

*Vajrasattva Commentaries*

*by Various Authors*

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## A Simple Practice

From a Commentary on Vajrasattva Purification Practice, by Geshe Doga

My attempt, from the very beginning, is to present a guideline of how to do a practice that can be incorporated into daily life. The sadhana which we recite as a meditation practice is only a basis. On top of that we need to elaborate the visualisations and so forth. In this way we see with more clarity how to incorporate the sadhana into our personal practice.

What I am saying here is that in order to relate to the practice as “Okay, this is something which I can do” we need a clear understanding of what the practice consists. Likewise, we don’t need to worry ourselves too much about those practices the whole purpose of which is beyond us and with which we can’t cope.

*So, from the very outset, we need a simple practice, simple in the sense that one does understand its purpose, together with our need to practice it.*

Based on that, if we elaborate a bit more, but *in a slow fashion*, our practice will be enhanced; it won’t be a case of us becoming more confused.

Actually, this is the way in which I have conducted my own studies in my own life. I have always not attempted to be too ambitious in trying to understand too much or going for big grand explanations right from the start. Instead, I would try to find something simple, something more manageable.

Then, based on that, I would add on by reading some other commentaries and relating to other explanations. In this way you can gradually build upon something with which you had a fixed clear idea initially. Anyhow, that is what I have found useful in my life. I would think it would also be useful in your approach. That is why you should find something simple

and immediately applicable that can serve as a core basis from the very beginning.

On the other hand, if we first acquire many explanations and many variations of detail and so forth, our mind has no anchor to which we can hold. We become quite dispersed, scattered in every direction so that the thought comes: “Oh, well I have heard so much, I have learnt so much, but what do I actually put into practice”? “What is it actually, that I am meant to be doing”?

This is a situation where there is a discrepancy between a genuine interest in learning and understanding something to be practiced, yet not being able to find something to put into actual practice. In such cases, having acquired lots of knowledge does not amount to much if we can't find a way to practice! If this has happened to us, then it indicates that we have actually lost the point!

Of course, what I am explaining here is relation to a [meditation] practice but I think what I am saying is also useful to consider not just in respect to our studies, but also to whatever it is in which we wish to embark or engage. It is because this advice is so useful that I have thought to share it with you.

## Notes from The Practice of Vajrasattva, from Being Pure, by Ringu Tulku

When we go for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, then we are practising Dharma. We are actually having a path and we are actually training ourselves on it. Therefore, going for refuge is actually very important and is the basis of the path. It is about our whole way of life. So, taking refuge is not something that we do once and then it is done and finished. It is a practice. It is a way of life and something we remind ourselves of, again and again. At the start of every day and at the beginning of every practice session we remind ourselves that this is the way we have chosen to go in, and how we need to work on it.

\* \* \*

All these practices are about how to train ourselves to become more positive, that is the practice. So we use this method of visualising in many different ways. And here we use it also in the refuge.

We start by visualising a very big lake: nice and calm, filled with cool, pure, fresh water. You can have fishes and birds in your visualisation, and things like that. But the main thing is, it is a very open and very spacious feeling. That is important, because how I actually feel is very much dependent on where I am and how I see things. If we are in a very pleasant, calm and quiet place, usually we naturally feel good. Being in nature is nice for us because nature is like that: It brings us contentment and peace to feel in contact with nature, with the natural ground. So this is why we use something pleasant like this as our visualisation.

The spaciousness is very important, also...

In the centre of the tree you see the Lama, who is your root guru if you have one, with all the lineage around him...and the Sangha, including all

the Arhats and Bodhisattvas, and the Yidams are all there, arranged as the text says. Everybody is there; everybody who has crossed the samsaric state of mind, who has the wisdom and compassion and the power to transform and help other beings. This includes all compassionate beings, not just Buddhists. You feel that it is like a mandala, or field, of every enlightened being there. They are all full of compassion, as if seeing each being as their only child and wanting to help them. And they have the capacity and wisdom to help. As much as possible, you imagine or feel they are like that...

\* \* \*

When I recite my prayer, I feel that some kind of blessings, or light, that can bring transformation, comes from the refuge tree. I feel that I am receiving this light, these blessings and the power of transformation. And, not only I, but all sentient beings are receiving these... I become purified and healed and transformed... And so does every being, also...

All the negative things that I have accumulated are gone. All the resulting negative things – like pain and tension and disease - have gone. But, also, so have the causes of them – all the negative emotions and habitual tendencies...

When you do this practice, you can take your time over it. You can recite the refuge, again and again, if you want. Or you can just recite it once and then take time on feeling it all. This is very important to understand, because all practices are similar in this way.

The essence of all the practices is the same and it is not about thinking; it is not just using seeing and thinking; it is more about feeling. Because what we need to transform is the way we experience things, the way we feel, and

not only the way we think. Thinking is only concepts, but feeling is experience. We need to transform our experience, not only our concepts, so the main thing about the practice, is the feeling.

\* \* \*

The first, real Bodhicitta is that you want to commit yourself to work towards the well being of all the beings, including yourself. You commit to work on it, step by step, and that becomes the focus. In order to do that, you may have to do different things: you may have to do this or that; you may need to rest, also; you may need to not do anything yet but just study and work on your own understanding.

So there are two things here. One is that, the more you understand that there is a possibility of doing this, the more strong and realistic you become about it. This is the wisdom, a kind of understanding that there might be a way to change myself, to transform myself. If I work on my habitual tendencies and on my negative ways of reacting, then there is a possibility of finding more peace and joy and things like that. If I don't react with so much fear, aversion, clinging and attachment, then I can face my life in a more real way. The more I understand this, the clearer I become about it and the more convinced I become. My conviction, and my experience, becomes stronger. So, therefore, the wisdom and the compassion come together.

When I feel the presence of, or know of the possibility of, enlightened beings, and then I want to work on this path; then I am generating Bodhicitta. The more I renew this understanding or this choice of direction or way of understanding, the more clear and directed I am. This is why they say that, when you generate Bodhicitta, you are on the way to Buddhahood. This is how it becomes very important. It is also compassion - practical compassion. It is not all soppy - nice, nice, only - it is about really wanting to work on that direction and do something beneficial.



So we connect with this wish and generate the mind of Bodhicitta, with the same visualisation still in place...

\* \* \*

Something that has become habitual is not easy to change. So, the practice is to cultivate another habit because that is how to change the habit you already have.

So, therefore, that is the practice: learning how to feel pure; how to feel when you are not holding on to negative things; how to feel more pure and positive and compassionate.

You learn how to feel like Vajrasattva, like a Buddha. You can only do that by doing. You cannot learn it by just having the understanding. It is like learning to drive a car. You cannot learn to drive a car by just reading the text about how to drive a car, and memorising that. You have to go and do it, again and again and again.

So, in the same way, we learn to be like Vajrasattva. We learn by doing it, by experiencing. We can recite the mantra and visualise Vajrasattva. Or we can do it in our daily life. Both ways are learning through experience and we have to do both these ways. That is Vajrasattva practice. Whether you want to visualise in exactly the way described or not, that is not the most important thing.

Purification actually comes about through wisdom and compassion. What purifies us is our understanding of wisdom and compassion. The strongest purification is wisdom, because it gets rid of ignorance directly. If you really reach a place of true wisdom, that is it!– All negativity will be gone.

But it is not so easy to reach such a place. So, the next approach is compassion. This is the next strongest way to purify negativity...

\* \* \*

Because of your devotion and prayers, you feel that cleansing or purifying amrita. It is like a cooling, cleansing liquid and it fills up the body of Vajrasattva and flows out of his right big toe and enters through your fontanel. You feel that, inside your body, everything is purified and cleaned.

*'All your obscurations and past negative actions, embodied in a substance that looks like ink or dark smoke, leave your body as all of your body's parts are filled with amrita. While doing this visualisation, recite Vajrasattva's mantra as many times as you can.'*

So, this is the main practice. You feel that the amrita or cleansing nectar enters into your body. You feel good about that. You feel comfortable, happy, warm. All the negative things that are inside you, all the diseases in your body, all the negative emotions you have, all the negative habitual tendencies that you hold onto in your body, everything is cleaned and taken off from you, in the form of something like dirt. It is washed out of you. You feel totally cleaned and purified and transformed. You not only have no more pain or illnesses in you, but you also have no more negative feelings or emotions.

Then you feel free of all the negative things. They are washed off in the form of something like a dark smoke. And your body is filled with amrita. You feel joyful, and completely healed and transformed. Once all the impurities have left you, you feel that the amrita fills you up, from your base up to the crown of your head. You can go through this visualisation one time in a session, or many times.

Feeling all that positivity, rather than focusing on the negative things, you recite the mantras.,

\* \* \*

Acknowledging a negative deed to be negative is the beginning of your purification. Confessing is saying that and that you want to let go of it. But the Tibetan word used here, *Shagpa* (pronounced shakpa), does not only mean to do this. It includes this meaning but it also means 'to get rid of, to let go, to purify' these negative things. Shag literally means to cut or cleave, like splitting a log with an axe. One part is cut away from the other part. So, Shagpa means to completely separate, to dissociate, to cut away.

