



## **Bodhicitta**

**by**

**the 12th Chamgon Tai Situ Rinpoche**

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We have a very precious subject to explore this evening-bodhicitta. The teaching of Buddha known as the Middle Path is based on bodhicitta. First Buddha taught about suffering and peace and the various methods through which we can overcome suffering and develop both inner and outer peace. Then Lord Buddha gave a vast number of teachings, the essence of which is bodhicitta. These were later compiled into sutras by his disciples.

Bodhicitta is a Sanskrit term. In Tibetan it is *chang chup che sems*. *Chang chup* and *sems* are two distinct words, with two distinct meanings. *Chang* can be explained as purification, clarification or the total result of practice. We get used to it. There is no boundary. There is no obstacle. *Chup* means inclusiveness. Nothing is left out. It is under, it is total, everything is included in it. *Che* is a particle of grammar that connects *chang chup* and *sems*. *Sems* means mind. Here it also indirectly represents thought, attitude and motivation – everything that is involved with mind.

*Chang chup che sems* can be looked at in several ways, all of which arrive at the same conclusion. One way of understanding *chang chup che sems* is total, pure dedication towards full realization and full liberation. The principle thought and motivation of a person who has *chang chup che sems* is, "I wish to be liberated from the ignorance and defilements of samsara for the benefit of all sentient beings."

Approaching bodhicitta from a more academic or philosophical perspective, it is a particular attitude that will benefit our development. It is a way of thinking, a principle that imbues all of our efforts with meaning. With bodhicitta as our aim and principle, our efforts become continuously more and more meaningful, until we ultimately obtain enlightenment, liberation. This is the inner development that results from the practice of the bodhicitta principle. A bodhisattva is a person who practices that principle of bodhicitta.

In sutra, Lord Buddha said many times, "The validity and the benefit of any expression, activity, outward appearance or practice is totally dependent upon the purpose, philosophy and motivation behind it." Lord Buddha taught about generosity, morality, diligence and all the other positive qualities, but he always emphasized the motivation behind these so-called good and positive actions. That principle, that motivation, is bodhicitta.

Lord Buddha describes the value of bodhicitta in a very direct and strong manner. "Moments before you develop bodhicitta you can be the most evil being in the whole universe, but the moment after you develop bodhicitta, you instantly become the most noble, kind and precious being in the whole universe." Then he said, "developing bodhicitta is taking birth in the family of enlightenment." You will find a similar statement in every sutra. Without bodhicitta we can never attain enlightenment, because bodhicitta is the beginning of enlightenment. To succeed on the path of liberation, one

has to reach the realization of the bodhisattva by developing bodhicitta – by recognizing it, by practicing it, by putting it into action. That is the first important step.

### Four Limitless Thoughts

To understand bodhicitta totally, we must look deeply into each aspect of it. We can get a solid understanding of bodhicitta quite simply from the four-sentence prayer called "Four Limitless Thoughts" that every Buddhist is supposed to recite everyday. Translating these is always a challenge for me. For now I'll use the most common words in use by translators these days, and I'll try to explain them.

In Tibetan, the first limitless thought is *champa*, the second limitless thought is *nying je*, the third limitless thought is *gawa*, and the fourth limitless thought is *tang jung*. We add *che ne* at the end of each of them – *champa che ne*, *nying je che ne*, etc. *Che ne* means no boundary, no limitation. *Champa* is translated as loving-kindness, although many people have told me that loving-kindness doesn't make much sense in English. I have to believe them, but that is how it is usually translated, so we'll go along with it for now. *Nying je* is translated as compassion. Some people have said *champa* should be compassion and *nying je* should be something else. *Gawa* is like joy. *Tang jung* is a little more difficult to translate, but basically it means impartiality. But when we say impartial, there is a risk of misunderstanding. It can mean impartial in an unhealthy way as well as in a healthy way, and definitely we should keep on the track of healthy impartiality. (Health food for enlightenment!)

