

Three Principles of the Teaching .

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When we follow any kind of teaching, we must understand that there are always three principles, otherwise we won't be able to understand what kind of teaching it is, and which kind of benefit we can have. This is not for judging that one teaching is better than another. But it is very important because if we are following a teaching, we must understand the characteristics of that teaching. The characteristics are related to the situation. The teaching goes according to the capacity of the individual, just like a medicine: for example, some individuals are more interested [in the teaching], some have more capacity or less, others have more or less knowledge, etc. When we are ill we can't take any kind of medicine. In order to know what medicine to take, we have to go to a doctor who checks and then gives us advice. That means that it is related to the situation and condition of the individual. It is the same thing with the teaching.

In the teaching there are three principles that we must understand. In general, in the Dzogchen teaching, we call these three the base, the path, and the fruit. They may not use the same terms in all teaching traditions, but even if they do not, there are always three principles.

I'll give you the example of the Sutra teaching. The Sutra teaching is the teaching of the Buddha at the more physical level. In this teaching there are two vehicles that are called Hinayana and Mahayana. Hinayana means 'minor vehicle' while Mahayana means 'greater vehicle'. Why is one considered 'minor' and the other 'greater'? When we judge with our minds in an ordinary way, we immediately think that 'minor' is less important and that 'greater' is much better. But it doesn't mean that. It is related to the condition of the individual. Many people do not have the capacity to open themselves. You can understand this in ordinary life. Many people always remain closed and don't even manage to communicate with other people. Some people are always open so we can understand that there is a difference.

In the same way, in the teaching, Mahayana means more open. The Hinayana or 'minor vehicle' means more closed, not open. They listened to what Buddha said, and whatever he said they considered perfect. But Buddha can manifest in different ways, in different circumstances, and teach in different ways. Buddha was an enlightened being, not just someone who lived in India for some years, manifested *parinirvana*, death, and then it was finished. We cannot limit the teaching of the Buddha in that way. When you think like that it means you are closed, not open. Buddha, for example, gave teachings to human beings, divinities, *nagas*, and different classes of sentient beings, in different forms and in different circumstances. It wasn't that Buddha taught only in India to a few students. So you can understand what closed and open means.

The Hinayana are a bit like that and for that reason when they follow teaching they receive a vow. What does receiving a vow mean? It means controlling your existence: your body, your speech, and your mind. Among the teachings of the Buddha there are some that say you can do this but

you cannot do that, and so you follow this with a vow, considering that you should behave in this way, insisting that the vow is the only way to realization.

Mahayana is not that way, even though they also pay respect to vows because they are necessary for people who have no capacity. In our ordinary lives a lot of people say that they don't want to drink too much, or that they don't want to smoke because they have discovered that these things are very negative for them. They try to stop many times, but they never succeed. This is the weak point of human beings. For people who have this condition, the only way is to take a vow and respect it. In this way they have some possibility [to stop]. So in the Hinayana system, you control your body, speech and mind and don't commit negative actions. So when you receive a vow, there is a rule that you should follow. If you break the rule, you feel bad.

In the Mahayana the principle is not that. If you do not have the capacity and need to take a vow, you can take it and apply it. But the principle of the Mahayana is related to your intentions. What kind of intention do you have? Good or bad? For example, if you have a good intention, you continue with that and accumulate good actions. If you are a Mahayana practitioner and have a bad intention, you discover that you have a bad intention. If you follow a bad intention, you can commit negative actions. So you don't need any vows. You can control yourself. When you know that you have a negative intention, you get rid of it and cultivate a good intention instead. Going ahead that way there is no problem.

What is the difference between Mahayana and Hinayana? In a very simple way it is because one is called a 'minor' vehicle and the other a 'greater' one. It doesn't mean that Mahayana is more important and even if it were more important, the principle of the names 'Mahayana' and 'Hinayana' is not based on that. When some people explain the difference between the two they say that Mahayana has more compassion and Hinayana less. This is not correct. You cannot say that Hinayana doesn't have enough compassion. In Hinayana there is the realization of the Arhats who know very well about the condition of *samsara*. They know very well how heavy the suffering of sentient beings is. Then how is it possible that they have no compassion. This is not true.

In Hinayana and Mahayana there are three principles: the first is called the base, which is the consideration of the condition of the individual, the real nature of sentient beings. In different traditions they have different considerations of this. How is this explained, for example, in Mahayana? They say?? (gzhi bden gnyis zung 'jug) which means that the base is the Two Truths. It is the union between these two because they are interdependent. When good and bad exist they are always interdependent: if there is no good, bad does not exist. If there is no bad, good does not exist. That means that they are interdependent. When we say 'Two Truths', it means that the truth of the real nature is emptiness. In the Sutra teaching it is called *shunyata*, emptiness, the real nature of everything. This is called Absolute Truth, the real nature of emptiness.