So, I let go of all my downfalls and misdeeds. 'Misdeeds' mean doing whatever is not good to do. 'Downfalls' are when I promised to do something good but I did the opposite. And I promise not to do it again because if I do something negative, and I do it knowingly, again and again, it's not good for me. I vow not to do anything negative and I don't hold on to anything negative. So then, I ask that I may not experience the result of anything I have already done.

*'Saying this, confess and resolve not to repeat your misdeeds.'*

We say this with a strong kind of a resolution that we let go of all these negative things. When we are talking about negative things here, it means not only negative things that *I have done*, but also negative things that *I have experienced*, anything that is negative that I have experienced. This is anything that has been done to me, that I kind of hold on to, whether in my body, in my speech or in my mind. Any habitual tendencies towards that, I allow them to go. Whatever has happened, we can still have the attitude, 'It happened, it is done, and now I don't want to hold on to any habitual tendencies in body, speech and mind because of it, so I let it go.'

At this point then, I feel that Vajrasattva says, 'Your misdeeds are purified, done, finished.' And you feel that you have been able to let them go. This is important – this is the practice. The practice is that you actually *feel* that they are gone.

\* \* \*

Then the Vajrasattva melts into light and dissolves into you. Right from the beginning Vajrasattva is made of light and is not so solid. Now it melts into light and enters into me through my crown. I feel that I have myself become as pure as Vajrasattva, as enlightened as Vajrasattva. There is no difference between us. The essence of my mind is no different from Vajrasattva...

## Vajrasattva Purification, by Ringu Tulku

The Dorjé Sempa (Tibetan) or Vajrasattva (Sanskrit) practice is a very important practice which is used as the most effective purification or healing method in Vajrayana Buddhism. It is used by all Tibetan Buddhist schools. All of them do the same Vajrasattva practice, and it is supposed to be the most effective of all purification techniques. The technique behind it is more or less the same as that of all healing practices that we do through meditation.

Now why Dorjé Sempa? Why this deity? The Buddha told that Vajrasattva, or Dorjé Sempa, is the Buddha who, right from the time he first generated Bodhicitta until he became an enlightened being, dedicated all his activities, all his positive deeds as a Bodhisattva to the healing and purification of all beings. His main wish, his sole aspiration was to be able to heal and purify all sentient beings. Therefore, his spontaneous power of healing and purification is the greatest.

If from the time you become a Bodhisattva and throughout your “Bodhisattva-hood”, you have a strong wish and you make a prayer in that sense - as for instance, your main aspiration is to grant long life, or success, or to be able to protect people, or to cure them from illnesses, or eradicate poverty - and you dedicate all your practices towards that aim, we believe that you will then become a Buddha with that particular power. This is why, even now, when we do prayers, it is so important to make very vast, grand, big prayers, in the most spacious and generous way. Dorjé Sempa made the specific prayer to be able to purify all the negative deeds, and thereby eliminate all their negative results, like illnesses and sufferings that come from those negative deeds (because, as you know, all the negative things that happen to us come out of our negative deeds).

It is believed that to practise Dorjé Sempa has a very special, an unequalled power to eliminate all our negative karma and the negative results of that

karma. What we actually do is very simple. First, there is the visualisation of Dorjé Sempa:

*On a lotus and moon seat above my head is my guru, Dorjé Sempa, white in colour and exquisitely adorned. Seated in the Vajra posture, he has one face, two arms, the right hand holding a Vajra, and the left one a bell.*

This is the form you think of. A little above your head, about one foot, you visualise a big lotus flower, and on top of that lotus flower, there is a moon disc, and on top of it sits Vajrasattva. But he is not just the Vajrasattva deity: he is inseparable from your own root guru (if you have one) and he is also one with all the enlightened beings.

The Vajrasattva you have visualised is not like a kind of sculpture, or painting, but he is fully alive, with all the qualities of a Buddha: he has a completely enlightened mind, unlimited compassion and wisdom, and he radiates love, compassion, joy, power and energy in the form of different coloured rays of light.

Vajrasattva is white, and he is decorated with all the ornaments of a Sambhogakaya Buddha. When we talk of a Buddha in the Dharmakaya form, it means that he is represented as totally naked, without ornaments, without any clothes. When we talk of a Sambhogakaya Buddha, he is represented as an Indian prince or princess, in the form of enjoyment, very beautiful, young, with 30 different ornaments, very rich, with gold, silver and diamonds. There are also wrathful forms of Sambhogakaya. And when we talk of a Nirmanakaya form, it is the form of Shakyamuni Buddha, with the monk's dresses and a begging bowl.

So Vajrasattva is in the Sambhogakaya form, sitting cross-legged, with a Vajra in his right hand, and a dribu- or bell- in his left hand. You may not be able to visualise him completely clearly and as much as you wish, but it doesn't matter. The main thing is that you feel the energy.

It is also good if you can visualise certain parts, sometimes the face, sometimes the energy, the lights, or the form, or the mantra with a blue Hung in Dorjé Sempa's heart. But most important is the feeling that Dorjé Sempa is the embodiment of energy, of compassionate wisdom, of all the positive things, because what we are actually trying to do through all these practices is to identify with these qualities. We try to get out of our constant tendency to feel bad, negative, frustrated and tense. Therefore, if you think of all these positive qualities, of these positive energies, even if you cannot identify with them, your mind concentrates on them, and therefore you develop more positive feelings. This is very important. The figure is just symbolic, the main point is your concentration on these positive energies, to get absorbed in those positive qualities...

When our visualisation is established, we think that from the heart of the Dorjé Sempa we have visualised above our head, rays of light emanate in all ten directions, going all over the universe, inviting the assembly of "jnana-sattvas" or "yeshé sempa"- which means that the blessings, the energy, the power and mind of all the enlightened beings is invited to dissolve into Dorjé Sempa. In this way, we become more confident that this kind of energy, the union of all the positive energies is actually present above our head. Actually, the most important thing is to maintain the concentration throughout the practice. When we do this, we are serving two purposes:

1) we practice the calming-down meditation through keeping our mind fully concentrated in one place,

\*2) we develop compassion and the positive side of ourselves by wholeheartedly absorbing our mind in positive aspects.

\*As I said before, the only way to become more positive, to develop the positive, is to think less and less of the negative while thinking more and more of the positive.

We now make a prayer to Dorjé Sempa, saying:

*My guru, Dorjé Sempa, I pray you, cleanse and purify the multitude of harmful deeds, obscurations, faults and transgressions leading to downfall, in myself and in all other beings, everywhere, to the end of space.*

We pray with genuine feeling that with Dorjé Sempa's help and our own strong aspiration, all our negative deeds and those of all the sentient beings may be purified. Following that supplication, we visualise the Hung on top of a moon disc in the heart centre of Dorjé Sempa. We should see Dorjé Sempa in a transparent, rainbow like form, not as a solid, opaque figure. Therefore we can see the Hung inside his body, surrounded by the Hundred Syllable Mantra, from which flows a stream of amrita. The mantra around the Hung appears in very small, very thin letters, as if they were written with one hair. When we recite the mantra, we think, we visualise that drops of amrita stream from the mantra. Amrita is a kind of nectar, of divine liquid, that contains the blessings, or the power, or the energy of Vajrasattva and his mantra, of our own purified nature.

This stream of energy flows from the mantra, flows through Dorjé Sempa's body and enters our own body through the fontanel or "Brahma aperture". As it flows down through our body, we should feel that all our negative deeds, all our negative karma and its results, obscurations, illnesses, pain, blockages, everything is completely cleansed. From the head to the toes, all the negativities leave our body, and all its parts are cleansed from within. Even the causes of the negativities, the mind poisons, the negative emotions are completely purified.

As we think of this process, of the nectar running like water in our body and purifying everything, we try to feel we are becoming more and more joyful and blissful. What enters into us is nectar, and nectar is supposed to be a substance that gives a sensation of warmth, pleasure and bliss when we touch it. When we are completely purified, our body is like an empty



bottle that fills with nectar, we feel there is nothing negative in us any more, we experience an unearthly bliss, and we try to concentrate on that.

\* Sometimes, it seems that people who do the Dorjé Sempa practice tend to concentrate more on the negative than on the positive: they think of all the negative deeds they did, they feel and think: more on the negative side, and that is not good, that is unnecessary. Try to feel the positive side because the negative is finished, it is purified, eliminated. And this is not just for ourselves, but for all sentient beings. Of course, first we need to concentrate on our own purification, but at the same time, we try to think and feel that this is not only happening to ourselves but to all sentient beings.

While thinking of this, we recite the mantra :

*Om Bendza Sato Samaya Manupalaya Bendza Sato Tenopa Titra Drito Mébawa  
Suto Kayo Mébawa Supo Kayo Mébawa Anurakto Mébawa Sarwa Siddhi Mentra  
Yatsa Sarwa Karma Sutsamé Tsitam Shiri ya Guru Hung Ha Ha Ha Ha Ho  
Bhagawan Sarwa Tatagata Bendza Mamé Muntsa Bendza Bhawa Maha Samaya  
Sato Ah*

This is not really the way the Sanskrit is read, but it is the way the Tibetans read Sanskrit! It is wrong, but it doesn't matter!

