

**Teaching by Shangpa Rinpoche on
“Perfecting the Six Paramitas in an Imperfect World”**
Session 1 - 23 March 2012 8pm-10pm Karma Kagyud Buddhist Centre

Good evening to everybody. After quite a long break, now we are back together again. Tonight we talk on the subject of dharma. This is a very moment for me. This time, I discussed with some of the committee members over the subject of the topic and decided to explain on the Six Paramitas over a few sessions. Tonight is the first session.

How important the Six Paramitas are for a practitioner, especially a practitioner of Mahayana and Vajrayana? They are so important that without the development of the Six Paramitas, one is unable to progress on the path of enlightenment. It is thus compulsory for us to adopt these paramitas or perfections and it is kind of a gradual process of development under the Mahayana and Vajrayana practice.

So, how does one apply them into the daily life? They are simple and yet not so simple for application into the daily life. It depends on how we understand them. Usually one learns Buddhism through books first. Once we become convinced, we take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha and explore in depth the meaning of the dharma and acquire more understanding. Then we develop Bodhicitta. Following the Mahayana path, we start to realize that Bodhicitta is compulsory and that it must be adopted. Without which one does not embark onto the path of enlightenment. It is the main gate for entry. So we must take Bodhisattva vow that comprises of Aspiration Bodhicitta and Application Bodhicitta.

We often refer to Bodhicitta and enlightenment. Presumably we know what they mean. In the word Bodhi, ‘Bo’ means knowing or seeing. Knowing means free from ignorance. Knowing something is the antidote to the unknown. The ordinary superficial knowledge that we have is partial knowledge. But Bodhi refers to complete knowledge, in totality, without ignorance and any obscuration. The whole truth of samsara and nirvana is known.

‘Di’ is the person who has the ‘Bo’. Thus ‘Bodhi’. Every sentient being has that kind of potential. It is just a matter of clearing that obscuration. So once you clear that obscuration, the ‘Bo’ or wisdom surfaces. There is no need to find it from external source. It is within oneself. ‘Citta’ means mind or heart. Currently we are not enlightened persons, but we have that intention to become enlightened. That is called ‘Bodhicitta’, the intention to attain the Bodhi. That is how we should understand.

Enlightenment or Bodhi are the same thing. Enlightenment is also Buddha. Buddha is also derived from Bodhi. Buddha means omniscience. The Tibetan word for Buddha is ‘Sangye’, i.e. awakened from the sleep of ignorance. These are all definitions of enlightenment. First we must know the meaning of enlightenment. Then we will have an interest and strive towards enlightenment. Under the Mahayana and Vajrayana path, enlightenment has two aspects – accomplishment of self and others. When both are accomplished, then it is enlightenment. If one only managed to complete one’s own purpose, that is not enlightenment. Practitioners who strive only for their own enlightenment, they fulfill their own purpose and become Arhants or

PratyekaBuddhas. Practitioners who fulfill the purpose of both self and others, and complete their aspirations for sentient beings ultimately attain Buddhahood. That is complete enlightenment.

In order to develop that enlightenment, it is taught that the application Bodhicitta comprises of 1. generosity, 2. morality, 3. patience, 4. diligence, 5. meditative concentration and 6. wisdom or prajna. These are the six paramitas.

‘Para’ means the other side. Parami. ‘Ita’ means gone to the other side. If you are within the samsara side, your concept of generosity is just ordinary practice of generosity since you have not gone beyond samsara. But it is through the conceptually development to the higher enlightenment cause that it becomes gone beyond. The impact of the development of the six paramitas is not restricted to the worldly achievement but beyond worldly attainment. Finally, one is able to attain enlightenment. Gone beyond, go to the other side.

So whether the application of these six can become paramita or not, there is some kind of specification to abide by. If you apply with the seal of emptiness with every action, then it becomes paramita. If the three seals of emptiness are not applied, then the paramita becomes worldly. But to simplify it, any application that you do, you simply wish for the cause of enlightenment or aspire towards the cause of enlightenment. Then, your application is somehow related to the paramita. There are many practices that we do not make for the aspiration for enlightenment for sentient beings. Rather, they are practiced simply for this lifetime or within the samsaric aspect. For instance, one wishes to be beautiful, rich, dwell in happy places, and fulfill other worldly wishes. In order to achieve that, we practice generosity, patience etc. That is not paramita though there will be results nonetheless. Results are dependent on what you aim for. If you aim for the cause of enlightenment sincerely, without imperfect thoughts, while you are applying, then it becomes paramita, it becomes a cause for enlightenment. It will also fulfill your worldly successes in order for you to have favourable conditions to practice the dharma. You must have sufficient food, good looks and others in order to practice the dharma. If you look fearful, no one will come near to you.

