



His Eminence Khentin Tai Situ Rinpoche

The Six Paramitas, and the Paths & the Grounds

Six invaluable qualities unfold and manifest freely and openly from within the minds of disciples of the Buddhadharma who practiced and perfected the teachings that Lord Buddha presented. The six invaluable qualities are known as “the six paramitas,” *phar-phying-drug*. The six paramitas in Tibetan and Sanskrit are: (1) *sbyin-pa* (*dana*, ‘generosity’), (2) *tshul-khrims* (*shila*, ‘ethics’), (3) *bzöd-pa* (*kshanti*, ‘forbearance, acceptance, patience, forgiveness’), (4) *brtsong-grüis* (*virya*, ‘joyful endeavour, diligence, zeal’), (5) *bsam-gtän* (*dyana*, ‘meditative concentration’), and (6) *shes-rab* (*prajna*, ‘discriminating wisdom-awareness, insight’). *Paramita* is a Sanskrit term and means ‘perfection.’ It is translated into Tibetan as *pha-rol-tu-phyin-pa*, which literally means ‘gone to the other shore.’ The other shore in the context of the Buddhadharma means transcendence of mental fixations concerning a subject, an object, and an action.

1. Generosity – *sByin-pa*

The practice of generosity, the first paramita, is to give what is helpful and beneficial and to give without clinging to a self. There are three ways to be generous: (1) giving material things, (2) giving loving protection from fear, and (3) giving loving kindness and understanding. The teachings on the first kind of generosity explain correct and incorrect generosity. It is necessary to abandon improper giving and to practice correct generosity.

One’s motivation is very important when one is generous and charitable. It is incorrect to give something to someone with the intention to harm them, or with the intention to become famous, or out of fear of impending poverty. It’s also necessary to consider what one gives. A Bodhisattva should never give anything that can hurt others and should never give anything with malevolent

thoughts in mind. It's also important to reflect the recipient of one's generosity. It certainly isn't good to pamper those persons filled with desire and greed. Furthermore, a Bodhisattva is never reluctant to be charitable and is never malevolent, disrespectful, or scornful when doing so. Correct generosity is giving whatever one possibly can and doing so with a pure motivation and with enthusiasm. There are many very inspiring stories about great Arhats and Bodhisattvas who even gave their own flesh to feed animals that were on the verge of starving to death. So, one gives whatever one can to the needy.

It's important to practice generosity, especially towards representations of the Three Jewels, towards one's parents, towards those who are sick and in need of protection, and also towards those one thinks are rivals or foes. One gives them whatever one can with joy, respect, compassion, and openly. It's more beneficial to use one's own hands than to ask others to take one's place, to choose the right time, and not to cause any harm whatsoever.

The second form of generosity is giving loving protection to all those who are fearful of others, who are afraid of getting sick and of dying, and who are afraid of natural catastrophes.

The third form of generosity is giving the priceless gift of Dharma to others, which doesn't mean speaking about it with just anyone. It means helping those who have respect for the precious Buddhadharma understand and appreciate its invaluable meaning and worth. With a pure motivation, one should pass on the authentic teachings that one has received from an authentic scholar and master and that one has understood very well. So that no distortions occur, it's important not to mix the traditional teachings with one's own opinions or to give them out of self-centredness. The truth of the Buddhadharma is precious and rare and should always be discussed in a pleasant environment and way. The Sutras explain how to give teachings in the traditional manner, and one should know better than to mix them with mundane concerns.

So, these are the three basic forms of generosity, the first paramita that Lord Buddha taught. It is also the easiest paramita to appreciate and understand. It can be practiced by everyone and is the foundation for the next five.

2. Discipline – *Tshul-khrims*

The second paramita is ethics, morality, moral discipline, ethical conduct, rule, order. According to the Bodhisattva Vehicle, the Vajrayana, there are three categories of ethics: (1) to refrain from negative actions, (2) to engage in virtuous actions, and (3) to work for the welfare of others.

To refrain from negative actions is the first of the three kinds of discipline. It means avoiding misdeeds and wrongdoings, i.e., not doing that which hurts others and that which is selfish. In general, harmful actions are the ten non-virtues, which are (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) engaging in sexual misconduct, (4) lying, (5) being slanderous, (6) using harsh speech, (7) engaging in useless chatter, (8) being covetous, (9) having ill-will, and (10) having misguided beliefs. If one's motivation is pure, however, then the first seven wrongdoings are permissible. If one's motivation is impure, one isn't a Bodhisattva. To have pure conduct, one needs to study and learn what is negative by training under the guidance of someone who really knows the significance of virtue and non-virtue.