After this Hundred Syllable Mantra, that you can recite as often as you wish, we recite the Six Syllable Mantra, which is a shorter form of the 100 Syllable Mantra:

*Om Bendza Sato Hung*

At the end, when we have recited the mantra and done the Dorjé Sempa practice as often as we wanted to, we conclude by joining our hands at the level of our heart and saying the following prayer:

*Protector, unknowingly and out of stupidity, I have violated and broken my commitments. My guru and protector, give me refuge. Highest one, Vajra-holder, whose nature is the greatest compassion, I take refuge in you, leader of beings. I confess and repent all breaches of the principal and secondary commitments related to body, speech and mind. Please grant your blessing that the multitude of harmful deeds, obscurations, faults and transgressions leading to downfall may be cleansed and purified.*

Dorjé Sempa is one and the same with all the Buddhas, all the protectors. “Protector” here doesn’t mean the “Dharma protectors”, it is one of the names of the Buddha. The Tibetan word “gönpo” could be translated as “Lord”. It applies to somebody who has the power and willingness to protect.

Due to our confusion and ignorance, we have done many bad things. We now realise how badly we behaved and that these negative actions will have negative results. This is not what we want: we want positive results. Therefore we regret what we did under the power of our delusion, we take the firm resolution not to do it again and we ask to be purified of all those negativities. Even the good things we tried to do- by taking vows, samayas, commitments- we were unable to keep them due to our ignorance, our inability, and different other reasons like aversion and attachment, we broke our engagements. We now express our strong wish to get rid completely of these mind poisons, of the negative things we did and the positive we did not. Therefore we take refuge in Vajrasattva and we supplicate him to help us. The text then says:

*Dorjé Sempa gives me release, melts into light and dissolves into me, making us “not two”.*

When we say this, we feel that we are completely purified, that whatever negativities we did are purified and what was not completely fulfilled is now fulfilled.

Now we think that we become exactly like Vajrasattva. The Vajrasattva we have visualised melts into light, dissolves into us and we think we become Vajrasattva. Our Vajrasattva nature, our pure Buddha nature has been awakened because, as we said already, the temporary defilements are the only obstructions keeping us from becoming fully enlightened. So now, since we have completely purified our negativities, we fully become Vajrasattva himself. We try to look at ourselves as being Vajrasattva, to feel ourselves in that state (of complete purity), and this is the end of the Vajrasattva practice.

It is a very good healing method and it has some effects, I think, if we do it long enough. It is not difficult to do, but whether we have an actual effect or not depends on whether we actually do it or not. If we want to see whether it has any effect on us, we should try and do it in the first place.

### Questions

Student: Rinpoché, regarding visualisation, I always have a problem: do I see it in front of me or do I feel myself like that? When you say for instance that we should visualise ourselves as Vajrasattva, do I see myself as Vajrasattva in front of me, or do I feel myself as Vajrasattva?

Rinpoche: You are visualising yourself as Vajrasattva, so if you want to look at yourself from any angle, it is up to you! Your actual body now becomes Vajrasattva. You are not seeing it with your eyes, because you cannot see yourself completely.

Student: Can I dedicate the merits of this practice for one person in particular?

Rinpoche: Usually, the Buddhist way of dedication is that, even if we want to dedicate it to one person, we don't just do that, we dedicate it to all the beings, because when we do so, the merit becomes even more, it multiplies.

Then we make a second dedication to the person for whom we actually want to do it. That is the usual way.

Vajrasattva Sadhana, with commentary by Lama Lodo

## **DORJE SEMPA MEDITATION AND THE RECITATION OF HIS MANTRA**

**(which purifies harmful actions and removes the obscurations of the  
mind)**

This text was composed more than eight hundred years ago by the Ninth Karmapa.

The Guru embodies all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Most important in attaining enlightenment is the Guru-disciple relationship. The Guru's kindness and compassion and the disciple's devotion- these two come together.

The Guru is closer to us, kinder than the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Due to our ignorance, impurity, we do not see Buddha right now. He is the past, present, and future Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, so it is very important to maintain devotion. His body is the Buddha, speech, Dharma, and mind is enlightenment itself.

The first prayer from our heart is for the blessing of the Gurus.

**Glorious and precious Root Guru who sits on a lotus-moon seat on the  
crown of my head, through your great kindness, having taken me as your  
disciple, grant me the accomplishments of the Body, Speech and Mind  
(of the Buddhas).**

Refuge and Bodhicitta

Guru Vajrasattva, his body is Sangha, speech, Dharma, and mind, Buddha. Vajrasattva mind is Buddha, speech (word) is Dharma, and body, the Sublime Assembly, which shows how to practice with devotion and

compassion. In the Sangha, we learn how to do good things, in group practice. He is the Sangha as the Bodhisattva's perfect activity and example.

Think that you are under the protection of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. You are completely safe, not only yourself, but all sentient beings.

### Enlightenment Mind - The Heart of Enlightenment

You wish to attain perfect Buddha in order to benefit all sentient beings and guide them to enlightenment; to free them all from suffering and discomfort, unconditionally, whoever is suffering. This is wishing and willing to contribute to free them from suffering and the causes, not only temporarily, but forever, and make it so that all have happiness and the cause of happiness, not only temporarily, but happiness that lasts forever.

But this body, this mind, this speech, can only temporarily remove their suffering, only temporarily give happiness, therefore, I must strive, put all my effort into attaining enlightenment like the Buddha.

Great Compassion is without discrimination. This is very powerful. This kind of thought always in your heart, this means the Heart of Enlightenment, this means the heart of altruism, this means the heart of bodhicitta.

Generosity- whatever practice you have

Morality- no anger, desire, jealousy, greed, hope and doubt; none allowed. What you do not allow, that is morality.

Patience- when there is difficulty, either with visualization or laziness, or from pains, you take it, be patient.

Diligence- to visualize, to recite, and not allow distractions, this is the opposite of laziness. During practice, laziness is the main difficulty.

Concentration- on deities, mind not withdrawn from visualization

Wisdom- all these inherently not existent. Truly, they are empty, they are the nature of bliss and joy.

**I take refuge, until I attain enlightenment, in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sublime Assembly. By the merit that I have accumulated through generosity and other virtues, may I obtain Buddhahood for the sake of all beings. (Repeat 3 times)**

Next, bring your mind to a sense of emptiness, absence of thought, the natural state.

After you have quieted down your mind, visualize yourself (in your usual state) with a 'pom' on the crown of your head. This turns into a lotus, upon which is the syllable 'ah'. The 'ah' turns into a moon-disk on this lotus, upon which there is a white 'hung', which changes into a white vajra (with a white hung in the center).

White, red, blue, green, and yellow light radiates to the six realms, realms of confusion and suffering, and pain. These rays of light completely purify suffering and the cause of suffering. The rays of light then return.

The five colors again radiate, this time reaching to all holy beings, from Buddha to your Root Guru, wrathful and peaceful Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, Dharmapalas and Divine Beings. The rays of light return, and Vajrasattva appears. He is the power of purification of all Buddhas. Right leg out, and left leg drawn in, he is very peaceful and completely white, and transparent.

From Vajrasattva's heart, lights radiate to Divine Beings, from Buddha all the way through the lineage Guru's to your own Root Guru, all the tantric deities, past, present, and future, Dharmapalas. Light reaches to please all the enlightened ones.

Light then returns from them in the form of Vajrasattva. Visualize the Wisdom Beings from their Pure Land merging with the Samaya Being, like rain dissolving into an ocean. They become one.

**On the crown of my head, on a lotus-moon seat, is Lama Dorje Sempa, white in color and wearing all the ornaments. He has one face and two arms; in his right hand he holds a vajra and in his left, a bell; he sits in cross-legged posture.**

**(Rays of light emanate from Dorje Sempa's heart center, invoking the assembly of absolute knowledge deities [yeshepas] who are absorbed into him. Meditate that Dorje Sempa is in essence the union of all the rare and sublime jewels.**

Then, think that there is nothing that cannot be purified; affliction (sin), obscuration, disease. Vajrasattva is the purity of all enlightened beings.

Before and during the recitation think (of the Four Powers):

1- In the past, whatever action I have done due to my negative emotions, which cause me suffering and affliction, all these I repent. All these which obstruct, all these, so negative, I repent. Embodiment of enlightenment, I ask that you forgive me.

2nd- Now, even at the cost of my life, I will not do this action anymore. From my heart I repent. Because this causes pain, confusion, obstruction, I will not do this action anymore.

3rd- Trust and devotion. Trust in Vajrasattva. Have faith that this is the embodiment of all Buddhas, stainless purity and compassion, having the power to purify. Any virtuous action is the third power.

4th- You are purified because of the intention to benefit other sentient beings; altruism, bodhicitta.



Cultivate these.