We should develop purely for the sake of enlightenment to benefit all sentient beings and not for today’s achievements, e.g. for health, wealth etc. Nevertheless, we are human beings so naturally these wishes arise and we can’t hide from that. People often come to see me for various purposes. For instance, when they feel that their businesses are not doing well, they ask for puja, make lamp offerings etc to improve their businesses. That is purely with the intention to pick up the business. That kind of aim, if you compare with the aspect of the dharma, it is totally different. It does not fulfill the spiritual requirements. But that kind of action is not totally bad. You still have faith towards the Buddha Dharma and so you do it wholeheartedly. It is still okay but not perfect.

The practice of the paramita is part of our daily lives. We need to have a bit awareness of what we are doing is in accordance with the path of development or not. If you detect something wrong, then we should make correction. After all, our thoughts and motivation can switch us towards the right direction. Most of our actions can be part of our development. Actions follow the intention. If we could correct our intention,

even if you are doing business, with the correct intention, that business forms part of your practice. This is an important aspect that we need to know.

Up to what I have said is just general sharing of the subject. Now we go into detail on the subject of the six paramitas. The first paramita is generosity. The Sanskrit word for generosity is dana paramita. Tibetan is called Jinpa. In most of the Buddha's teaching, the first thing that the Buddha teaches is to develop more generosity. Developing generosity will create favourable conditions to come into contact with more merits and also connections with the dharma and spirituality. I believe you know the life stories of the Buddha. The Buddha is an enlightened person without the desire of food or offerings. He is not dependent on others for food to survive. Under the enlightened quality, good or bad taste to an enlightened aspect is the same. He has gone beyond perfection and imperfection. Everything is super. But why does the Buddha still need to seek alms with his bowl from door to door to beg people for food daily? This is because the Buddha wishes everyone to generate generosity. The immediate effect of the Buddha's action is that the giver comes into contact with the Buddha and his teachings. The Buddha is able to know exactly what that person needs and that person will realize the truth, embark onto the path and reach different stages of realization. Generosity is the first thing to initiate. For that, the Buddha encouraged his monks to go from door to door to seek alms and to teach, assist, advise and give blessings. They can help to relieve the givers' suffering by eating their food and make good dedication. That is how the Buddha introduced generosity during his time. The Buddha also taught that generosity is the most appropriate practice for the layperson because the layperson has some wealth. Monks during the Buddha's time only have three sets of robes and one alms bowl. If the monk gives that bowl to another person, then the next meal might become a problem. Monks do not have materials to give unlike layperson.

Giving does not mean you must give a lot. The amount given does not equate to the amount of merits accumulated. It is the motivation in the giving. That is very important at that moment of giving. One king who offers the whole kingdom to the Buddha acquires the same amount of merits as a beggar offering all that he has to the Buddha. They have the same motivation. So if you compare the king and the beggar in terms of materials, the king has much more to offer. It is the intention or thought that you let go of your own belongings.

'Dan' – generosity, you let go of something and give it to another person. Before that, the item belongs to you. That kind of letting go or giving up is the main thing. If you give with hesitation, considering whether to give or not, it shows you can't let go completely. With that hesitation, you become half-hearted. Though it is still meritorious as it benefits the receiver, the merits accumulated are imperfect in the sense of the giver.

The nature of generosity is partially or fully related to the antidote to the grasping of self – Dag dzin nyen po. When there is an 'I', there are requirements of mine. Then the piling up of 'mine' follows.

Like the queen of the bee, this is I, this is mine, others are worker bees. It becomes attachment or grasping. In the process of cutting off that main grasping of self or I, if you can remove them one by one, it becomes easier to remove that big giant "I". If

you can remove the big worker bee, it becomes easier to attack the queen bee. Worker bees protect the Queen Bee. Together, they protect the honey. If you relate this to self and self-generated possessions and belongings, they are similar. If you let go of something to someone who can benefit from it, even if the action is small, that amount of attachment to self can be minimized. Overall, when you develop more and more generosity, you eliminate more and more attachment to self. Eventually attachment to self is left alone and so you can use one effective weapon of prajna or wisdom to defeat it.