The Relative Truth means everything that we are, that we see and hear, the relative condition.

Even an enlightened being like Buddha Sakyamuni, whose real nature is Dharmakaya, the state of emptiness, had all the qualifications and for that reason manifested as a human being. When Buddha was a human being, he was in the relative condition, not in the absolute condition. For that reason, if today Buddha Sakyamuni was somewhere in India, we could go there and see him, just like in ancient times, when Buddha's students had contact with him. This is called the relative condition.

They say that the base is the relative condition and the condition of the real truth. In the condition of the real truth they explain that all sentient beings have Buddha seed or Buddha nature. That means that even though they are in *samsara*, suffering and transmigrating, if they follow the teaching of the Buddha, the Path, they have the possibility to be realized. Just like having a National Lottery ticket, they have the possibility of winning. But there is no guarantee. In the same way, everybody has Buddha nature, and there is this possibility. This is the consideration of the Mahayana.

Hinayana does not consider that. Hinayana says that there are sentient beings who have Buddha nature when they are fortunate and meet the teaching of the Buddha, although most beings do not have it and transmigrate infinitely. In Tibetan we call this *????????* (*rigs chad*) which [literally] means missing that family, generation. The Hinayana and Mahayana have many discussions about this. In any case, in the Sutra teaching, the base considers that we have Buddha nature. It doesn't mean that we have the potentiality or the qualification of realization, only the possibility of Buddha nature. This is the Sutra point of view of the base. It doesn't mean only for human beings but for all sentient beings. Even a small ant walking on the street also has Buddha nature. So this is the path of Sutra.

The Vajrayana teaching was not taught directly or physically by the Buddha. The Buddha manifested in different manifestations; sometimes he even manifested as Buddha in the human dimension or that of the Devas. What he transmitted was the Vajrayana teaching. However, most of the time he manifested in different ways called Sambhogakaya, the pure dimension with the essence of the five elements. Think about the manifestation of Kalachakra. We say that the Kalachakra teaching is the teaching of Buddha Sakyamuni, but it doesn't mean that he taught it somewhere in India. Some histories of Kalachakra say that three years before his Parinirvana, Buddha manifested as Kalachakra somewhere in south India. But this is very much linked to our human ideas. A Sambhogakaya manifestation cannot exist in time. If there is a Sambhogakaya manifestation in time, it is not Sambhogakaya. Sambhogakaya manifestation is beyond time and space. It is in the pure dimension. So who is Kalachakra? Buddhists think that it is Buddha Shakyamuni. In an ordinary way, Buddha Shakyamuni was a monk. Kalachakra is the union of *yab* and *yum* so how can it physically be Buddha Shakyamuni? This is a manifestation, otherwise it is a complete contradiction.

There is no contradiction when Enlightened Beings manifest in the Sambhogakaya. It depends on the type of experience, and through that experience they transmit that knowledge and manifest that

way.

The teaching of Tantrism or Vajrayana we call Vajra teaching. Why is it called Vajrayana? The teaching that Buddha gave in Bodhgaya and other places is called Sutrayana. *Yana* means vehicle, a vehicle for travelling towards total realization. All the different vehicles are called '*yana*' in Sanskrit.

This is a symbol of the *vajra* [Rinpoche holds up a *vajra*]. Most people think that this is a *vajra*, but it is not. It is a symbol of the *vajra* and it is presented in the Vajrayana or the vehicle of the *vajra*. What does *vajra* mean? In the centre there is a kind of sphere or ball which represents our real nature of Dharmakaya, beyond any kind of concepts or limitations. This is the real nature when we say Absolute Truth. The Vajrayana also considers that.

In the Sutra the relative condition is only what we see and hear. In Vajrayana practices and knowledge, the relative condition is divided into two types: the pure dimension and the impure. The pure dimension is related to manifestations of Enlightened Beings in the pure dimension. The impure dimension is the samsaric situation that we are in. For that reason there are two levels: on the top of the *vajra* there are five points, on the lower part there are five points. Both the pure and the impure dimensions are related to the center, because this is the nature of all sentient beings.

Most sentient beings are ignorant of their real nature. Not only this, they are also ignorant of this higher level of the pure dimension. They believe in what they see and hear with their sense organs. This is their capacity. When we close our eyes we don't see anything. When we open our eyes we can see something. What do we see? Everything that is produced by our karmic dimension. This is our impure dimension: everything that has contact with our senses when we see, hear, and think. We have contact with subject and object continually, and transmigrate day after day that way. And we believe in that very much.

The Vajrayana makes us understand. For example, there are the manifestations of the five Dhyani Buddhas in the pure dimension. In Vajrayana, we have different kinds of manifestations, but even though there are infinite manifestations, they all belong to these five families, just as they are presented in the *mandala*. At the center of the *mandala* there is the Buddha family, which is more related to the Dharmakaya and the real condition. Then in the east of the *mandala* there is the Vajra family, in the south the Ratna family, in the west the Padma family, and in the north the Karma family. All manifestations are included within these five families. This is the way to learn how to go to the essence.