Having seen which negative habits and actions are strongest and easiest to give up, a practitioner can take vows or pledge never to repeat them again. For example, if one is certain that one can stop killing, then one can take the vow not to kill. If one is certain that one can stop killing and not steal, then one can take both vows. Moral codes and vows are supports that make it easy for sincere practitioners to reduce and eventually eliminate any wrongdoings that they might have.

The discipline of training in positive actions and developing virtuous qualities is the second aspect of the three kinds of discipline. Creating values of worth can be practiced at all times and in relation to anyone and with anything. There is no situation or thing that can't be used as the practice of a Bodhisattva. It's said that there are as many practices as there are phenomena and that both positive and negative circumstances and situations are an opportunity for a Bodhisattva to benefit living beings. Virtuous qualities are described as the six paramitas, but a person must be ready and prepared to engage in them. Having the intention to do so is the first step.

The Mahayana ways of dealing with mind poisons are skilful methods. If one has many desires, for example, then it may be necessary to exert effort in order to stop one's strong craving. First it's necessary to understand the source and result of desire and craving and then it's necessary to learn what it means to be content. While investigating both aspects, one's desires automatically diminish and one's contentment naturally increases. There's no need to sit down and work on decreasing one's desires and to later sit down and work on increasing one's contentment, seeing that winning an understanding of both practices serves both purposes. In this way, various skilful methods can be developed and put into practice: generosity as an antidote for being stingy, diligence as an antidote for laziness, meditative concentration as an antidote for mental complexity, discriminating wisdom-awareness as an antidote for ignorance, and so forth. Mahayana Buddhism teaches many methods of practice, and one starts by engaging in the easiest ones first, until one can practice what needs to be done on a larger scale.

Acting on behalf of sentient beings is the third aspect of diligence. One does need to have achieved a certain level of realization that is based upon a pure mind of loving kindness and egoless compassion in order to be able to really benefit others effectively and reliably. However, it is possible to benefit others before one has fully accomplished perfection if one has a pure and untainted motivation.

There are four basic guidelines to act upon for the benefit of sentient beings if one has a pure motivation. They are: (1) to give sentient beings whatever they need, provided one's help does not harm anyone; (2) to say what others like to hear, provided what one says causes no harm and hurts no one. This means to speak nicely. Nevertheless, should it be necessary to use harsh words for someone's sake and one is certain it will move them to stop harming themselves or others, then, whether one likes it or not, one just has to use harsh words. (3) If in any way it is possible to offer others a slightest glimpse of the truth, then one is obliged to do so. (4) Regardless of one's own spiritual level of advancement, regardless of whether it is a law or not, one should behave according to the local customs and norms.

As it is, one's ability to help oneself and others is limited. One's capacities are limited as long as one hasn't developed sufficient wisdom-awareness, the sixth paramita. One's ability to help

oneself and others is also restricted as long as one doesn't understand circumstances and situations fully and isn't totally sure whether the help one gives others will not lead to disappointment or be obscured by pride. And yet, one starts where one is, at one's personal level of understanding, and acts for the welfare of others in whatever way possible and according to one's understanding and capabilities.

3. Patience – *bZöd-pa*

There are three ways to practice patience that I wish to discuss with you. They are: (1) patience while refraining from hurting those who have caused one grief and pain; (2) patience of dealing with any suffering one experiences by accepting it; and (3) patience of confidence while gaining certainty of the ultimate truth.

The first type of patience is the patience of not being moved by harm-doers. The teachings speak of the patience of not being offended when someone hurts or abuses one personally or those one thinks are dear. Put simply, it means not retaliating when someone hits us because then they would have *really* managed to hit us, in other words, not being offended when hit or knocked around by somebody. One understands that their blow did not come out of the blue rather is based upon causes that one created in the past. By accepting a blow, the cause of a particular situation is overcome and the blow itself is used as an opportunity to practice patience, without feeling resentful. One sees it as a chance to turn what might seem negative into a beneficial practice, without becoming angry. Of course, it's easier said than done.

