulkus and Khenpos have proclaimed themselves as Rinpoche, which is a little unfortunate.

In short, 'Lama' means ordinary ordained monk. 'Khenpo' refers to those who are learned. "Tulkus" are ordinary reincarnated lama. 'Rinpoche' means the precious one.

A monastery may have one or two Rinpoches—normally one—and three to four Tulkus. Bigger monasteries may have three to four Rinpoches, six to seven Tulkus, and nine to ten Khenpos. Very large institutes of higher learning may have up to twenty Khenpos.

Tulkus and Rinpoches are more related to the Vajrayana tradition. Khenpo applies more to personal Buddhist academic qualification acquired during that life.

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