The six paramitas are weapons to destroy the bee's nest. They minimize the attachment to self and self-related possessions. Every possession that you gather gains more attachment. Every possession that you let go, you minimize attachment. It works in that way.

As what I have explained earlier, generosity is the first step introduced by the Buddha and it is a common practice for everybody. Anyone who has a bit of possession can develop generosity. Of course generosity does not refer only to materials. Generosity can be developed through three types – material giving, protection giving, or dharma or spirituality giving. Spiritual person who does not have wealth to give to others can give dharma. Ordinary person who does not have wealth to develop generosity, or the receiver has no need of wealth but needs protection or support, can offer security. Let's say someone is drowning or in life and death situation, you can help save the life of that person by extracting him out of the water. You give protection to others in dangerous situations like fire. Or sometimes if one has to go through scary or unsafe passage without a protector or guard, you can offer the person to safely cross that fearful place. That is protection.

Generosity under the general terms refer to material gifts. But if generosity comes in terms of Mahayana or Vajrayana approach, then generosity is the three types of material giving, protection giving and dharma giving.

Buddha in giving generosity as the first teaching according to Chandrakirti, he mentioned in his text that every person needs and seeks happiness. Every human's happiness is not accomplished without wealth. But that wealth does not naturally come if you do not have merits. That merits of wealth come from development of generosity. The Buddha seeing the cause of wealth is generosity, and that every sentient being needs wealth, the Buddha taught generosity as the first important practice.

Generosity according to Mahayana and Vajrayana approaches are not developed for one's own gain. We need to understand that. Either you are very compassionate to somebody, hoping that in giving, the receiver will benefit; or the subject of your giving is the Triple Gem. This does not mean the Triple Gem is the subject of your compassion. The Triple Gem is far greater than us. The giving here again refers to the love and compassion to all sentient beings. Love and compassion to all sentient beings is so strong that you find ways to accumulate merits. Merits can be acquired by making offerings. That merits gained can be dedicated to offer to sentient beings to liberate themselves. So again, it is the motivation to benefit beings. Or with great compassion, you directly give or offer to relieve that immediate problem. Then happiness is acquired through your generosity. Both are generosity. And these acts do

not have any selfish reasons, i.e. without the intention of being born rich, hoping to improve one's business etc., but purely out of compassion and faith towards the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. That becomes very perfect generosity.

Generosity is like a very important instrument. If you use that in whichever way, results can be fulfilled. We can also use that instrument of generosity to acquire temporary benefits such as to get rich, good rebirth etc. Many sutras and the entire Buddha's teaching affirm that. By being generous, you will be rich. Without giving, you will not gain. Buddha gave the analogy of extracting water from the well. In order to increase and improve the water in the well, you need to extract water from the well. This is true. In Nepal and India, wells are common. If you do not use the wells for months, water will dry out. If you use it frequently, water will increase and improve. The more wealth you need, you should be more generous. Just like the more water you want, you should draw more water from the well.

If you adopt your motivation temporarily, it will also grant that result. If you use this instrument of generosity for the sake of one's own motivation, you are following an arhant or Pratyekabuddha's path. But they do not have the volumes of love and compassion to all sentient beings. They have the wish to liberate themselves. Without genuine love and compassion but for the sake of your own development, if you use the instrument of generosity, you can also achieve liberation. If you think in terms of Mahayana and Vajrayana, led by the love and compassion for sentient beings, then that generosity becomes supreme aspect of generosity. Not only will it benefit sentient beings, eventually it can lead oneself to enlightenment also. Thus, generosity is like one instrument. How one uses it will make the results greater or lesser.