It was common in Tibet to deal with situations just described as incorrect or cowardly. Tibetans used to look down on anyone who was not offended and who did not retaliate when hurt or harmed. As a result, a victim felt ashamed if he or she did not strike back when insulted or hurt. Once I saw a monk in Sikkim react differently, though, and I was amazed. The very nice monk had a big sense of humour and one day he said something that sounded frivolous to a monk who was very short-tempered. Angered, the short-tempered monk kicked the nice monk and then hit him on the head with a stick. The nice monk was not offended, remained as soft as cotton, and said to the short-tempered monk, "Thank you very much. If no one were ever angry with me, how could I develop patience? Thank you for having been unkind to me." He really meant what he said and was very grateful. When situations like this arise, one has to be prepared to deal with them in the same way. How? One begins practicing when simple situations arise. For instance, if someone says something that seems slightly abusive or annoying, one just remarks, "Yes, yes. It's so true." One doesn't really mean it, but pretends in order to prevent an argument from escalating and turning into a battle. One understands that their nasty words are only words. By practicing patience in the wake of irrelevant matters, one will eventually be able to master much larger negative situations.

The second type of patience is the patience of enduring any suffering one goes through, without fighting it uselessly or feeling intimidated. Although it might sound so, the patience of tolerating suffering does not mean one seeks suffering and rejoices when one is in pain. Since time that has no beginning, until the present day, every sentient being living in one of the six realms of conditioned existence has been suffering in one way or another. During the entire expanse of time it is a fact that everyone has endured billions of centuries of suffering in the hell realms,

billions of centuries of suffering in the animal and in all other realms of our world system, which is therefore called “the Saha world of endurance.” So, all past suffering can be helpful in that one appreciates that one doesn’t suffer much when one does, yet in another way it hasn’t really helped much.

When sick, one often does suffer a lot and should take medicine. Similarly, when one is in trouble with others, one definitely should get out of harm’s way. However, one shouldn’t think that those situations are negative. Suffering is like a broom one uses to sweep away its causes. If one understands this, one’s suffering will diminish. If one doesn’t understand this, one’s suffering will intensify twice, ten, or a hundred times over and over again. How does one develop understanding? By thinking, “My suffering is the result of past causes. Just as I do not want to suffer, nobody wants to suffer.” One prays, “May my present suffering be of true benefit in that it removes the suffering of all living beings.” This is how one imagines taking on the suffering and relieving the pain that all living beings endure due to the law of cause and effect. If one’s aspiration and sincere intention do not help others because there is no karmic link, then it certainly enhances one’s own practice of mind training, in that one imagines taking on the suffering of others and giving them all one’s happiness.

When one sits down to meditate, many times one has little to no patience. It often feels painful to sit in the right posture, to uphold the right attitude, and to recite the liturgy. Cultivating patience in practice will really help oneself and others. Before he attained enlightenment under the Bodhitree at Bodhgaya, Lord Buddha practiced intensively for six years along the banks of the Neranjara River, which is known today as the Lilajan River. The result of his great patience while practicing and reaching enlightenment has lasted more than 2500 years now and will continue helping sentient beings until the end of times, which is never. He not only benefited beings living on the planet Earth but beings living in the myriad world systems, too. Therefore, one should not complain about petty difficulties one might experience but, instead, practice patience and fortitude.

The third type of patience is being patient while learning to have confidence in the excellent qualities of the Three Jewels. Confidence arises through taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha and increases, becoming certitude, through practicing the instructions that one receives from a qualified scholar and teacher. This is the patience of bearing hardships for the sake of the Dharma.

It’s very important to continuously learn about and recall the qualities of the Three Jewels so that one is inspired to patiently do one’s best to understand and realize the absolute and relative truths. *Karma* (‘the infallible law of cause and effect’) is valid and effective in the relative world and therefore one should do good and avoid evil actions and ways. The absolute truth is that everything is like an illusion, and therefore virtue and non-virtue are also illusory. But, it’s not easy for most people to understand and appreciate the indivisibility of the two truths, so it’s important to practice the patience of not becoming weary of learning the profound meaning of the Dharma. How does one go about this? One begins learning and contemplating the teachings from a very basic, down-to-earth level.