**Then say)**

**"Lama Dorje Sempa, please purify and remove all harmful actions, obscurations of the mind, faults and transgressions which I and other beings limitless as space have accumulated."**

After this prayer, in Dorje Sempa's heart center, on a moon disc, the letter HUNG appears, surrounded by the hundred syllable mantra; from the syllables arises an uninterrupted stream of nectar which flows from his form, enters through the opening in the crown of my head, fills my body and purifies all harmful actions and transgressions.

Visualize at the heart of Vajrasattva, the hundred syllable mantra, on a moon disk. As the mantra is recited, a nectar stream uninterruptedly flows down and fills Vajrasattva's body with wisdom nectar. From his right front big toe, on the crown of your head, nectar flows down like a waterfall, through the crown of your head, and flows through your body.

**OM BENZRA SATO SAMAYA MANU PALAYA BENZRA SATO  
TENOPA TISHSTA DRI BO ME BHAWA SUTO KAYO ME BHAWA  
SUPO KAYO ME BHAWA ANURAKTO ME BHAWA SARWA SIDDHI  
MEM PRAYATSA SARWA KARMA SU TSA ME TSI TANG SHRI YA  
KU RU HUNG HA HA HA HA HO BA GA WAN SARWA TA TA GA TA  
BENZRA MA ME MUN TSA BENZRA BA WA MA HA  
SA MA YA SATO AH**

**By the vow of Vajrasattva, keeping guard, thou Vajrasattva, stay near, steady me, satisfy me, enrich me, be loving towards me. Bestow on me all perfections. In all deeds, also, make my mind virtuous. The four joys. Blessed ones. All the thus-gone. Diamond (one), do not abandon me. Make me adamant. (Thou)being of the great vow!**

## OM BENZRA SATO HUNG

The hundred wrathful and peaceful deities of the bardo, all tantric deities are embodied in this mantra.

The flow comes in the nine openings as nectar, and pushes out obscurations, as pus and blood, obscurations, sickness, disease, physical and mental disease (soot); cockroach, ugly, nectar pushing out, pushing out impurities coming from your body. All this goes under the earth. Keep reciting, not too slow or too quick. Pronounce each syllable. Completely concentrate your mind. Do not let it wander. Continue reciting while applying the Four Powers (regret, resolve, faith, and altruism).

All disease, any karmic action, especially any that cause obstruction to spiritual practice are completely purified by this.

**"Protector! Through ignorance and delusion, I have not kept my commitments and have broken them. Lama, Protector, give me refuge. O Lord of beings, Holder of the Vajra, who possesses the true nature of compassion, I take refuge in you. I openly admit all the Vajrayana commitments of body, speech and mind which I have not fulfilled and have also broken, whether they be primary or secondary commitments. Grant me your blessing so that I am purified, and all harmful actions, obscurations of the mind, faults and transgressions are removed."**

Vajrasattva overhead is pleased. Smiling, he speaks,

**Dorje Sempa assures me that I am purified, melts into light and is absorbed into me. We become indivisible.**

All is purified. Now I think of myself as completely clear and radiating.  
(rest mind)

There is no past, no future, no present time mind; no color, no shape, nothing to analyze. Keep mind without contriving effort, relaxed mind, bliss and joy, yet very empty. Keep this as long as you want. If you like you can follow your breath, as long as you want.

### **Dedication Prayer**

**Through this virtue I pray all beings without exception experience the undying state of permanent bliss by merging supreme knowledge and methods and come to realize Dorje Sempa. Dedicating the merit of traveling the inner Vajra path, may I be granted the stage of Buddhahood.**

Then we practice taking and sending, removing all suffering of sentient beings, giving all happiness.

This is the complete tantric path.

Vajrasattva Sadhana, with commentaries by Lama Lodu - II

(C2) 'I walk on the virtuous path, the cause of happiness.'

The Guru represents all past, present, and future Buddhas, and contains all the blessings of the lineage. He is free from impurity. We are asking him to bless our speech, mind, and body.

**Glorious and precious Root Guru who sits on a lotus-moon seat on the crown of my head, through your great kindness, having taken me as your disciple, grant me the accomplishments of the Body, Speech and Mind (of the Buddhas).**

'Glorious' here means 'possessing the diamond quality' - nothing can distract him from the nature of mind. A diamond can cut any material, but no material can cut diamond. It is powerful- no affliction can make him waver, nothing can move him, disturb him, that one who possesses the glorious mind.

'La' means the mind's quality, perfection and purity is above all else, nothing can match that. And 'ma', like a mother's concern for her child, Lama is he who cares for all sentient beings without exception, to protect all sentient beings from suffering and to guide them to happiness; even his enemies he looks on with compassion.

Holy, supreme, noble; to all the Lamas who possess such qualities, I go for refuge; such diamond qualities, perfect qualities, supreme qualities, kindness and compassion; holding the lineage from Buddha, from Lama to Lama; initiations he keeps as nectar; he is the essence of all past, present, and future Buddhas.

Deities are numberless, and all of them are manifestations of the Buddha, emanating to meet the needs of living beings, according to their different afflictions.

'Yi' means mind, and 'dam', tight. Think with one-pointed mind of the deities. They are wisdom manifestations of the Buddha. I go for refuge to all the manifestations of the Guru.

'Buddha' means completely perfect and pure; flourishing wisdom and compassion; he who attained the perfect awakening.

'Dharma' means truth. The Buddha's word is the truth that brings you to attain perfect enlightenment. The Buddha's book is the Holy Dharma. The words give us an idea of how to pacify afflictions, how to maintain stability of mind, to analyze and to develop insight, and to stabilize this, and to remove obstacles.

We rely on books. Through study, meditation and experience we learn and become liberated. Books describe how to be free from suffering, to attain insight, and to stabilize this.

Sangha are those with no afflictions at all. All ten levels of Bodhisattvas developing wisdom are perfect sangha. They never have negative intentions, never come back to suffering; they are continually progressing. The true sangha, excellent sangha, they can do Buddha's teaching perfectly. Ordinary sangha is someone we can learn from. They guide us, deliver teachings to us.

Dakas and Dakinis are tantric male and female bodhisattvas, some are enlightened and some are on their way to enlightenment. Both are extremely beneficial to our practice.

Wrathful forms- tantric practice is so strong, so powerful, it can ripen our karma very quickly. Lots of obstacles may come. So we rely on Dharma Protectors. They have given their word to protect those who practice precisely, with devotion. He has the commitment to protect them, and to preserve the teaching. They want to protect you from suffering.

With compassion and devotion, think of all sentient beings, mother, father, family, enemies, think:

*I and all sentient beings are under their protection.*

Ask whoever has the power to help, from your heart. The Three Roots and the Three Jewels are everywhere. As long as you have devotion they are there.

**I take refuge in all the glorious and holy lamas. I take refuge in the yidams and deities assembled in their mandalas. I take refuge in the Bhagavan Buddhas. I take refuge in the holy Dharma teachings. I take refuge in the exalted Sangha. I take refuge in the assembly of dakas, dakinis, Dharma Protectors and Guardians who possess the Eye of Supreme Knowledge.**

### **Vajrasattva**

**The meditation and Recitation of Dorje Sempa, which purifies sins and harmful actions.**

(C1) Vajrasattva Visualization and Mantra

Preliminary Visualization:

On the crown of your head, visualize a white PAM, which transforms into a blooming, many petalled white lotus. A white AH appears in the center of the lotus and changes into a moon disk. A white HUNG appears on the moon disk and changes into a white vajra marked with a white HUNG. The vajra radiates light to the Six Realms to pacify the suffering of all sentient beings.

(C2) To pacify and remove afflictions, we become free of that realm. Impure realms become pure realms; impure beings become pure beings.

(C1) Then the vajra radiates light as an offering to the Buddha fields of the ten directions. All the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are pleased and return the light to condense all their Blessings and Wisdom on the crown of your head.

(C2) Every being is pleased. Cultivate that. All wisdom speech, mind, body condense into light and dissolve into the crown of your head.

(C1) The vajra and the HUNG transform into Vajrasattva sitting in the half lotus position, with his left leg drawn in and the right foot stretched out. He has a transparent body that is completely white, one face, two, arms and the blue Akshobya Buddha on the crown of his head-knot.

His eyes are wise and compassionate. His right hand is holding a golden vajra and his left hand is holding a silver bell. He is dressed in divine silks, precious gems and the costume of the peaceful deities who are victorious over emotions and suffering.

Vajrasattva has a white OM on his forehead, a red AH at his throat, and a blue HUNG at his heart center, representing the Body, Speech, and Mind of the Buddha.

The white, red, and blue colors radiate to the Buddha fields of the ten directions and three times, returning to Vajrasattva to dissolve into his body like water into water.

We meditate that Vajrasattva is the Wisdom and Samaya essence.

(C2) Vajrasattva's qualities, cultivate in your mind.

'Like water into water' means you don't know which came from outside and what was already there. The Samaya and Wisdom beings, they become one.