There are very slight differences between *champa*, loving-kindness, and *nying je*, compassion. *Champa* is being naturally kind and gentle, like a mother towards her child. We have compassion regardless of the other party's suffering. If they're suffering, we have *champa*. And even if the other party isn't suffering, still we have *champa*. *Nying je* is more specifically related with the suffering of others. The example given is the attitude of a powerful and kind king toward his poor and needy subjects. That is *nying je*. So there is a slight difference between these two. For *champa* it is said, "May all beings be happy." For *nying je* it says "May all beings be free from suffering." These two are the same, of course. If everybody is happy, then everyone is free from suffering. If everybody is free from suffering, then they must be happy. It comes to the same thing. Still, they have their own definition, however subtle.

Then *gawa* is the joy that is naturally there when we have *champa* and *nying je*, loving-kindness and compassion. Then, anybody's happiness makes us happy, and the fact that we are able to have this loving-kindness and compassion makes us happy. We have a saying that might sound a little ridiculous if not understood precisely, but it is worth exploring. "Even if we have to suffer, suffer happily." The reverse would be, "Don't enjoy sadly." There is something in it, and I leave it for you to ponder what it means.

The fourth aspect of bodhicitta is impartiality. Our loving-kindness, our compassion and our joy shouldn't be limited to our friends or relatives. It should be impartial to every sentient being. In Buddhism, when we say "every sentient being," it is a vast subject. Lord Buddha's teachings allude to "all the sentient beings in the entire existence." He described the existence of sentient beings, along with where they exist. He said, "Sentient beings exist in space." And he said, "Space is endless." That is quite understandable – I don't think we can knock at the wall of space. There is no end to space. Then he said, "This endless space is filled with numberless universes of all levels." Then he said, "Those numberless universes are filled with countless sentient beings."

Lord Buddha classified those countless sentient beings into six realms. These six realms reflect not only physical differences but also levels of external and internal mental conditions. He said, "The highest realm is the devas and the lowest realm is hell. Human beings are somewhere in the middle." He said, "Being human is very fortunate because humans can taste both suffering and happiness." And he said, "If you take advantage of your human life, you can learn a lot. You can make a tremendous leap in your progress." Finally he said, "The human realm is better than any other realm for the development of wisdom and enlightenment." So, impartiality is for all sentient beings of all six realms, for all the sentient beings in the entire universe.

These four limitless thoughts that describe bodhicitta prove that we're extremely ambitious, because we pray that every sentient being will be free from suffering. I think that is quite ambitious. And we wish all sentient beings to be happy. There are practical reasons for this. It's not just a dream. It is practical because every sentient being has the potential to be free from suffering and to be happy. More than that, every sentient being has the potential for enlightenment. There is no one whose ultimate potential is negative. Lord Buddha says, "When it comes to the ultimate potential and essence of everyone, there is no evil in existence." Of course, relatively speaking, there is evil. Buddha, himself, had a relative who caused him lots of trouble. But it is the potential of every sentient being to attain enlightenment that makes this prayer practical. We're praying that every sentient will recognize what they are and who they are. May every one of us realize that our potential is good, not bad, our potential is healthy, not unhealthy, our potential is perfect, not imperfect. Nothing is missing. So may everyone recognize that.

If everyone recognizes this and decides to do something about it, a big part of our job is done. That is the biggest step. Once that step is taken, we should feel a sense of promise or a guarantee that there will be momentum that will move everything forward. But until we recognize this, even if we try to be good, it is a challenge. Because if we don't know that our ultimate potential is good, we assume that we're bad by nature, and therefore we have to become good. We try to be good, but we think that goodness isn't in us, that it's out there. We feel we're trying to become something we're not. But when we know this potential is there, we realize we're not trying to develop something that isn't there. Instead, we're trying to liberate whatever is inside of us, our potential, our real self. This makes a big difference.

When we look at bodhicitta through these four limitless thoughts, we see it is the source of all goodness. I'll give you an example that you can easily apply. When we don't have bodhicitta, others' happiness causes us suffering. It sounds unspeakable, but that is what happens without bodhicitta. It even gives me a funny feeling to say it. When we develop bodhicitta, another person's happiness becomes the source of our own happiness. We have been praying every day for the happiness of others, so when we see somebody happy, it's got to make us happy. There is a big difference in the attitude. And there is a big difference in the impact of the reality of life on our well-being. So, bodhicitta is very precious. Just by clearly understanding the preciousness of those four limitless thoughts, with no strings attached, we recognize what we are, what we can be and how to realize our potential.