It is a fact that we have all attained a precious human birth and, because we are free to do as we please, we certainly should appreciate how good our life is. Very many possibilities to do good and to benefit others are at our disposal. It would be a tremendous pity to waste the wonderful abilities and possibilities we have by ignoring and not making best use of them. For example, as long as a hundred kilos of gold remain buried beneath the house of a poverty-stricken family, it will be of no use to them. Similarly, a precious human birth is invaluable but wasted if not used meaningfully. Life is impermanent and passes quickly. The third type of patience is cultivated by really learning to understand more fully that it would be a pity to waste life away, and therefore one understands that it's important to practice the patience of taking on responsibilities

4. Joyful Endeavour – *brTson-'grüs*

The fourth paramita, joyful endeavour, is also translated as 'effort, exertion, and perseverance.' There are five kinds of joyful endeavour. They are: (1) armour-like diligence, (2) zeal of application, (3) relentless exertion, (4) the zeal of not turning back, and (5) insatiable perseverance. I wish to speak about armour-like diligence, zeal of application, and insatiable perseverance.

1) Armour-like diligence - *Go-cha'i-brtson-'grüs*

Armour-like diligence presupposes having given rise to the aspiration to work for the benefit of others, which is Bodhicitta of aspiration. A sincere disciple has the wish to benefit others, yet he or she doesn't really know the best ways to go about it. A student therefore first develops and increases the heart-felt intention, formulated in *The Prayer of a Bodhisattva*, which is, "From this very moment on I will use my precious human existence to attain realization of the ultimate truth for the sake of all living beings, so that I may lead them away from suffering and its causes." This heart-felt wish is the foundation of armour-like diligence.

Just as armour protects one from wounds inflicted by sharp weapons, diligence is a strength that protects one from being dominated by despondency and complacency. Laziness pulls one down, impedes and disrupts one's intentions. It stops one from realizing the four qualities that are accomplished by perfecting the paramita of diligence. The four qualities that will be attained by developing and increasing joyful endeavour are: (1) overcoming adverse factors such as laziness, (2) realizing the non-conceptual state of the non-self of phenomena, (3) perfecting what is desired, and (4) bringing the three potentials (the three *Kayas*, 'bodies of a buddha') to maturation. Perfection of diligence means having transcended exertion.

It's first necessary to know what one wants before one begins. One needs to clearly understand the purpose of practice and win certainty in the teachings so that one's confidence and devotion are stable and firm. Then one can successfully engage in the practices with one-pointed concentration, without losing the samadhi of diligence.

2) Zeal of application - *sByor-ba'i-brtson-'grüs*

When someone knows how to give unfailing help and support to those who are suffering and in need, he or she is able to engage in reliable methods to truly benefit himself or herself as well as

others. This, then, is Bodhicitta of application. So, relative Bodhicitta has two aspects: Bodhicitta of aspiration and Bodhicitta of application. There are many ways to practice the teachings on a relative, day-to-day basis.

The first stage of integrating what one has understood into one's everyday life is rousing the will to give up unwholesome activities and steering away from any harmful and disrupting influences that impede and distort one's intention to lead a meaningful life. The second stage is rousing the will to develop and increase wholesome activities by stirring the energy to do good and making virtue a living part of one's life. The third stage of practicing joyful endeavour is rousing the will to maintain any virtue that has arisen, not allowing the good to decrease or vanish, and exerting great effort to increase beneficial qualities by helping others in the short and long-run, i.e., relatively and ultimately. Of course, a disciple practices and proceeds from the level where he or she is and does what is possible. It's easy, for instance, never to hurt anyone and then to progress according to one's capabilities, until one is able to effortlessly give unfailing help to others in the long-run, too. This is accomplished through having great perseverance and zeal.

3) Insatiable perseverance - *Chog-par-mi-'dzin-pa'i-brtson-'grüs*

Insatiable perseverance is based upon truly being disgusted with non-virtuous ways. All too often one's efforts are sporadic, i.e., one tries one's best for a short while and then falls back into inconsiderate behaviour. If one wishes to progress, one's practice must be steady and consistent. When a practitioner is thoroughly disenchanted and disheartened with the workings of delusiveness and seriously feels weary and disgusted of it, he or she never stops longing to mature and become a better person by engaging in unwavering perseverance. Then he or she progresses by engaging in beneficial activities for the welfare of others. The teachings state, "Even if you knew that you would die tomorrow morning, you should still try to learn more. Even if you have helped everybody you know, you should help them again and again." A billion or trillion friends are not too many and one enemy is one too many for a sincere practitioner of the Dharma.