So related to generosity in the form of offering is the giving of service. When I was touring in Malaysia recently, in one of the centres I taught the similar topic of generosity. One day, I visited many houses. Each house has a nice shrine with many offerings of flowers, fruits etc. Some places have shrines but were not maintained neatly and cleanly. There were lots of dust and the images were dull and unpolished. The reason for keeping a shrine is to accumulate merits. We also come to the temple to accumulate merits. The best field to accumulate merits is the representation of the Buddha, Dharma or Sangha. They can be in the form of scriptures or symbols of the Buddha, Dharma or Sangha. I am sure all of you have shrine. You put them into your house, in the best place of your room, with the best furniture, best arrangement, in order to benefit from shrine. How does one benefit from the shrine? By having a shrine, you have the opportunity to serve the shrine, make offerings, clean the shrine etc. Each time you clean up the shrine, you purify sins. The shrine contains representations of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Offerings made accumulate a lot of merits equivalent to mandala offering daily. One piece of flower offering also accumulate merits. Generosity can also be developed through shrine. If you have a shrine but don't do anything to it, then what is it for? I heard someone exclaimed "My Buddha is poor thing, I work and am busy and have no time for the shrine". The Buddha is not the poor thing, the poor thing is you. That is very pitiful. If you think that you can't accumulate merits through the shrine, you should not have a shrine in the first place. Every morning and evening, after you wake up, you should at least make three prostrations, offer one incense and probably one candle and say a few words of prayers. Done! You have accumulated lots of merits. Then you go to work. After work, you do the same thing. Buddha does not require your offerings. It is for

your sake. Offering pleases the Buddha, it is true. But the offerings are not for his consumption. He is pleased because the moment you offer him, you gain lots of merits. The accumulation of merits can benefit many sentient beings to relieve their suffering. That is why the Buddha is happy and pleased. If you have a shrine, so be more diligent in generosity in the form of offering to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Make offering in terms of service like cleaning the shrine. Next time I visit your house, hopefully I will see some difference. That will be wonderful. (Laughters!)

This practice of generosity is not only during ordinary stage it should be developed all the way till the attainment of the first Bhumi and so on it continues. For ordinary person like us, currently we can encourage towards material generosity. You can let go of your own possession to someone else. With that kind of giving you will feel pleasure. Generosity should be applied with application of love and compassion. If you reach high levels of Bodhisattva, you will not have hesitation and in fact have great joy for such act. This is shown during the Buddha's developing stage where he went through 500 impure rebirths and 500 pure rebirths. Most were acts of generosity of his lives for the benefit of others. There were many stories when the Buddha was in the developing stage of Bodhisattva. Once he was the Bodhisattva named Great Soul who gave his life to a tigress and her cubs which were hungry and starving to death. The mother tigress was about to eat her own cubs for survival. Feeling very compassionate, he felt his life was not important and gave it to give them, thus saving the lives of the tigress and her cubs and relieve their suffering. So without hesitation, he used his sword to draw blood and eventually gave up his life to the tigress and cubs.

There were many other similar stories of generosity. It is said that the Bodhisattvas are always hungry for that kind of subject to give. They are always waiting for someone to ask for help. When they hear it, that joy is so great, even greater than an arhant's or PratyekaBuddha's joy in achieving peace. This is because their compassion is limitless and thus they are always waiting to give. It is their fulfillment of their wish to give. An ordinary person still develops generosity through giving materials. Saying a few words of dharma does not mean the person gives spirituality. There must be at least some forms of renunciation. Loving kindness and compassion are within oneself. Just knowing how to say a few words of dharma without the integration of loving kindness and compassion is not a spiritual person. Our ability of generosity will increase through material giving. Gradually that generosity level will increase. Even letting go of one's own body for the sake of others as shown in the stories of the Buddha becomes possible.

In giving up of the body, does the Bodhisattva suffer or not? There are two types in this aspect. Those who did not totally realize emptiness, they will suffer but only in terms of the suffering of lower realms. Nonetheless, they feel happy as they know that the suffering of the physical body endured by them is to replace the suffering of their torments of hell. With that, it helps them to understand the suffering better and they are still okay with the suffering. The Bodhisattva who reaches the first bhumi onwards, who has already realized the truth of emptiness, they do not have physical suffering and thus no mental suffering as well. They only have the joy of giving. Their level of generosity increases and it becomes great.