When we are ignorant of our real nature, which is just like the five Dhyani Buddhas in the pure dimension, then we see and hear everything in an ordinary way with our karmic vision. In our karmic vision in the base we have the five aggregations: aggregations of form, of sensation, perception, mental formation, and consciousness. These are similar to the five Dhyani Buddhas in the pure dimension. When we develop them, we have all aspects of *samsara*. For that reason, in

the Vajrayana, the symbol of the *vajra* is presented because they say that everybody has the potentiality of the *vajra* in their real nature. All Vajrayana teachings have this knowledge, although some may be more direct, while others may be less. Even the lower tantras recognize the nature of the *vajra*. The nature of the *vajra* means much more than Buddha seed.

How is Buddha nature explained in Vajrayana? Buddha nature is considered to be a very powerful potentiality. Nobody can destroy it. Nobody can change it. It cannot be cut. It is always stable in its own condition etc. There are explanations of its seven qualifications or aspects. This is the base, the condition of the individual as it is presented in Vajrayana. What do we need when we have this base? We need to receive initiation to empower the development stage and accomplishment stage to get in that state. So the base and the path are presented that way.

In Dzogchen the presentation is not like that of the *vajra*. In the Dzogchen teaching and the Vajrayana there are two systems. For example, the principal practice of Vajrayana is transformation, transforming our impure dimension into a pure one, like in the *mandala*. Our individual condition transforms into a deity.

After receiving initiation, there are two systems to apply that. One way is to develop [the visualization] slowly step by step. Another way is when we receive initiation, knowing the condition of our real nature we can be directly, instantly, in that transformation.

When we go ahead with this gradual transformation, it is called the Anuttara Tantra system, in Sanskrit. When we transform instantly this method is called Anuyoga. In the Anuttara Tantra there is also the name 'Anu' as in Anuyoga. 'Anu' means 'superior' which means we can have this transformation into a divinity. Both of these methods were originally taught by Guru Padmasambhava in Tibet in the 8th century. Then that knowledge developed in the Buddhist tradition, in particular the method of Anuyoga, not transforming gradually but instantly. But today this tradition and method has only continued in the Nyingmapa school.

In Tibet, in the Vajrayana tradition we have four official schools: firstly the Nyingmapa which means the more ancient, then later on the Sakyapa, Kagyupa and Gelugpa traditions developed. All these traditions follow Vajrayana teaching. Of course people also apply and follow all Buddhist traditions in Tibet, including Hinayana and Mahayana, and have this knowledge of the base. When we go to a high level of the teaching, we should not be closed. We should understand all the lower traditions and be expert in them. We should not stop and think that we don't want to learn about the others because we consider that we are following a high path and remain ignorant of the existence of other teachings at a high level. For this reason, in Vajrayana they know very well about Hinayana and Mahayana and apply and use them although the principle is Vajrayana practice.

Vajrayana practices in the Sakyapa, Gelugpa and Kagyupa traditions are called Anuttara Tantra, or the way of gradual transformation. For example, if you receive an initiation of the Anuttara Tantra system, such as Kalachakra, and you are interested in doing the practice, there is a small book

called *sadhana* to learn how to do it. It starts with refuge and *bodhicitta* at the beginning, then explains how you should transform in the development stage, then the accomplishment stage etc. When you read this book step by step and do all these things, then slowly you construct the manifestation. This is called the gradual way.

Anuyoga doesn't need that because Anuyoga doesn't consider that the real nature of an individual practitioner is only *vajra*. In Anuyoga the base is the same as Dzogchen: since the beginning we have a perfected state, we have all qualifications. When we have that, in Anuyoga when we receive an initiation from a master, the teacher giving the initiation introduces you and you have total potentiality. Now that you know that you have this potentiality, why do you need to construct something? You don't need to. You only need a secondary cause and this is the initiation you already received and the instructions to know how you have to transform, for example, what Kalachakra looks like. Instantly when you use that seed syllable you are Kalachakra. This is just the same as reflections manifesting in the mirror. The mirror has infinite potentiality of reflecting. In the same way in our condition we have the infinite potentiality of self-perfected qualifications. When we know that, we are just in that state; there is no reason to construct or create something. This is the difference between Anuyoga and Anuttara Tantra.

In Dzogchen, when we do any kind of practice if we use transformation we use more the Anuyoga system because it is easier. When we talk about the Base in Dzogchen teaching, it means that we are talking about the self-perfected state from the very beginning. What is Dzogchen? It is the non-duality of *kadag* and *lhundrub*. The non-duality of emptiness and its infinite qualifications, this is the real nature. And even though we use something like transformation or being in the state of contemplation, we are being directly in that state because this is our condition. It is presented in the Dzogchen teaching that way.

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