One should never be satisfied about having accomplished positive qualities but earnestly feel that one is beginning anew with every tiny step one takes and slightest assistance one can give others. Whenever one sees the possibility to help someone, one should not be reluctant but be grateful and happy about the opportunity to be a friend. Whenever one sees the possibility to stop someone from harming others, one should not hesitate but be grateful for the opportunity to stop the evildoer. Avoiding such issues by thinking it doesn't matter if someone is helped or harmed is most certainly wrong. For example, if one notices a glass splitter lying on the ground, it's so easy to just pick it up and throw it into the trashcan. It would surely not be right to think, "Oh well, thousands of people pass by here and don't go to the trouble of throwing the glass that someone can step on away, so why should I bother?" Everyone has responsibilities. If one thinks that one drop of water is worthless, then the ocean is worth nothing in one's mind. After all, an ocean consists of drops of water. If one accumulates one drop after another, drop-by-drop, one might be able to one day have gathered accumulation as vast as an entire ocean and become someone who has reached the goal through insatiable perseverance.

5. Meditative Concentration – *bSam-gtän*

There are three ways to train in meditative concentration that I wish to discuss with you.

1) It is impossible to perfect the other five paramitas without having developed attentive awareness, therefore it's important to practice the first meditative concentration, which is a beginner's level of training to develop attentiveness and awareness. At an early stage of practice, a meditator learns to have firm concentration through the practice of calm abiding meditation. Through calm abiding meditation, one's mind becomes tranquil. This makes it possible to one-pointedly abide in one's mind's innate quality, free from disturbing emotions. By engaging in calm abiding meditation, one cultivates awareness and thus sees what arises in one's mind. Also, one's body, speech, and mind rest naturally in the present moment, free from obscurations (such as desire, anger, ignorance, miserliness, jealousy, and pride) that delude and hurt oneself and others.

2) The second stage of meditative concentration is discerning the real. It is divided into two categories: common and special. The first concerns the ordinary mind, in that one learns to stop following after needless thoughts that arise and from wandering off as a result. Sitting meditation (*shamata* in Sanskrit) is not carried out in order to make the mind blank and to shut it off, rather the purpose of practicing shamata is to be able to recognize thoughts when they arise and to be aware of one's own mind's clear and radiant nature, eventually coming to see that mind recognizes mind itself.

The second kind of practice includes the first and consists of taking Bodhicitta a step further. A meditator practices to become free from the veils of clinging to a self, to objects, and to actions. Seeking an answer, he or she contemplates questions such as, "Who is meditating? What is being meditated upon?" Practicing in this way, a sincere disciple eventually transcends imputations and mental fixations that are biased and partial.

3) The third stage of practice carried out in order to perfect meditative concentration is upholding the first two with a pure motivation and increasing one's openness of loving kindness and compassion for all sentient beings without exception. Realizing shamata that delights the Tathagatas is Mahayana and denotes realization of emptiness. It means a practitioner abides in impartiality by having perfected shamata and is thus free of erroneous beliefs by having perfected the second stage of practice, which is insight meditation. Based upon the pure motivation, complete perfection of meditative concentration means that a Mahayana practitioner is richly adorned with awareness of his or her mind's inherent and radiant qualities. As a result, he or she spontaneously and effortlessly engages in virtuous activities that always benefit others.

In summary: One's mind first needs to be pacified through calm abiding practice. By having become proficient in shamata, one's mind becomes quite calm and passive, so it's necessary to engage in insight meditation (*vipassana* in Sanskrit), in which case one learns to recognize the way things are and the way things appear. It's also necessary to practice calm abiding and insight meditation with the right motivation, which is the wish to benefit others. Uniting all three aspects in practice is perfect and complete meditative concentration. Someone who hopes to be practicing Vajrayana would simply embark on an ego trip if he or she tried to practice meditation without Bodhicitta. In that case, there would be no benefit for anyone.

6. Wisdom-Awareness – *Shes-rab*

There are three types of wisdom-awareness, which can be translated as ‘ordinary knowledge, lesser discriminating wisdom-awareness, and highest wisdom-awareness.’ They are discriminating wisdom-awareness gained by hearing or receiving the teachings, wisdom-awareness gained by reflecting the teachings, and wisdom-awareness won by meditating the teachings.