The act of generosity of the great Bodhisattvas is together with the Three Seals of Emptiness. Partially that can be applied. We can think in that way and our generosity can become quite perfect. But the complete generosity can only be done by the great Bodhisattvas who have realized emptiness. Emptiness in terms of the person who give, who receive, and in terms of the materials or actions of giving. You start to realize that these three are not truly existing. I am a giver, I am empty in nature. While you realize that, the subject of receiver is also equally empty. In that sense, there is no receiver or person in physical or truly established. In that manner, while you also realized at the same time, the giver or material or receiver, they are all empty in nature. Thus you complete the giving in the most perfect form of generosity. That generosity does not carry any stains or worldly aspect. It is complete paramita as there are no conceptals involved. There is no pride of the giver or the inferior of the receiver. It is free from any concepts. It is generosity with the seal of three emptiness. So next time you give something, you try to give with emptiness nature. Then that is great. If you can't incorporate emptiness, then give out of love and compassion. Do not give with the intention of investing, without thinking of wanting something back which is business-like. Give without the intention of investing. The benefits will be achieved spontaneously and you don't have to reject spontaneous achievement. It very regretful or pitiful if you gave with the intention of wanting something in return.

That is all for tonight. Hopefully you are not bored with my nonsensical talk.

Session 2 - 3 April 2012 8pm-10pm Karma Kagyud Buddhist Centre

Good evening. We continue our talk on the six paramita. We have already completed the first session. Tonight is the second session where I will explain more on morality.

Generally, we develop our enlightened attitudes or enlightened minds, which refer to the Bodhicitta. How does that look like? There are a few things that we need to understand. First we need to understand the suffering nature of samsara and start to see things as imperfect, that they are not meaningful or not so purposeful. In that way, renunciation will develop. When renunciation develops, you think you must be liberated and not to remain in samsara as that is not worth it. That kind of correct understanding very deeply rooted in ourselves is the first step of renunciation.

With renunciation, then we start to practice, taking refuge, purification of sins, accumulation of merits. After that you start to analyze that liberation of myself alone is not a total solution of overcoming samsara sufferings. This is because both myself and others are actually the same. If only oneself is liberated, the others who are still suffering in samsara are not so justified. That (self-liberation) also shows that something is not completely perfected. We need to develop the thought that liberating ourselves can liberate others. With that understanding, then we start to take Bodhisattva vows. The way of thinking is then upgraded or changed and we generate more compassion. This compassion when it goes to a higher level, we call it *lhag sam*. It means extraordinary thoughts related to compassion. You dare to involve yourself in

the relief of suffering. Most of the time, we have compassion but we do not go in to eradicate the suffering. We do not suffer ourselves in relieving the suffering of others. You can easily tell whether you have that *lhag sam*, whether you have that special thought or not for the relief of other's suffering. If you do not have that, you will definitely pity others but you do not wish to suffer in relieving the suffering of others. Bodhisattvas on the other hand are willing to – even for the sake of one sentient being. They think in such a manner “If I have to suffer aeons of hell in order to relieve that being, I am willing to do so.”

We may not be ready to do that but mentally we must be ready to accept up to that extent. Then we go to the proper procedures of taking vows and commitments. From now on I will commit Aspiration Bodhicitta and Application Bodhicitta.

Aspiration Bodhicitta – for that cause, one aspires towards it.

Application Bodhicitta – willing to do whatever that is necessary to reach that state of enlightenment.

Buddha himself has defined the practise path of Bodhisattva. i.e. to follow the steps of the six paramitas. They are very important for our progress. That starts with generosity as the first paramita. One does not need to attain a certain level of achievement or be a special category of person in order to practice generosity. It is the easiest to start. It is also the most important practice. Based on our level, generosity is what we need the most and what we need to do the best. It is the best practice.

As shared in the last session, there are three different types of generosity namely:–

- i. Material giving;
- ii. Protection – protecting other's lives, protecting other's happiness, giving assistance to others;
- iii. Dharma – showing the spiritual path. With certain qualities, you are able to give guidance to others onto the right path to enlightenment. Spiritual giving.

These show how important generosity is. Then, we move onto the next step which is also a very important paramita, i.e. Morality. Morality in sanskrit is *sila*. In the Tibetan language, morality is termed *Tsultrim*. *Sila* may have many meanings. One meaning is cool comfort. As long as you engage in morality, such discipline will make your mind very calm and contented and very peaceful. That calm and peaceful nature is like a comfortable temperature. It is neither freezing cold nor burning hot but comfort coolness. If you have some kind of moral discipline, it will make your mind calm and disciplined. This is *sila*.

Tsultrim - *Tsul* means in accordance. If you are living amongst 100 gentlemen, you have to be in accordance with their discipline, their lifestyle, eating, talking, in accordance with that standard of gentleman. *Trim* means discipline. Discipline in accordance with Bodhisattva's ways or self-liberation's methods (Pratyekabuddha).