Bodhicitta is fundamentally and superficially described as the Mahayana principle. In one way, this is true, because the disciples of Buddha categorized his teachings into many different levels and included most of the teachings related to bodhicitta in the Mahayana sutras. But bodhicitta is the foundation for all Buddhism, because every Buddhist should practice bodhicitta.

All the sutras that are involved with bodhicitta include the philosophy, or the view, and the meditation, contemplation and action that comprise the actual practice. Lord Buddha said contemplation is very important. For example, the first thing we should do with those four limitless thoughts is contemplate them. The purpose of most prayers is contemplation. I'm quite certain the Tibetan word *samten* and the English word contemplation are the same.

There is a fine line between contemplation and meditation. Meditation is usually a particular method for dealing with mind. Meditation involves using a particular method appropriately, step-by-step, as given in the teachings, in the lineage, as it was continued throughout Buddhist history. Meditation isn't like saying "May all sentient beings be free from suffering." Meditation involves concentrating on the breath, or on a particular visualization, or watching the thoughts, or trying to recognize the pure quality of bodhicitta within. Meditating on each one of these is quite different from contemplating a particular philosophical or technical subject through chanting or a step-by-step thinking process. There is a difference.

When it comes to action, such as diligence, patience, and contemplation, how do we apply that bodhicitta, those four limitless thoughts, into daily activity? Such principles as morality, tolerance (or patience), diligence and contemplation help us to be generous, to be compassionate, to be impartial, to be mindful, and to be aware. They help us to manifest these qualities. They naturally develop wisdom, because wisdom is something that develops within. Intellectual input is information, knowledge. The appropriate application of that knowledge develops wisdom.

### **Knowledge and Wisdom**

It might be appropriate to discuss the difference between knowledge and wisdom in more detail here. Knowledge is information, knowing how to go about something. As far as the practice of bodhicitta is concerned, knowledge is how to develop bodhicitta, which is our essence. How can we manifest our perfect, kind, compassionate, impartial, joyful potential? By applying our knowledge so that the essence is able to manifest correctly, purely and sharply. This is wisdom. So knowledge and wisdom work hand-in-hand. We cannot say this is knowledge but not wisdom, this is wisdom but not knowledge, because the wisdom of today can be the knowledge of tomorrow, and the wisdom of today can be good information for tomorrow's development.

This is why, in the development of a bodhisattva, there are ten levels. We call them ten bhumis. This is a way of describing the constant development. Actually, rather than there being ten distinct levels, we just continuously grow and develop. The ten levels are just a way to describe it. It could be a thousand levels, it could be a million levels, it could be five levels, three levels, it could be anything. But in the Mahayana teachings, it's taught as ten levels.

Why is it taught as ten levels? Just to give some idea how we progress step-by-step. First we progress to the first level, or first-level bodhisattva. Then, to advance to a second-level bodhisattva, we have to undo everything we've done to become a first-level bodhisattva. We do this not by going backwards, but by a process of refinement. So the knowledge that enabled us to attain the first-level bodhisattva becomes wisdom after we reach that point. By the time we become a second-level bodhisattva, all the wisdom of the first-level bodhisattva is just knowledge. That is what I mean when I say there is no clear distinction between what is knowledge and what is wisdom.

What is real wisdom, ultimate wisdom? The moment we attain enlightenment, the moment we become Buddha, everything is wisdom. There is no more knowledge. From the level of the most basic knowledge, like knowing what to do when we're hungry, to the realization of the tenth-level bodhisattva, everything is a kind of knowledge. And Buddha is the final wisdom.

People like myself understand things by knowledge. But even in my knowledge, certain things are wisdom; whatever inner realization I have is my wisdom. But if I compare this with the wisdom of a realized being, it is knowledge that is probably only 5% correct. Even that is being very presumptuous, because 5% is a lot. So the subject of knowledge and wisdom is quite vast, and it is almost impossible to be precise.

### **Relative and Ultimate Bodhicitta**

In fully understanding bodhicitta, it is important for us to know the difference between relative and ultimate bodhicitta. Relative bodhicitta is all four limitless thoughts. It is related with dualism, with "I want to be enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings." It's absolutely dualistic. And it would be a lie if we said we were non-dual right now. We may be non-dual for short periods of time. If somebody knocks us on our head with a hammer, we'll be non-dual for a couple of minutes. Even that is a rather forced non-duality. Everything we do – learning about dharma, meditating, doing something for other people – is dualistic. We don't have to feel bad about our dualistic condition. We're not cheating ourselves, we're not dreaming, we're not imagining. We're handling our present condition appropriately when we deal with dualism in this way.