There are ten branches of learning (*rig-pa'i-gnäs-bcu*) that are studied extensively in the Tibetan tradition so that disciples of the Buddhadharmā can eventually and unmistakably realize all three types of wisdom-awareness. They are: (1) rhetorics, (2) astronomy and astrology, (3) grammar, (4) performing arts, (5) lexicology, (6) handicrafts, (7) medicine, (8) semantics, (9) dialectics or logic, and (10) Buddhist philosophy. We used to refer to them as “the ten arts”; nowadays they are called “sciences.” The ten sciences are divided into five minor disciplines and five major disciplines. I want to first give a brief explanation of the five minor disciplines of study.

1) Rhetorics is studied so that students learn to observe a consistent order when formulating their feelings and thoughts. This enables them to arouse a similar understanding and appreciation of experiences and things with those who are not in the same situation.

2) Astronomy and astrology is a combined field of study in the Tibetan tradition and was derived from Indian sources. Astronomy is the field of science that investigates the outer universe, the cosmos. It is the study of the celestial bodies, their magnitudes, motions, constitution, and so forth. The Earth belongs to the inner universe and is called *Jambudvīpa* in Sanskrit, '*dzam-bu-gling* in Tibetan. Living beings are a reflection of appearances and therefore Tibetan astrological charts will always address the correlation between the elements that dominated in the cosmos when someone was born. The relative locations of planets, the constellations, and other celestial bodies are indicators of the daily rhythms of global and personal lives. An astrologer (*skar-byed-pa-po*) can precisely describe a client’s father and mother.

Astrology is the field of study that calculates the cosmos in conjunction with the human body and the subtle energy forces within the body. So, next to the outer physical world, there is the outer, physical human body as we know it and the inner human body that consists of subtle energies. Living beings also have a mind that is taken into consideration when a horoscope is made. These many aspects are interconnected and influence each other. Astrology is the field of study that enables researchers to calculate and enumerate these quite complex connections that constitute someone’s life.

A Tibetan calendar sometimes divides a year into 12 months, sometimes into 13. Sometimes there are only 28 days in a month, often there are 30 days in a month. Why? Our calendar is based upon the moon’s cycles that determine the four seasons. Our summer months are always summer and our winter months are always winter. Eclipses are also calculated by astrologists and marked in our calendars.

There are several systems of astrology, some are called “white” and others are called “black.” These two general connotations have nothing to do with white or black magic and they don’t

imply anything that could be seen as good or bad. Black astrology is much more complex and involves more mathematical skill than white astrology.

3) Grammar is the study of classes of words, their inflections, syntactical relations, and their functions. Once we had seven treatises translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan that explained the principles of grammar, poetics, metrics, lexicography, and etymology, but five were lost. Nevertheless, the two texts on grammar that were not lost are very concise.

4) Performing arts and dramaturgy include the study of many topics. It is the art of learning to vividly recount tales, historical facts, personal stories, or those written from a play-writer's knowledge. Theatrical performances are representations of events and their background and of persons who were decisive in the lives of many people. Such performances enable an audience to learn about and appreciate foreign cultures, and they offer an opportunity to empathize with people living in other parts of the world. Actors need to know how to speak clearly, dance, sing, and perform in ways that move an audience to reflect other times and places as well as other people's lives.

5) Lexicology is the branch of linguistics that investigates words. Many words are explicit, i.e., they are perfectly clear in meaning; others are implicit and can only be fairly understood though they cannot be expressed precisely. For instance, the Sanskrit term for *Buddha* was translated into Tibetan as *Sangs+rgyäs*. *Sangs* means 'awakened from the sleep of ignorance' and *rgyäs* means 'full blossoming of all qualities and knowledge.' Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye offered an explicit and literal definition of *Sangs+rgyäs* and wrote, "*Sangs-pa-dang-rgyäs-pa-gnyis-ka-la-'jug-päs-sangs+rgyäs-zhes-brjöd-pa* - 'One, such as Shakyamuni, who has purified obscurations (*sangs*) and developed pristine cognition (*rgyäs*),' i.e., the state of having eradicated all obscurations and of having the wisdom of seeing the nature of all things as they exist, "as it is." There is a Tibetan dictionary with implicit translations of hundreds of explicit words. The dictionary states that the word "flower," for instance, is called "that which drinks through its feet" or "that which has fine petals."

The five minor branches of study deal with less difficult topics. The five major disciplines that I wish to speak about now are more important. They are handicrafts, medicine, phonetics, dialectics or logic, and Buddhist philosophy.