Morality in English is defined as the quality of being in accord with standards of right or good conduct.

Why do we need to observe morality? This is not only a Buddhist practice. If you go anywhere, in a society or community or country, wherever you are there are certain moral ethics or discipline or rules. In laymen terms, morality refers to the rules and regulations, terms and conditions. You need to be perfect in morality to accordance yourself with society, community, country, spirituality and so on. This is very universal as long as there are human inhabitants in this world. There are rules, discipline, moral ethics. Whether they are strict or loose or just nice is very much dependent on communities and situations. Somehow as human, we need to have them to make ourselves most perfect. So Buddha Shakyamuni also defined the rules – what we should and should not do. For instance, we accumulate merits and advance towards enlightenment. What we break, certain rules and regulations will have negative impact to degenerate ourselves.

For monks, there is the vinaya or 253 rules that must be observed. There are also 36 novice rules to observe. After Buddha's enlightenment, he went to Varanasi and started spreading teachings and ordained monks as Bhikshu who subsequently attained arahathood and so on. In the beginning years, Buddha did not define any precepts for ordination and observance. He did not see anyone breaking the rules. Everyone was perfect and full of renunciation. Everyone integrated dharma in them closely. So there was no need for the Buddha to create rules. In later part of Buddha's life, there were some monks who misbehaved and the Buddha saw that the bad behavior might be repeated so he started setting the first four major vows and added more along the way. The remaining vows were made to protect the four major vows. That is the vinaya.

Similarly for laypersons, observing morality was just to engage with the ten wholesome thoughts and actions and to abandon the ten unwholesome thoughts and actions. That was the beginning and the basis of everything. When you put them into more precise context, there are self-liberation vows, upasik (male layman practitioner) and upasika (female lay practitioner), sramana (male novice) and sramanerika (female novice) and Bhikhus (monks) and Bhikunis (nuns) making a total of seven liberation vows.

The principle of these seven vows is the ten wholesome acts and the ten unwholesome acts.

So once we know how great generosity is, by being generous to perfect and imperfect fields, generosity in many ways, all these can result in the accumulation of lots of merits and purification of lots of karma. So how can that merit and purification be increased and become more effective? If you perform just one time of generosity, you can achieve maybe 100 times the results of generosity. How can we make generosity efficient and perfect? So next to generosity is morality. Morality is the holding basis of all qualities. Morality is just like the earth that sustains everything. It is the basis of every major or minor quality. Development of every quality starts from morality. Even if you develop generosity very diligently, if you do not have morality, the merits are not so great. If you don't observe morality properly, if your conduct or ethics are very loose, you may have lesser chance to be born as a human or in higher realms. Your chances of being born in lower realms are greater. You may not acquire precious human body. E.g. Rich families' pets have no problem with food. They are very well taken care by their owners but they are still not in human form. Maybe they have in

their past lives developed generosity and so their lives are much better than stray animals. Some pet dogs are so well taken care and sometimes, the quality of their lives are even better than poor people. The Bhutan King used to have a dog that must eat together with the King. The dog has his a throne and special utensils etc. The servants even had to lower their heads when serving the dog or else the dog will bark at the servants, thus making the King unhappy. That was in the olden days during the 16th Karmapa's time. Many Khenpos and Rinpoches had seen that dog and witnessed the acts. The dog was very lucky amongst other dogs. Perhaps due to his past generosity? Yet he does not have morality and so he was born as a dog. It is mentioned in the *Abhisamaya Alankara* the verses below:-

*Generosity will acquire wealth.
Yet, if there is bad rebirth;
That must be due to the damage in the leg of morality*

In order for us to complete the accumulation of merits and purification, then morality is very important for us to observe. In observing morality, we can sustain our quality and increase the power of accumulation of merits and purification. This can be increased multifold by the hundreds and thousands.

So under the Mahayana as well as Vajrayana, morality is a part of the Bodhisattva's development. This morality is divided into three categories:-

- i. Morality to protect from wrong-doing, negative thoughts and actions. That is very important as negative thoughts and actions arise effortlessly due to our habitual patterns since beginningless time. We must have some protective shield to prevent these from entering into us and destroy our qualities. For ordinary levels of morality, this is the most important to protect against negative thoughts and actions. For that reason, we receive the self-liberation vows, Bodhisattva vows, Vajrayana vows and so on. On the other hand, morality also helps to increase positive thoughts and actions.
- ii. For Bodhisattva practice, we need morality to generate all the virtues. Morality to gather all the virtues.
- iii. Bodhisattva practice – Morality to benefit sentient beings or to fulfill the purpose of sentient beings.