Ultimate bodhicitta is non-dual. When a person like me says "non-dual," I'm thinking about something like a first-level bodhisattva. Even that can be too much, but it's close. How will a first-level bodhisattva manifest for the benefit of other sentient beings? As non-dual. But it can't be totally non-dual, because otherwise the first-level bodhisattva would be Buddha. But we have to be practical and honest. If I saw a first-level bodhisattva and a Buddha together, I don't know if I would recognize which is which. I'm afraid I might say to the Buddha, "Please wait here," thinking he is the attendant! I might bring the first-level bodhisattva to my home and serve him. This is because, compared to us, the first-level bodhisattva's bodhicitta is non-dual and ultimate, so it would be hard for us to know the difference at that level.

The second-level bodhisattva's bodhicitta and activity manifestation is non-dual compared to the first-level bodhisattva, and this can go on and on and on. But what is the ultimate bodhicitta? The non-dual manifestation, the Buddha, Buddha activity – only that is final. That is the definition of Buddha. So these two things are important for us to know – relative bodhicitta, which is how we practice, and ultimate bodhicitta, which is always within us, always there, but when it is totally liberated, it is called enlightenment. And Buddha's compassion, Buddha's loving-kindness, Buddha's joy, Buddha's impartiality are, taken together, the ultimate bodhicitta.

### **Five Strengths**

In order for a person like ourselves to apply bodhicitta in our everyday lives, a few important principles are described. These five principles are entitled "Five Strengths." This means a strength that will never be exhausted, a strength that can go on and on until enlightenment. This is inner strength. Every bodhisattva should practice these five strengths.

The first strength is described as "I will attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings." If we know what enlightenment is, if we know what we mean when we say "I," if we know what we mean when we say "I will attain enlightenment," if we know what "all sentient beings" means, if we know precisely what we mean when we say "attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings," that is the first strength. Once we say it, and we know what we say, we'll never give up.

The second strength is that once we say it personally and honestly, we have the constant motivation towards action related to that first strength. And those conditions will help us to gain the momentum to go on.

The third strength is that when that momentum goes on, everything becomes like a seed. Whatever we do now becomes a seed for the next thing. That particular creation which comes out of the seed isn't just a fruit that comes up and is gone. It will be another seed. Everything becomes a seed. When we look at it from another point of view, this is karma. Karma means condition, so everything that is done now becomes a condition for later. Everything that is happening now has a condition related with the past.

To illustrate the fourth strength, we have a saying. "When I make a journey of a million miles, I might miss my step, I might slip millions of times, but I will put my feet back on my path." We're expected to make mistakes. We must not, but we will. It's almost guaranteed. All of us will make mistakes – sometimes terrible mistakes – but we should learn from our mistakes and not lie to ourselves. We shouldn't try to brainwash ourselves that our faults are not faults. We make mistakes and we learn from them. Very simple. We acknowledge our mistakes and then bring ourselves back to the right track and go on. Then we become invincible, because there is nothing that can destroy us. We recognize every mistake we make and we go on. Any bad situation that happens becomes good circumstances for us because it helps us to see all of our mistakes that caused the negative situation.

The fifth strength is very important – to let go of everything at every moment. I have to explain this a little bit more. When we say "Let go of everything," it means that when we do something good, if we don't let go of that, we'll get stuck there. We might get proud of it. And when we get proud of it, we naturally become arrogant. That arrogance becomes a roadblock for us that will keep us from progressing. That is why we totally dedicate anything positive that we're able to do. We don't think about it, we just appreciate it and then dedicate it for everyone.

In the practice of Vajrayana Buddhism especially, it is always emphasized that if we forget to dedicate, then our good deed isn't complete. For that reason, every prayer or practice has three parts – the beginning – the refuge and bodhicitta – the actual practice, and the dedication. First we remind ourselves of Buddha, his teachings and his followers, and bodhicitta – the four limitless thoughts that I just described. Then, the actual practice. Last is the dedication. When we dedicate, it simply means, "I dedicate this merit, I dedicate this wisdom, for the benefit of all sentient beings." We can add, "I dedicate this merit and wisdom for the benefit of all sentient beings, so I will attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings." If we add that, it becomes complete. That is the fifth strength.