6) The first field of major study is handicrafts (*bzo-ba'i-rig-pa* in Tibetan, *bzo-ba* meaning 'to build, to set up'). The entire universe is comprised of five elements. Five substances or principles are needed and support each other so that things can be made. It's even possible to learn what material things consist of without the help of a teacher. For example, a skilled potter knows that he needs clay (the principle of solidity) when he makes a pot. He also knows that he needs water (the principle of moisture) and wind in the space in which he turns his wheel before the pot he designed is burned in a furnace. And so, a potter naturally knows about the five elements (earth, water, wind, space, and fire). The study of handicrafts includes becoming skilled in metalwork, carving, painting, weaving, and a host of other creative crafts.

7) The second higher field of study at the greater universities of the Tibetan tradition is *gso-ba'i-rig-pa*, 'the science of healing, medicine.' The general meaning of *gso-ba* is 'to mend, to nourish,

to enhance.’ Medical training is the study of what living bodies consist of and how they function. When the physical body doesn’t function in a balanced manner, a patient is diagnosed and treated with medicine. There are many ways of diagnosing a sickness and disease. If a Tibetan doctor is not able to immediately find the cause of an illness, he will test ten remedies that he would choose from after he has made a diagnosis. He makes a diagnosis by adding a sample of one of each ten possible herbal remedies to each sample of urine that a patient filled into ten separate jars. He will then carefully observe what happens in each jar, will then be able to recommend a medicine and treat his patients effectively. The organs of the human body react to specific herbs, which grow on mountain slopes or in meadows. Our medicine is biological and non-invasive.

8) The third higher field of study is *sgra'i-rig-pa*, ‘semantics,’ the science that investigates the meaning of sounds and words. Semantics is often thought to be the study of the Sanskrit alphabet, but it is much more – it is an ornament, *sgra'i-rgyän*, in that it adorns someone who has understood the meaning of sounds and words. It is the study of all the elements, movements, feelings, and sounds that can be made and heard. The thorough study of semantics also enables a sincere student to understand what animals are conveying when they make sounds that express their sensations and feelings. It is a higher branch of study that also enables one to know what the sounds of a breeze, a fire burning in the oven, or a stream mean.

9) Dialectics or logic, *gtan-tshigs-kyi-rig-pa*, is the investigation of phenomenal interconnectedness. One aspect of knowledge won through the study of logic is electronics, a field of physics that explains how televisions, radios, and telephones work. Another branch is kinetics, the science that enables one to watch someone speaking over the phone while at the Earth’s other side, as though that person were in the same room. Dialectics or logic is the study of physical properties that occur through vibrations and sounds.

10) Buddhist philosophy, *nang-gi-rig-pa*, is the study of spiritual philosophy (*pramana* in Sanskrit). It is the very complicating and profound study of the two truths (*bden-gnyis*) that are nominally distinct, i.e., the ultimate truth (*dön-dam-bden-pa*) and the relative truth (*kun-rdzob-kyi-bden-pa*). It takes 10 to 15 years of rigorous study on the side of a student to master the higher science of *pramana*. In Buddhism, we learn how everything arises, how the mind functions, and the interconnectedness of all things.

Lesser wisdom-awareness is won by investigating the two truths from one angle only and therefore it is one-sided knowledge. It is realization of the ten virtuous actions. A disciple who has attained a very good understanding of wisdom-awareness knows that non-virtuous actions cause suffering and virtuous actions bring happiness, but such understanding is dualistic since the ultimate is still considered to be like the other side of a coin. A practitioner who has lesser wisdom-awareness has surmounted samsara but has not attained the supreme Dharmakaya that is achieved when one has realized the inseparability of the two truths, *bden-gnyis-dbyer-med-lhag-pa'i-chös-sku-che*. Highest wisdom-awareness is freedom from dualistic fixations of any kind. It is ineffable since it is beyond a subject-object dichotomy.

Knowing how things function is the first stage of practice, knowing how they really are is the second stage, and realizing the indivisibility of the relative and absolute truths is the third stage

that sincere disciples of Mahayana and Vajrayana eventually realize if they practice. Wisdom-awareness can only be roughly described through language usage, while in truth it can only be experienced. Everyone has to taste it himself or herself.