**On the crown of my head, on a lotus-moon seat, is Lama Dorje Sempa, white in color and wearing all the ornaments. He has one face and two arms; in his right hand he holds the vajra and in his left, the bell; he sits in cross-legged posture.**

**(Rays of light emanate from Dorje Sempa's heart center, invoking the assembly of absolute knowledge deities [yeshepas] who are absorbed into him. Meditate that Dorje Sempa is in essence the union of all the rare and sublime Jewels.**

(C1) Four Powers: From time to time during the meditation remember to cultivate the four powers:

- 1) Renunciation and regret for our past negative actions.
- 2) Vowing not to repeat negative actions.
- 3) By develop faith and reliance on Vajrasttva as the essence of the Three Roots and Three Jewels, and by going for refuge and developing bodhicitta we will purify all our sins and obscurations.

(C2) Think: through your pure, stainless wisdom and compassion, you can purify me. Have faith in the compassion and kindness of Vajrasattva as the essence of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, wrathful and peaceful deities.

(C1) 4) Determination to carry out wholesome actions to purify our past actions.

(C2) Negative is countered by positive action's energy. More positive actions makes negative actions powerless.

(C1) There are many deities and mantras on the Diamond Path that you can use for purification. In addition, building stupas and monasteries, circumambulating them, visiting and practicing at holy places, and



performing prostrations, all purify your obscurations. Of all methods, the most effective is reciting the Hundred Syllable mantra of Vajrasattva. Vajrasattva is the essence of the Hundred Deities.

Throughout the sutras, these four powers are discussed and appear in many stories of the various Arhats. Any one of these four powers can purify all of your past actions. However, it is far more effective to combine the four powers together.

(C2) From time to time think of the four powers in front of Vajrasattva.

**Then we recite:)**

**Lama Dorje Sempa, please purify and remove all harmful actions, obscurations of the mind, faults and transgressions which I and other beings limitless as space have accumulated.**

**After this prayer, in Dorje Sempa's heart center, on a moon disc, the letter HUNG appears, surrounded by the hundred syllable mantra; from the syllables an uninterrupted stream of nectar arises, flows from his form, enters through the opening in the crown of my head, fills my body and purifies my harmful actions, obscurations of the mind, faults and transgressions.**

(C1) The visualization while reciting the mantra:

In the center of Vajrasattva's heart is a white lotus and moon disk with a white HUNG, surrounded by the pearl garland of the mantra that spins clockwise and sends forth multicolored light. The crystal rosary of the mantra moves like a smooth flow of water, filled with colors and lights that grow brighter.

An uninterrupted stream of nectar flows from the white HUNG filling Vajrasattva's body completely. It overflows from his outstretched right toe

directly above the crown of your head. (Like a waterfall, very shining) The nectar is white going into your body. The nectar fills the body and purifies harmful actions, obscurations of the mind, faults and transgressions.

**OM BENZRA SATO SAMAYA MANU PALAYA BENZRA SATO  
TENOPA TISHSTA DRI BO ME BHAWA SUTO KAYO ME BHAWA  
SUPO KAYO ME BHAWA ANURAKTO ME BHAWA SARWA SIDDHI  
MEM PRAYATSA SARWA KARMA SU TSA ME TSI TANG SHRI YA  
KU RU HUNG HA HA HA HA HO BA GA WAN SARWA TA TA GA TA  
BENZRA MA MR MUN TSA BENZRA BA WA MA HA SA MA YA  
SATO AH**

**By your vow, Vajrasattva, keep guard, Vajrasattva, stay near me, steady me, satisfy me, enrich me, be loving towards me. Bestow on me all perfections. In all deeds, also, make my mind virtuous. (The four joys.) HA HA HA HA Blessed ones. All the thus-gone. Diamond (one), do not abandon me. Make me adamantine. O being of the great vow!**

**OM BENZRA SATO HUNG**

Disease is visualized as blood and pus which comes out of your body and dissolves into the Golden Earth.

(C2) Mental obscurations, discomfort, and obscurations to samatha, vipassana, and mahamudra are visualized as inky, smoke, and all of this dissolves into the Golden Earth.

(C1) Harmful actions and obscurations are visualized as inky smoke flowing out of the pores of the skin and dissolving into the Golden Earth.

Demons and obstructions to your practice (projections of our own egos) are visualized as ugly shaped creatures (small insects, spiders, scorpions, snakes, etc.) coming out of your bodily orifices and dissolving into the Golden Earth.

(C2) One should try to say the short mantra six times the number of the long mantra.

During the recitation one can do the following:

just look at Vajrasattva;

look at the mantra and HUNG on the lotus-moon disk at his heart center;

concentrate on the nectar flow;

think of the four powers;

meditate on compassion;

on devotion;

and on the nature of mind

The four powers should be thought of at least three times: at the beginning, the middle, and at the end of the practice.

At the end of the practice your body should be seen as crystal clear, perfect and pure.

**(This is the hundred syllables.) (Then repeat these mantras as many times as we can.) (Afterwards join the palms at the heart)**

(C1) After 100 mantras, the nectar overflows from the crown of your head and touches Vajrasattva's toe. Flesh and bones dissolve and your body becomes like a crystal vase.

**'Protector! Through ignorance and delusion, I have not kept my commitments and have broken them. Lama Protector, give me refuge. O**

**Lord of beings, Holder of the Vajra, who possesses the true nature of compassion, I take refuge in you. I openly admit all the Vajrayana commitments of body, speech and mind which I have not fulfilled and have also broken, whether they be primary or secondary commitments. Grant me your blessing so that I am purified, and all harmful actions, obscurations of the mind, faults and transgressions are removed.'**

Vajrasattva, with a delightful expression, gives you his blessing.

*(C2) 'Noble family, you are completely purified now.'*

**Dorje Sempa assures me that I am purified, melts into light and is absorbed into me. We become indivisible.**

*(C1) Finally, Vajrasattva melts into light and dissolves into you. The mind remains free from concepts.*

Leave your mind in its own nature.

Then dedication.

*(C1) Dedicate the merit that all beings may achieve Perfect, Supreme Enlightenment.*

*(C2) Anything that I do good, I share the merit with all sentient beings. May it free them from all sorrows, forever, and help them to attain the full awakening stage, lasting forever.*

Whatever is dedicated in this way will last until you reach enlightenment, and will support you in your practice.

## Dedication Prayer

**Through this virtue I pray all beings without exception experience the undying state of permanent bliss by merging supreme knowledge and methods and come to realize Dorje Sempa. Dedicating the merit of traveling the inner Vajra path, may I be granted the stage of Buddhahood.**

(C1) These notes are based upon oral instructions given by Lama Lodro Rinpoche on several occasions. The original set of notes were compiled by Peggy Fallon. These were subsequently edited and typed by Bill Minasian. They are made available to others on the occasion of Lama Lodro Rinpoche bestowing the empowerment of Vajrasattva in Marin County, California, on January 22, 1995.

(C2) Meditation is the mind on vacation.

'... the essence of thought is dharmakaya'; not thought, but the essence of thought.

Our Buddha Nature itself is the Deities.

Deity and mantra are of the same nature. The outer nature is the deities, the inner nature is mantra, and the innermost aspect is the true nature of mind.

From A Commentary on Vajrasattva Meditation, by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Those things which occurred in the past are only like a memory now, much like objects in a dream. However, the Buddhist texts say:

*Actions done in the past establish predispositions  
or potencies in the mind  
capable of issuing forth effects in the future.*

In the past we did certain actions that have already passed away, however, the predispositions or potencies established by those actions are fresh in our mind, ready to issue forth effects in the future.

Now basically each one of us wants only happiness and does not want suffering, and we make great exertion to achieve that happiness and get rid of that suffering, in accordance with our own estimation of the best techniques for achieving that. The techniques which are widely known in the world to bring about happiness and get rid of suffering are to try to accumulate money, friends and great fame. However, there is another technique which cannot be seen by the eyes, but which is a means of achieving happiness and getting rid of suffering - Dharma practice. There are similar techniques for improving the mind, for teaching patience, for making us into better people, but what I am going to be speaking about today is the Buddhist religion...

The basis for all this development is our own mental continuum, and from within the mental continuum, the basis for the development into these marvelous qualities of buddhahood is the most subtle level of consciousness. In some systems this is called the "self-arisen pristine wisdom" and in some it is called "the fundamental innate mind of clear light". It's also called the "all good"; it is an "all good" consciousness devoid of any beginning or end. It is not something we need to achieve

newly; it is inherently with us. It is called the buddha nature; the nature of "one gone thus."

So then we ask, if we do have such a wonderful basic consciousness, what are all of these attitudes of desire and hatred which bring us suffering?

\*These are adventitious. The defilements appear in the mind due to temporary or adventitious causes and conditions, and do not reside in the very nature of the mind itself, therefore, they can be removed.