These five strengths empower our bodhicitta and make it complete and strong. That way it gains momentum and goes on non-stop.

I've read in many Mahayana sutras and commentaries that if we have pure bodhicitta, the four

limitless thoughts, and all of these strengths together, then even if we're not doing anything, our bodhicitta naturally increases. It says, "Every pulse that is moving in your body, every breath that you take, becomes practice." That is quite good. And the reason is because we are the bodhicitta, so therefore we are the bodhisattva.

Thank you for listening. I feel we have communicated to each other quite well. Does anyone have questions? I'll welcome them.

**Question:** Rinpoche, will you say a little more about the second strength?

**Rinpoche:** The second strength is the constant motivation and momentum towards action related to that first strength. The five strengths are actually just one described strength enumerated into five aspects. The second strength is just the continuation of the first strength.

**Question:** Did you say that the number of sentient beings is limitless? Doesn't that mean that a bodhisattva who has dedicated himself to always coming back until all sentient beings gain enlightenment will never, himself, reach enlightenment.

**Rinpoche:** That is correct. That is why a bodhisattva's thought has to be limitless.

**Question:** But he'll never be Buddha, though.

**Rinpoche:** Of course he'll be Buddha. Don't worry about that. Buddha became Buddha, and he's still helping us just as if he were living and breathing right now, after 2,500 years. This is ultimate bodhicitta activity. Buddha didn't stop being a bodhisattva after his enlightenment. He is working right now through ultimate bodhicitta – not through relative bodhicitta. If we like, we can make up our own vocabulary and say that Buddha isn't a relative bodhisattva, Buddha is an ultimate bodhisattva. Buddha's compassion, Buddha's loving-kindness, is helping us. He didn't abandon us when he became enlightened. But there will be an end, of course. When all sentient beings attain enlightenment, that is the end. When one sentient being attains enlightenment, that is one less of the limitless sentient beings.

**Question:** Rinpoche, will you say the four limitless thoughts in their entirety?

**Rinpoche:** It's very difficult to say it precisely, although I read it many times in English. It says something like, "May all sentient beings be happy and be with the causes of happiness." But "be with" is poor English. I'm certain there must be a better way to say it. The second is, "May all sentient beings be free from suffering and the causes of suffering." But here I have difficulties with the "free from." Should it be free from or free of? Or free with? I don't know. The third one is complicated, "May all sentient beings never be separate, or never be in the absence of pure happiness, pure joy – that is, without any suffering." About the fourth, because of the number of words, the prayer doesn't say "May all sentient beings," because it becomes too long. So it says, "Free from closeness and free from distance, free from attachment and free from hatred, may they always remain in great impartiality." I think that is it. But then, of course, "May all sentient beings" should be at the beginning. I have read many translations on this because it's very important, but unfortunately I haven't found one that makes similar sense to the prayer in our language. So somebody has to work hard on this.

**Question:** Would you talk about the relationship between bodhicitta and emptiness?

**Rinpoche:** Because we will talk about emptiness later, I didn't say much about it today. Emptiness is a very difficult word. I personally have lots of difficulty explaining this subject

using the word emptiness. Emptiness means that nothing is out there more than just interdependent manifestation. Physical, mental and emotional – everything is there indeed, but just as an interdependent manifestation. A person who is very mean, angry, negative and evil can develop bodhicitta because of emptiness. If that person decides not to be mean, not to be evil, not to be unkind, not to be angry, that's where it starts. The person has to work to overcome their habit of being rude or evil, but it won't take long once he or she decides. So it's absolutely connected with emptiness. Everything is possible because of emptiness.

**Question:** Rinpoche, how can we develop bodhicitta?

**Rinpoche:** It sounds a little presumptuous, but I can almost guarantee that we will not find it difficult at all, because within each one of us there is nothing but ultimate bodhicitta. That is our essence. It is what we are. But relatively, our circumstances cause us to be deluded, so we have to overcome those delusions. Each one of us has different types of delusions that we must overcome, and there are many methods by which we can overcome them.