So we need to observe and understand these three moralities. The first category of morality – to protect oneself from negative thoughts and actions, most are related to self-liberation vows. These are the five precepts. I will not go into the details as there are so many things to say. Self-liberation vows alone also has many categories. Five precepts for ordinary lay practitioners, 36 for novice monks, full monks 253 under the *sarwa-asti* (Japanese, Chinese, Tibetan Buddhism systems). *Sthavir-wadi* (*Thervadi*). Based on the history that most Mahayana and Vajrayana follow *sarwa-asti vadi*. *Pratekabuddha* follow *starwa-wadi* or *Theravada*. But today we simply refer to yellow robed monks as *Theravada* monks. *Sravakayana* is the proper word. *Sra* – listening. *Vak* – talking. They are like messengers of the Buddha. They share whatever they have listened from the Buddha. *Pratekayabuddha* - *prate* means self or individual. *Buddha* refers to enlightenment. So single proclamation of the Buddha. This is yet another category of liberation that took place. *Pratekyabuddha* through the

12 independent links, realized how samsara forms and in reverse, how samsara ends. So they cut off the cause of samsara.

These are two different approaches but both lead to liberation. That is *sravaka* and *pratekaya* and both lead to *Arahant* or Foe-destroyer. *Ari* means enemy, *hant* means to destroy or kill. Foe-destroyer refers to the destruction of defilements and the cause which is ignorance. Is Buddha Shakyamuni an arahant? He is not only a Buddha but also an arahant as he has destroyed all enemies and all defilements. In that way, under that category is classified as Theravada.

There is another name which many people don't like especially those who are in the path of arahant, *Sravakabuddha* and *Pratyekabuddha*. That word is *Hinayana*. *Hina* means small or less. *Yana* means vehicle or transportation. *Mahayana* is the greater vehicle. But *Hinayana* is not an insult. It is just the functional aspect of the practice.

Under the *Mahayana* teachings, the Buddha himself referred to the term *Hinayana*. Under *Mahayana* sutras, there are mentions of the word *Hinayana*. That does not refer to anything bad but in the type of persons who engage in carrying more or less load. That is the only difference. The person engaging in carrying smaller load is not inferior or lower. It is not an insult to the practice. The practice is perfect as taught by the Buddha as it cuts off samsara. But based on the commitments, for Mahayana practitioners, once you engage in it, whether you can or you cannot, you still have to uplift all sentient beings. It is like a duty. Many people can't do it though they kept the promise. Some can do it. *Hinayana* means you carry the weight of yourself towards liberation. So in comparison, yourself is lighter and simpler than others in the way you attain liberation. In the Buddha's time, there were *arahants* and practitioners of *Mahayana*. Everyone lived together. Many *Mahayana* teachings were listened by *Sariputta*, *Mogallana* etc. These great *arahants* were the ones who listened to the *Mahayana* teachings the most but they chose to be *sravakas*. They assisted *Mahayana* sangha and acted as messenger of the Buddha's teachings in transmitting the Buddha's *Mahayana* teachings. It is dependent on each individual's aims and our capacity of our minds that we can hold and sustain.

So that is the arahants and accordingly the self-liberation vows that one need to observe. Even these self-liberation vows must be observed according to Bodhisattva ways. They are the same vows but with different motivation. In the early times, we keep the vows for liberation from samsara. But as Bodhisattvas, we keep these vows not just for oneself, not for the achievement as a Universal King or gods or humans or wealth, beauty, nobility, prevention to be reborn in hell or hungry ghosts etc. We keep Bodhisattva vows not for these purposes but for the cause of enlightenment and that enlightenment is for the benefit of sentient beings. For sentient beings to have ultimate benefits of liberation from samsara, that kind of benefits can only be given by the enlightened. Simple giving of money, meals, medicine etc cannot liberate others easily as these are merely temporary relief. Thus the force of compassion is so strong that I must liberate them. For that, I must do whatever is needed. So I must be enlightened for the sake of all beings. So I strive to achieve enlightenment first not for the purpose of securing oneself first. If you have that motivation, enlightenment will not be attained. Perhaps liberation can be achieved for oneself only but not complete Buddhahood if one carries this self-intention. In order for enlightenment to occur, you

have to give up everything, even the attainment of enlightenment must be for the sake of all beings. So with that, we observe morality.