To give an example of this, the protector Nagarjuna says in his Praise of the Element of Superior Qualities:

*When a metal garment which has become stained with contaminations  
And is to be cleansed by fire, is put in fire,  
Its stains are burned but it is not.*

Applying this to what is exemplified, he then says:

*So with regard to the mind of clear light  
Which has the stains of desire and so forth,  
Its stains are burned by wisdom's fire  
But its nature, clear light, is not.*

Therefore the temporary faults can be purified or removed. The direct antidote to removing these defilements is the wisdom realizing the emptiness of inherent existence. In order for that antidotal consciousness realizing emptiness to be powerful, it is necessary for it to be accompanied by a compassionate method. Therefore, it is necessary to generate wisdom accompanied by compassionate method...

What we need is a combined mode of practice in which we accumulate the positive and purify the negative.

For overcoming ill deeds and defilements we engage in disclosure, confession, and the practice of restraint. For this we need what are called the four powers, which are:

*the power of the object*

*the power of regret*

*the power of resolve*

and,

*the power of the remedy*

*The power of the object* is refuge and generating an altruistic intention to become enlightened. With regard to refuge there are vast explanations of the external, internal and secret refuge. In one procedure, we go for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and spiritual community which have already been established in other's continuums.

Refuge in something external is called the causal procedure of going for refuge. This means going for refuge to the Buddha, Dharma and spiritual community which will be generated within our continuum in the future.

In the causal refuge, when we go for refuge externally, the purpose is our own attainment of buddhahood. We will attain the Buddha, Dharma and spiritual community in the future.

The other factor with regard to the power of the object is altruism. When we just think about ourselves the scope of our attitude is very small, but when we think about as many others as we can, our attitude is much more vast.

To generate this positive mind of altruism, we engage in the seven-fold quintessential instructions of cause and effect. This is one method for generating an altruistic attitude; the other method is engaging in the practice of equalizing and exchanging oneself and others.



*\*If we have a little experience in the attitudes involved in going for refuge and altruism, then when we do the Vajrasattva practice about which I will be speaking today; when we begin with refuge and the generation of the altruistic mind, we will be really moved because of our previous practice. Therefore it is necessary to engage in a continual form of practice of refuge and altruism. If we do not have such experience, when we read the text it will be just words and the mind will not be moved, so it won't have much effect. Therefore, it is necessary to continually take the practice of refuge and development of altruism as the very inner structure of our daily practice.*

The second power is called *the power of regret*. This means that we generate feelings of regret with regard to the negative actions we have done in the past. In order to generate such feelings we need to reflect over and over again on the disadvantages of those negative actions. As it says in the text:

*We need to generate a sense of contrition, a feeling of regret; feeling sorry as if we have swallowed poison and want to remove it from our body.*

If we have a strong sense of regret, feeling sorry, then this itself induces a feeling of restraint from the activity in the future, and we determine not to engage in that activity anymore in the future. If we don't have a strong sense of contrition- regret, feeling sorry- then we can't possibly have a strong sense of restraint in the future.

Without a strong sense of contrition and restraint, if we engage in some method of confession, disclosure and purification of that negative action, it would be as if we were eating poison, then doing a little bit of confession, then eating more poison, doing a little confession and eating more poison. The only result over time, is that it will ruin your body. Thus it is necessary to have the second power, the power of regret, in a strong form.

This will induce the third power, *the power of resolve*, then on the basis of that, we can engage in the fourth power, *the power of the remedy* of those ill deeds.

The fourth power, the power of the remedy, involves engaging in a virtuous activity, such as circumambulating, building a stupa, generating compassion in meditation, generating the realization of emptiness and so forth. That is why the preliminary practices are so important, so valuable.

## The Purification of Obscurations - The Meditation of Vajrasattva

{Edited}

By Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche

Vajrasattva is called the all pervasive sovereign of both the outer and inner tantras. He is also known as the Lord of the Body, Speech, Mind, Qualities and Activities of all the Buddhas. Vajrasattva is the supreme embodiment of the whole tantric mandala and lord of all the buddha families. The buddha families display the aspects of primordial wisdom which pervade the world in every direction. The major radiations are known as the five wisdoms, which are symbolized by the five buddha families.

*Vajrasattva* is a Sanskrit name. *Vajra* means “diamond” and symbolizes the innermost essence of love, compassion and wisdom which is indestructible. *Sattva* is one who is heroic or courageous. The union of wisdom and compassion describes the nature of Vajrasattva and all the buddhas. All of the extraordinary powers and qualities of our Buddha nature derive from this indestructible, vajra-like essence. Those who discover this vajra nature, are enlightened.

To practice on Vajrasattva is a reflection on the external level signifying that we are striving to awaken. On the inner level we are developing unyielding courage, so that in trying to bring a clear understanding of all this to sentient beings, we actually begin to radiate and communicate the transcendental beauty of these qualities.

Having discovered the indestructible courage of bodhicitta, the perfect union of love, compassion and wisdom, or the non-duality of skillful methods of activity and emptiness-awareness, we can begin to apply ourselves. If this was not our true nature, it would be futile to practice. We would just be wasting our time. Without this vajra essence, all efforts would

be completely useless. No matter how much you try to make charcoal white, it will remain black. The indestructible attributes of our true being are hidden behind all these habit patterns. To go beyond them, we must evoke vajra courage and a firm commitment. This is why we need to practice on Vajrasattva as Guru Padmasambhava instructed.

The visualization of Vajrasattva is a support for the realization of our Buddha nature. Why do we need support? Because we are so habituated to our conceptions that we continually relate to the world as if there were an inherently existent dualism of subject and object. We need to work with the mental attitude which characterizes our present experience. When we move beyond duality and merge with Vajrasattva in the true nature as it is, there will no longer be any need for external supports to invoke the intrinsic reality of indestructible courage.

There are two ways we employ this practice. Both are designed to help us discover our hidden Vajrasattva nature. The first is to visualize Buddha Vajrasattva above the crown of your head. This is practicing according to the system of the outer tantras. According to the inner tantras, visualize yourself as having completely merged and become one with Vajrasattva.

These two forms are called visualizing the deity in front of you, and self-emanated, which is to see yourself in the form of the deity. The ngöndro practice makes use of both forms. First, visualize Buddha Vajrasattva one arm's length above your head, seated on a white lotus with one thousand petals.

To be specific, the center of the lotus connects to the central channel via a luminous stalk which runs through the top of the head. Your crown chakra is wide open and surrounded by a halo of light. A white moon disc covers the pollen bed of the lotus, upon which Vajrasattva sits in the vajra posture. Vajrasattva is luminous and semi-transparent. His body is not solid but made of wisdom, loving-kindness and compassion. He has one face, two

arms, two legs, and is a rich white color, shining like a mountain glacier reflecting the light of a thousand full moons.

The very embodiment of compassion and wisdom, he is actually no other than Guru Padmasambhava and the heart of all lineage masters, appearing in this sambhogakaya form.

In his right hand, he holds a vajra vertically at the level of his heart center. His left hand is leaning on his hip and holding an upside-down bell...

Vajrasattva is the primordial state of great blissfulness, radiating the light of wisdom, compassion, love, and peace to beings in all directions. This bliss helps magnetize our power of concentration and deepens our feelings of devotion to the teacher, the teachings, and all sentient beings.

Begin by chanting these lines:

*Above the crown of my head is Vajrasattva,  
Inseparable from the lama.  
From Vajrasattva's body a nectar stream descends,  
Purifying my obscurations.*

Recite this once and then begin to chant the Hundred Syllable mantra of Vajrasattva. Vajrasattva's mantra is one of the longer ones. If you're just beginning you might say it once, seven, or twenty-one times. If you have time, do a mala, which is 108 mantras. Do even more if you can.

While reciting the mantra, hold this visualization:

In the heart center of Buddha Vajrasattva, visualize a five-pointed crystal dorje which stands upon a small moon disc. In the center sphere of the dorje there is a small HUM syllable, white in color, bright with wisdom light. Again, the moon, the dorje and the HUM are not solid objects. The

upright vajra is surrounded by the letters of the one-hundred-syllable mantra. Each syllable stands independently and is self-resounding as the garland rotates around the edge of the moon disc.

It's good to visualize this, but if it proves too difficult, don't worry about it. Everything that is explained in the sadhana is there from the beginning, so with that understanding, you can just go ahead and recite the mantra.

During this practice, do not be too concerned about details such as the precise size of the vajra or the exact number of petals in the lotus. Don't get too intellectual. Put the analytical scholar business aside, and concentrate with devotion on the warm and loving presence of Vajrasattva. Practice feeling his blissful immanence. That will take care of everything.

While chanting and visualizing the self-reciting syllables circling clockwise around the moon-disc, the mantra echoes from the heart of Vajrasattva. This initiates a blazing forth of love and wisdom energy which arises spontaneously out of his form, as white light radiates from his body and descends through the halo around your crown chakra into the central channel.

This starry nectar is not contained inside the central channel; your whole body becomes soaked in Vajrasattva's wisdom light. This light completely purifies all of our obscurations, obstacles, disease, and sicknesses. That's why Vajrasattva is known as the purification buddha. This is very special.

Meditate on the form of Vajrasattva and repeat the mantra as more and more of the luminous nectar descends, filling your chakras and totally purifying all emotional and mental obscurations until eventually your whole body is saturated with the pure energy of wisdom, love and compassion. This is the light of Buddha Vajrasattva. Through the practice, you become similar to him. With this understanding, continue to recite the mantra as much as you can.