The Paths & the Grounds

When treading the path of a Bodhisattva, one engages in the six paramitas. Each paramita consists of lesser, intermediate, and advanced stages, making 18 in all. By accomplishing a stage, one progresses to a higher level of the five paths of a Bodhisattva. The five paths a Bodhisattva practices before reaching the highest state of perfection are: (1) the path of accumulation, (2) the path of practice or conjunction, (3) the path of seeing, (4) the path of meditation, and (5) the path of no more learning (*tshogs-lam*, *sbyor-lam*, *mtshong-lam*, *sgom-lam*, and *mi-slob-pa'i-lam*). A Bodhisattva reaches the first ground of accomplishment, called *bhumi* in Sanskrit, when he or she has realized the third path of seeing.

There are ten bhumis in all (*sa-bcu* in Tibetan), which are ten grounds a Bodhisattva treads to accomplish complete and perfect enlightenment. On each stage, more subtle defilements are purified and more enlightened qualities unfold and manifest. The ten bhumis are: the joyous, the stainless, the radiant, the brilliant, the hard to conquer, the realized, the reaching far, the unshakable, the good intelligence, and the cloud of Dharma. In Tibetan: (1) *rab-tu-dga'-ba*, (2) *dri-ma-med-pa*, (3) *'od-byed-pa*, (4) *'od-phro-ba*, (5) *sbyang-dka'-ba*, (6) *mngon-du-gyur-ba*, (7) *ring-du-song-ba*, (8) *mi-g'yo-ba*, (9) *legs-pa'i-blo-grös* and (10) *chös-kyi-sprin*.

We have heard on many occasions that the Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, and Nirmanakaya manifest through having realized freedom from duality. On the final level of the last bhumi, a Bodhisattva becomes a master of the tenth bhumi and is called *sa-bcu'i-dbang-phyug*, 'rich with power' and then is a Great Bodhisattva. A Great Bodhisattva does not conceptualise the three referential spheres of subject, objects, and actions anymore because he or she has perfectly realized the transcendent, ultimate truth, "just as it is." The non-dual wisdom that a Great Bodhisattva has realized is vajra-like samadhi, *rdo-rje-lta-bu'i-ting-nge-dzin*, 'non-obscured, indestructible, timeless, primordial wisdom (*ye-she*).' It is perfect fulfilment or Buddhahood.

It's important to understand the fundamental principles of Mahayana, i.e., *Bodhicitta*, 'loving kindness and compassion,' and to acknowledge that ultimate realization, which is Buddha nature, ever and already abides within every living being without exception. Based upon having perfected the first five paramitas together with the sixth paramita of wisdom-awareness, immense loving kindness and compassion unfold in the minds of sincere disciples of Lord Buddha's teachings. A pure disciple who has realized and continuously manifests the qualities of the six paramitas is truly a noble and great regent, a buddha.

Dedication Prayers

Through this goodness may omniscience be attained
And thereby may every enemy (mental defilement) be overcome.
May beings be liberated from the ocean of samsara
That is troubled by waves of birth, old age, sickness, and death.

By this virtue may I quickly attain the state of Guru Buddha and then
Lead every being without exception to that very state!
May precious and supreme Bodhicitta that has not been generated now be so,
And may precious Bodhicitta that has already been never decline, but continuously increase!

Long Life Prayer for H.E. the XIIth Khentin Tai Situpa, Pema Dönyö Nyinche

The Regent of the Future Buddha, the Undefeatable,
The Regent of the Lotus, the protector of all beings and the teachings,
Tai Situ Pema Dönyo,
May your life be long and your activities be extensive.

Long Life Prayer for H.H. the XVIIth Gyalwa Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, composed by
H.E. the XIIth Goshir Gyaltshab Rinpoche, Dragpa Tenpe Yaphal

Naturally arising Dharmakaya, unchanging and ever-present,
Karmapa, you appear as the form kayas' magical illusions.
May your three secret vajras remain stable in the realms
And your infinite, spontaneous activity blaze in glory.



Photo of His Holiness the XVIIth Gyalwa Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, and H.E. Tai Situ Rinpoche in 2009 courtesy and copyright of Palpung Sherab Ling in India. Photo of peony taken and kindly offered by Josef Kerklau. Based on a rough transcript, this article was edited and arranged in memory of Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche the Third for the Dharma Download Project of Khenpo Karma Namgyal at Karma Lekshey Ling Monastery in Kathmandu and Karma Sherab Ling in Münster by Gaby Hollmann from Munich, responsible for all mistakes. Those persons and institutions that contributed to this article and are mentioned in this short acknowledgement have copyrights. It is distributed for personal use only. 2009.