First receive Bodhisattva's vows – aspiration and application Bodhisattva vows. There are two different systems – one from Shantideva tradition, another from Serlingpa or Atisha's masters tradition. The variation does not matter since they originated from the Buddha himself. After taking Bodhisattva's vows, we must observe them. Observance of vows also can be divided into two different categories though they are ultimately the same in generating love and compassion and special thoughts to engage or *lhag sam*. How do we preserve and make it more efficient? The advice still comes to the same thing.

Shantideva system of Buddha's practice is extracted from the sutra *Akashgarbar* sutra. Buddha gave this sutra to ask – essence of space. In that sutra, it described what is shared by Shantideva. 18 downfalls are described here. The other is Serlingpa – extracted from sutra called *Jang-sa* or Bodhisattva's bhumi or ground under the Mahayana sutra. That sutra mentioned the abandonment of defect of Bodhisattva – there are about 46. Abandoning thoughts and actions once we received the Bodhisattva's vows. If we can observe very carefully, then the path of enlightenment can be very smooth with no hindrance and all blockages cleared. So precepts are very important for our practice path. Related to that, in Vajrayana, once you receive empowerments, you are also bound to observe certain precepts. Vajrayana also have 14 downfalls. They are very general. Each tantra has its own detailed precepts to observe. But generally the 14 downfalls must be observed in all tantras. Once we engage in dharma, we must not remain stagnant and progress towards enlightenment. The observance of the precepts are very essential. With such observance, there will be no issue. Without that, there will be lots of obstructions and we may not make it to enlightenment. We abandon all negative thoughts and actions. Then after that is the gathering of all wholesome thoughts and actions such as performing prayers, recitation, prostration, making offerings, have a kind heart, serve others etc. One should not be lazy in doing something beneficial like recitation of mantra. Part of morality is to gather wholesome thoughts and actions and wholesome mind. Benefitting sentient beings is also an important step of the Bodhisattva's practice. Once you have taken up this responsibility, you do not wait till enlightenment is achieved before benefitting others. It is not that kind of contract. Even in the smallest capacity, no matter how you can benefit others, you should act. Make yourself useful to others. Not necessary in the extra ordinary way e.g. when one is not hungry and you force that person to eat. But if someone is very hungry, you in giving one meal can relieve hunger. Just that kind of simple service in giving water to relieve thirst, giving guidance when someone is lost. So this is morality in benefitting others.

1. Observing the vows to protect you from influence of negativities
2. Increase the merits and wisdom – that is related in all practices
3. Benefit sentient beings as much as you can skillfully. Especially in Vajrayana practice, skillfulness is a very important word. Without skills, you may cause more damage. Wholeheartedly you may wish to help, but with skills, you know how and when to help. That will benefit a lot.

Wordly and beyond worldly – emptiness approach of oneself, the observer of morality and emptiness, realization of the field of observing morality from whom? The actions

of the morality – that itself is also realization of emptiness in nature. *Pragyaparamita* – *pra* – uncommon or supreme, *gya* refers to wisdom, *para* means gone and *ita* means beyond. That merit is immeasurable.

Giving is empty,
Giver is empty,
Receiver is empty.

Q: Referring to the 14 vows of Vajrayana, can we discuss openly or only restricted to those who have taken the vows?

A: Whichever tantra you have received, as long as you receive one empowerment, and you start to keep that empowerment's commitment, then you are suppose to observe the 14 root downfalls. Vajrayana's empowerment is like a gateway to enter. Once you have received the empowerment, you are subject to observe the 14 root downfalls.

Q: The problem is many do not know the 14 root downfalls.

A: Is that right? We need to be serious about the downfalls. If we do not know what are to be observed, then how to observe? Then whatever arises will just be 'coincidence'. It is important to understand every one of these precepts, vows, downfalls. Then check which category of practitioner we are and observe accordingly. We can check ourselves before sleep. If we know, then we can restore that broken vow in the evening, and pay more attention to it to maintain it at your best the next day. So day-by-day, you restore, that is how you practice. It is impossible not to break the vows once you receive them. Even when we try our best, we still break them. We restore them and make ourselves more perfect and pure. So we must know what the vows are.