One of simplest methods is sitting meditation. To do sitting meditation, we don't have to believe in anything or perform any rituals. We first relax our body and our mind, and we use a particular method, such as breathing. That is the easiest method, because we breathe all the time. And breathing properly is even good for the temperament and the health as well. So it's multi-purpose.

If we practice breathing meditation, these delusions temporarily fall away. It's like taking off our dark glasses so we see what is there, even if it is only for a short moment as the result of a half-hour of meditation. We see nothing but our ultimate bodhicitta – some part of it, some aspect of it. Then, with the proper information, such as the four limitless thoughts, we recognize how to go about it. That might be the easiest way. But we need proper instruction. You can't just do it from the information I've given. You have to have a teacher to teach the particular method. It will take at least one good session.

**Question:** Rinpoche, would you say something about Manjushri?

**Rinpoche:** Manjushri is one of the eight bodhisattvas in the Buddhist texts. Each of the bodhisattvas represents a particular quality. Manjushri Bodhisattva represents wisdom. The specific purpose of Manjushri Bodhisattva is for the development of wisdom. We practice Manjushri sadhana, Manjushri meditation, and recite Manjushri mantra to receive the blessing of Lord Manjushri. Through that blessing, our wisdom will be awakened. That is a short way to describe it.

**Question:** Rinpoche, can you say something about the three wisdoms?

**Rinpoche:** The most common way to describe the three wisdoms is *töpi sherab*, *samde sherab* and *gomde sherab* in Tibetan. *Töpa* means listening. It's more like academic wisdom. *Samde sherab* is contemplation. *Samta* is like contemplation – *samten*, *samta*. So it is thinking or contemplation wisdom. The last one is *gompa*, *gompe sherab*, *gompa* is meditation. So, it's the wisdom that is developed through learning, through contemplating and through meditating.

**Question:** Rinpoche, I'm still a little confused about the difference between wisdom and knowledge. Could you say more about this?

**Rinpoche:** Knowledge and wisdom are two different things. If we look at the three aspects of wisdom I just explained, knowledge is the first wisdom, the listening. The bridge between

listening and meditation, the real wisdom, is contemplation. The contemplation process confirms. In contemplation, we explore every corner, leaving no detail unsearched. We contemplate everything, so what we know is complete. That's roughly it. And today's wisdom is tomorrow's knowledge.

Now, I just said today's wisdom is tomorrow's knowledge, but that is such a short time. Maybe "this lifetime's wisdom is the next lifetime's knowledge" is more appropriate. Now, what is the ultimate wisdom? That can only be the wisdom of the Buddha. Until that, everything is a kind of learning that is more or less dualistic. Even the wisdom of a tenth-level bodhisattva is dualistic compared to Buddha. So when we attain the first-level bodhisattva, our realization should be wisdom, but when we become a second-level bodhisattva, then the wisdom of the first-level bodhisattva isn't wisdom anymore. That wisdom causes us to attain the second-level bodhisattva. That wisdom is the information, that wisdom is the knowledge.

I have been using that particular example, but we can relate this to everything. We can relate this to the tantric way of describing the highest level. We say dorje . . . . It's like the last state of mind, which is like a diamond, to break through the final boundaries between enlightenment and non-enlightenment. Even at that stage, wisdom still has further to go. And as I said earlier, there is even a difference between the enlightenment of the Buddha and the enlightenment of the highest bodhisattva, or that bodhisattva would be Buddha.

**Question:** When we look at the life and teachings of the Buddha, obviously everything he had to say contained quite a bit of knowledge, and yet you just described what he attained was not knowledge but wisdom, and so I need a definition of this kind of knowledge.

**Rinpoche:** This is a totally different subject. Buddha's teaching is knowledge for us, but Buddha's teaching comes from his wisdom. Buddha himself said very clearly, "I haven't said anything, but everybody heard me say things." And I'm sure he even didn't say that. So the teaching of Buddha isn't like any of us talking. I learned for almost thirty years from many teachers. Then I did homework to prepare this talk. I thought very carefully about it before presenting it to you. This is absolutely dualistic. But Buddha's teaching is spontaneous, according to the capability and need and condition of the disciples who hear it. And that is the result of the relative bodhicitta, which is the ultimate bodhicitta, which is the ultimate wisdom – not knowledge.