Recite it as much as you can and finally, imagine that Vajrasattva smiles your way and says joyfully, “O noble son or daughter, now you’ve completely purified your obscurations.” He then dissolves into a small circle of white light, which enters through your crown chakra and descends through the central channel until it reaches the heart center. At that moment, you are transformed into the Buddha Vajrasattva.

To assume the form of Vajrasattva, you must have an understanding of the mandala of awakening, which means seeing this entire universe as the display of the mandala of Buddha Vajrasattva. All form is recognized as the body emanation of indestructible Vajrasattva. All vibrations, from the sound of the ocean to ambulance sirens, are the song of the indestructible hero communicating his message of true bodhicitta. The open, unobstructed nature of mind and space reveal the adamant courage of the bodhisattvas.

If we have a clear understanding of these three aspects of reality, we can meditate with confidence for a few minutes and then recite one mala of the short mantra which consists of six syllables:

OM VAJRA SATTVA HUNG

If you cannot do all of this as elaborately as I have described, just try to relax without thinking and analyzing. Remember that everything is primordially pure and that it is all arising in the mandala of awakening. Be confident in that understanding as you concentrate on the practice. To analyze or indulge in intellectual activities during a session is a form of doubt and hesitation. Reverberating with negative qualities won’t leave you any energy for meditation. Just apply yourself courageously, with full confidence and devotion. This is the way to connect directly with the healing, cleansing power of indestructible reality.

Recite the six-syllable mantra for as long as you have time, then chant:

*Vajrasattva melts into light  
And becomes mingled in one taste  
With one's own perceptions.*

Finally then, Vajrasattva is dissolved. This means we're returning to the basic ground of mind and recognizing that everything is a reflection of the primordial source.

The phrase, "*pure from the beginning, free from all extremes and complexities,*" describes the true nature of mind. Everything arises as a relative transformation of that pure, absolute condition. So when we dissolve the deity, it is like returning back to the original state which is all-pervading. Here there are no longer any divisions into times, directions, outer and inner. There is no partiality in the heart of perfect wisdom.

Dissolution in the primordial nature represents a more serious step forward on the profound path of indestructible heroism. It is free of all dualisms such as birth and death or existence and non-existence. All limitations are transcended in the innate condition as we practice merging back into that nature, relaxing into it. This is known as practicing on the absolute Vajrasattva.

Relax your mind and meditate this openness for as long as you have time.

If thoughts come up, don't pursue them; just let them go without suppressing or grasping them.

That is known as the great Dzogchen meditation.



## Vajrasattva Practice

From *Illuminating The Path*, by Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche

We need the visualization of Vajrasattva as a support for realizing our buddha-nature because we are so habituated to our concepts. We continually relate to the world as if we were truly-existing subjects who perceive truly-existing objects. Once we move beyond duality and merge with Vajrasattva in the ultimate nature, we will no longer do this.

There are two ways to practice Vajrasattva. The first is to visualize Buddha Vajrasattva above the crown of your head, which is the practice according to the Outer Tantras. The second way is to visualize yourself as Vajrasattva, which is the way of the Inner Tantras. These two forms are called "dun kye," or visualizing the deity in front of you, and "dak kye," visualizing yourself as the deity. The Dudjom Tersar Ngondro uses both of these forms.

...

It may be useful for us to recall the Four Powers of Vajrasattva and integrate these into our Vajrasattva purification practice.

*The first power of Vajrasattva is the power of the object of visualization, namely, Vajrasattva: the union of all buddhas, Dharmas, and refuges.*

*The second power (recognition) is the power that uproots negativities and mistakes.*

There are four principal types of mistake. "Mistake" in this context means any thought or action that adds to our accumulation of negative karma.

These are:

1. Not knowing what constitutes negativity
2. Knowing, but being forgetful
3. Willfully ignoring the law of karma

4. Being distracted from what to do (and what not to do) by the force of emotional conditioning

*Our awareness of our errors and our intention to improve is the second power.*

We need to acknowledge our bad karma and then engender the determination to eliminate our negativities with *the third power of Vajrasattva: the power of the method*, which is the recitation, visualization, and the harmonization of all the elements of this profound and multifaceted purification practice.

Again, your courageous determination not to relapse into wrongdoing is vital to the proper functioning of this method.

*The fourth power of Vajrasattva is the power of the restoration of purity.*

The only boon of error is that it can always be remedied. By applying these powerful antidotes, you will allow your pure vajra-nature to shine at last.

## How to Practice on Buddha Vajrasattva

From *The Beauty of Awakened Mind*, by Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche

Vajrasattva practice begins with bodhichitta and refuge. Then visualize Vajrasattva sitting one cubit above your head. A cubit is about the length of a forearm, from the tip of the middle finger to the elbow. Guru Padmasambhava, all the lineage masters, and all enlightened beings - particularly the Five Dhyani Buddhas - are completely embodied in the form of Vajrasattva.

Vajrasattva is white in color, and can be visualized with or without a consort. In this version of the practice, Vajrasattva sits in the “royal relaxing posture;” his left leg is bent in, and his right leg is stretched out slightly. Although Shigpo Dudtse does not specifically mention it here, other teachings say that Vajrasattva sits on a thousand-petal white lotus on top of a white moon disc. This instruction can be applied to this practice as well.

Keep this visualization, and with strong devotion and concentration, begin chanting the Hundred Syllable mantra of Vajrasattva. As you chant the mantra, visualize that from the big toe of Vajrasattva’s right foot, bright white light descends like a stream. This stream of white light enters your crown chakra and gradually fills your entire body, from the top of your head to the soles of your feet, cleansing and purifying all your physical, emotional, and intellectual obscurations.

After your body is completely filled, visualize the white light passing through the soles of your feet, descending into the earth. The white light goes to all karmically-connected beings, particularly those who harbor negative thoughts towards you because of unpaid karmic debts, real or imagined. Imagine that the white light transforms into whatever they want from you, and that this satisfies them completely. At that time you no longer have a body made of flesh and bone, but a body of glowing white

light - you are Vajrasattva. Then, if you have time, recite the Hundred Syllable Vajrasattva mantra one hundred and eight times. This is a very high meditation; it will transform all your perceptions into the purity state of the true nature.

The next step is to visualize white, red, blue, and yellow multi-colored lights emanating from the third eye, throat, heart, and navel chakras of the Vajrasattva above your head, which enter your own chakras. Finally, Vajrasattva above your head dissolves into light, which descends through your crown chakra and into your heart.

Shigpo Dudtse says that when you are doing this practice you can also visualize Vajrasattva above the head of each and every sentient being. In this way, everyone is purified at the same time.

And there is a third option. In some of Guru Padmasambhava's teachings it says to visualize Vajrasattva as big as the sky, like a giant umbrella covering and protecting all beings. Chant the Hundred Syllable Vajrasattva mantra, and visualize all beings beneath Vajrasattva receiving his blessings and light.

Finally, Vajrasattva dissolves into light, which dissolves into everyone's heart, and everyone becomes Vajrasattva. Each of these three ways to perform the Vajrasattva meditation is excellent. You can choose the one that you find most comfortable and convenient.

Once Vajrasattva dissolves into light, and that light enters your heart, meditate as we instructed before. Look at your mind. The moment you look there is nothing to see. Simply relax in that state. Do not search for something better; in fact, do not search at all. Do not block thoughts. When a thought arises, do not play with it, analyze it, or manipulate it. Don't reject it, don't accept it, let it be, and let it go.

Try to maintain the state you discovered when you first looked directly at your mind.

Practice like this for as long as you have time, then at the end of the session, dedicate the merit. Pray for your family, friends, for those who are sick, for those who are struggling, and for those who passed away. Pray that all suffering will be completely eradicated, and that all beings will enjoy long life, health, prosperity, and full spiritual awakening.

That is how to practice on Vajrasattva.

## Vajrasattva Meditation

The meditation on Vajrasattva is, according to the Tantric tradition, very beneficial for the confession and purification of sins. In order to pacify all the obscurations accumulated since beginningless times, and in order to restore broken pledges (1), one should practice this meditation regularly. The most appropriate time to practice this meditation is at night, before going to sleep. One should then recall and confess all the sins accumulated during the day, through body, speech and mind, the faults one is aware of, and all the faults accumulated unconsciously, through ignorance.

Here is contained an explanation on the meditation of Vajrasattva.

### Main Meditation

Before the main meditation, as before all meditations, one should take refuge and awaken the Bodhisattva's mind of great compassion:

*In the Enlightened One, His Teachings and Exalted Assembly,  
I take refuge until Enlightenment is won.  
Through the merit of giving and other good deeds,  
May I attain Enlightenment for the sake of all beings.*

(3x or more)

One then thinks of oneself as having regular physical appearance.(2) On the top of one's head one imagines a lotus flower on which rests a moon cushion the lotus flower represents purity and the moon cushion, emptiness. On the moon cushion stands a five-pointed gold vajra.