**Question:** In that sense, the wisdom of the levels is not really comparable to the wisdom of the Buddha but is somewhat like a nirmanakaya manifestation.

**Rinpoche:** The nirmanakaya manifests through the dharmakaya. The teachings of Buddha that people heard, and which we have in black and white, are the sambhogakaya aspect, the physical.

**Question:** So a bodhisattva is working in the nirmanakaya level?

**Rinpoche:** No. A bodhisattva's contact to Buddha is nirmanakaya. This is another subject. I don't want to confuse all of you, so I'd like to explain a little bit. When Prince Siddhartha attained enlightenment, he became the Buddha. Anybody who attained some level of bodhisattva realization received the teachings and the benefit from the Buddha in his sambhogakaya manifestation. Ordinary people in India who saw Buddha in his form received the teachings from the nirmanakaya. The nirmanakaya of the Buddha died when he passed away at Kushinagar. That is the correct way to relate to it.

Although many of the tantras are the teachings of the Buddha's sambhogakaya, when it is put on paper with ink, and we read it, it is nirmanakaya. But the contents, the meaning, is the sambhogakaya teaching, which is heard by the bodhisattvas.

**Question:** Rinpoche, could you say a little more about the difference between inspiration bodhicitta and practice bodhicitta?

**Rinpoche:** When a person formally takes the bodhicitta vows, we call that first step *nunpa senche*. *Nunpa* is translated as aspiration. After that, *jigpa senche*, entering the real practice, the real application, of bodhicitta. Most of the time it is done in two individual steps, and in a very serious, elaborate ceremony. It is very important. But these days it has become more casual, with almost no ceremony at all. If people want to take bodhicitta vows, they just do it. If they want to take refuge, they just do it. It became simpler. I'm not sure if this is better or not, but that's how it's done now.

The aspiration is, "I want to do my best to be a bodhisattva. I want to try." That is aspiration bodhicitta. Real practice is "Now, I will do everything. I will live as a bodhisattva. I will act as a bodhisattva. I will function as a bodhisattva." There are more vows in practice bodhicitta than in aspiration bodhicitta. These are usually done in two individual ceremonies.

**Question:** It would seem that you need skillful means to be a bodhisattva.

**Rinpoche:** We need skillful means to do anything. I agree. As a bodhisattva, we definitely need skillful means, because bodhisattva means that we try to help other sentient beings, and for that we definitely need skillful means. We have to be very skillful about this, because if we're not skillful, we might think we're helping somebody when actually we might be destroying them.

**Question:** Could you please talk more about renunciation, and how it is viewed by the different schools of Buddhism.

**Rinpoche:** Renunciation has many levels. The word renunciation is used more in vinaya. Buddha's 45 years of teaching were later categorized by his disciples into four: vinaya, abhidharma, sutra and tantra. According to the vinaya teachings, we renounce anything that is a condition for desire, anger, ignorance, jealousy or ego. Men become monks and women become nuns.

When it comes to the practice of sutra, it is expressed differently. The sutra might say that we leave selfishness behind and we take responsibility for others. Practically speaking, this means we're renouncing our selfishness, renouncing doing things for ourselves. We commit ourselves to doing things for others.

In tantra, we have this same renunciation principle, but the word is hardly ever used. What is renounced in tantra is duality. Dualistically speaking, bad is bad and good is good, and they are entirely different. In tantra, bad is the other side of good, and ignorance is the other side of wisdom. When we overcome ignorance, when we turn the page of ignorance, what happens is wisdom. When we overcome not knowing, we become knowing. So, in tantric practice we renounce the separation between bad and good. And roughly speaking, that is how the different levels of the teaching of Buddha apply the principle of renunciation.

It is time for us to draw a conclusion for today. I believe we have learned from each other, and

I very much appreciate that Lord Buddha and all of our teachers in the past made it available to us. Even if it is limited, I'm glad I was able to share some of what I know with you so that you can apply it to your daily situation. Now I would like to request all the venerable monks and lamas and nuns to pray for all of us, that we are able to use this in our daily life, until we reach enlightenment.

[Transcribed and edited by Stephanie Harolde]  
Sherab Ling, Himachal Pradesh, India  
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