In the center of the gold vajra there is a white letter HUM - which stands on a small moon cushion. This letter HUM represents the Dharmakaya of Vajrasattva, the nature of all the Buddhas. (3)

From the letter HUM, with the sound HUM, the Dharmakaya form is transformed into the Sambhogakaya form: Vajrasattva appears. His body is white, he has one face, and two arms. His right hand is holding a gold vajra and his left hand, a silver bell. He is adorned with the six jewel ornaments (4), and sitting in vajra asana position (full lotus).

On top of Vajrasattva's head, on a lotus flower and moon cushion, sits the Master of the Family, Akshobhya Vajrasattva. The top of his head is adorned with the top half of a gold vajra. (5)

In Vajrasattva's heart, there is a gold vajra on a moon cushion. In its center, on a small moon cushion, there is a white letter HUM. Imagine this letter as having three dimensions; it can be seen from any side. (6)

From the letter HUM, white light comes out and spreads throughout the ten directions. With this light, Vajrasattva emanates thousands of goddesses who bring offerings to all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The light touches all natural elements - oceans, mountains, medicine, trees - and reaches all sentient beings, purifying all their defilements and transforming them into Buddhas. The light then comes back, and all the offering goddesses return with all the energies of the natural elements, and with the blessings of all the Buddhas. This light sinks into the letter HUM which then becomes very powerful, vibrant with pure energy. This light circulation is repeated many times.

We then request Bhagawan Vajrasattva:

*O Blessed One, cleanse and purify, I pray, all the accumulations Of sins, obscurations, faults, failings and impurities which I and All beings have collected throughout beginningless times.*

(One then recalls all the sins gathered during the day and before.)

From the letter HUM, nectar comes out. It entirely fills up Vajrasattva's body and drips down the moon cushion and lotus flower seat. It flows outside and inside one's body, like the most pleasant shower.

The nectar washes out all physical diseases and sicknesses. It clears away all mental obscurations and defilements. If one feels bothered by evil spirits, one can imagine the nectar clearing them away. All these come out through one's feet and lower apertures of the body as dirty liquid which then disappears in the Dharmadhatu. (7) All physical and mental problems are thus purified.

With this visualization and while keeping in mind the thought of the four powers (8), one respectfully chants the 100-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva, at least 21 times. (9)

OM VAJRASATTVA SAMAYA MANUPALAYA VAJRASATTVA TENOPA  
TISHTHA DRIDHO ME BHAVA SUTOSHYO ME BHAVA SUPOSHYO ME  
BHAVA ANURAKTO ME BHAVA SARVA SIDDHI ME PRAYACCHA  
SARVA KARMA SUCH ME CITTAM SHREYANG KURU HUM HA HA  
HA HA HOH BHAGAVAN SARVA TATHAGATA VAJRA MA ME  
MUNCA VAJRI BHAVA MAHA SAMAYASATTVA AH.

### Completion Meditation

One more time, one asks Vajrasattva to purify all one's obscurations:

*I, deluded by ignorance, have broken and spoiled the vows; Guru and Protector, be my refuge. To the highest Vajradhara, possessed of the essence of great compassion, the chief of all beings, I go for refuge.*

*I confess all my transgressions of the root and branch vows of body, speech and mind. Cleanse and purify, I pray, all the accumulations of sins, obscurations, faults, failings and impurities.*



Vajrasattva then says: *“My child, I purify all your external and internal obscurations. You should now rejoice and feel happy.”* One thus feels encouraged and comforted.

Vajrasattva melts from the top of the Master of the Family down, from the lotus flower stem up. The light concentrates around his heart. This light is very powerful; it is the essence of all the energies and powers of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

The light slowly sinks down in our body. We are now identical to Vajrasattva. We cannot be separated from him. Our body becomes rainbow, free from all conceptions. We keep this feeling, joyful, natural, peaceful. We cannot separate the joyfulness from emptiness. It is a non-dual situation. We make sure our mind is stable, and we keep this state as long as possible.

#### Dedication Meditation

*By this virtue, may I quickly attain the state of Vajrasattva  
and place upon his stage all living beings, without exception.*

*By this virtue, may they all accumulate merits  
and achieve wisdom.*

*May they all obtain the two kinds of benefits,  
for oneself and for others.*

\* \* \*

This commentary was composed by Hiroshi Sonami, Thartse Ken Rinpoche, in Purwala, Northern India, in 1981.

## Notes

1. If one did not keep the vows to practice certain meditations received through initiation, Vajrasattva's meditation can help not to break completely the link with the deity.
2. Generally Mahayoga practitioners have to consider themselves as deity, and give rise to the deity's pride, but it is not so for the meditation of Vajrasattva.
3. One cannot think of the vajra as made of material substance but as having the same quality as a rainbow, made of bright, shining light.
4. Vajra crown, necklace, earrings, bracelets, anklets and apron.
5. Akshobhya Vajrasattva is here visualized as being about one-tenth of the size of Vajrasattva.
6. Tantras do not mention precise sizes for the visualizations, but it is helpful for one's practice to determine sizes with which one is comfortable. For instance, in this case one can think of the lotus as having about a two-foot diameter, about six inches above one's head. The size of the letter HUM is about one-tenth of the size of the gold vajra.
7. One can think of all sins and obscurations coming out as smoky liquid and coal liquid; all illnesses as pus, blood and other dirty things; all evil spirits as countless frogs, tadpoles, spiders, snakes and scorpions.
8. Vajrasattva sitting on top of one's head is the power of shrine: the power of the deity on whom one depends. Through him one can be purified. Producing a mind which strongly regrets all sins previously accumulated is the power of regret, of overpowering. The thought of never performing sinful actions again, from this time forth, even at the cost of one's life, is the power of the antidote. Strongly believing that this meditation will

completely purify one's mental and physical obscurations is the power of restoration.

9. If one does not know Vajrasattva's hundred syllable mantra, one can repeat Vajrasattva's seven-syllable mantra: OM VAJRASATTVA HUM.

## Vajrasattva Practice

### A Brief Introduction to Vajrasattva and the Vajrayana Path of Purification

The meditation and recitation practice of Vajrasattva falls into the special category of what in Buddhism are known as "confession and purification" practices. These are practiced in order to purify the negative actions that have been committed by both oneself and others. To practice the meditation of Vajrasattva, it is important to first have a proper understanding of the Buddhist notion of confession and purification, and how this process is connected with the mind's positive and negative aspects.

In Vajrayana Buddhism, the fundamental nature of our minds and the world is posited to be purity. The Buddha proposed that all beings without exception are endowed with "buddhanature" - the heart of enlightenment - and that everyone has the potential to fully awaken to their truest state, which is known as buddhahood. This state has been the nature of our minds from the very outset of practice, and not just at its completion. Thus, in the Buddhist practice of confession and purification, one aspires to reconnect with one's own and others' inherent nature of goodness, openness, and purity.

Although the nature of mind has never been other than this very state, we nevertheless experience various forms of confusion, disturbing emotions, and uncertainty. Through not realizing the spaciousness that pervades all moments of our existence, we fall under the influence of what in Buddhist teachings are called the three root mental afflictions, or "poisons": attachment, aggression, and ignorance. These mental afflictions block the perception of our true nature and are the cause for all actions that are harmful to ourselves and others.

Thus, we do not perform negative actions because we have a fundamentally bad character. From the perspective of the Buddhist teachings, negative actions are committed as a result of mental afflictions, which in turn arise

due to an ignorance of, or non-acquaintance with, the fundamentally positive, completely pure nature of mind. Therefore, while Buddhist confession involves feeling genuine regret and disenchantment toward the harm one may have caused oneself and others, it does not involve any kind of guilt or shame regarding the basic state of who we are.

The meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva is renowned as supreme among all forms of purification practice employed in Tibetan Buddhism. An important principle of Buddhist deity meditation is that the deity visualized is not thought of as existing "outside" of one's own mind. Rather, through meditating on Vajrasattva as an expression of mind's pure essence, we will be more and more capable of connecting directly with our fundamental state. In this way, incidental obscurations that are not inherently part of the mind's nature will be gradually cleansed, allowing buddhanature to manifest. This will help us engender more compassion for others, as well as more insight into the true nature of all beings and all things, and this insight will naturally and spontaneously lead to the accomplishment of our own and others' relative and ultimate benefit.

Vajrasattva, from *Vivid Awareness*, by Thrangu Rinpoche

The second of the preliminaries is:

The meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva, which purifies misdeeds, obscurations, and adverse conditions that prevent the essence of refuge and bodhichitta from dawning in your being.

Why do we do Vajrasattva meditation? We often have many problems that prevent us from developing relative and ultimate bodhichitta, the meditation that realizes the nature of the mind. What are these problems? Often they are the obstacles from bad acts that we have committed in previous lives. These are what we call misdeeds. We also often have strong imprints from the past that lead us to have strong afflictions and coarse thoughts. These are what we call obscurations.

Often we have thoughts of greed, aversion, delusion, pride, or jealousy. These are what we call the afflictive obscurations. Sometimes, we might not experience greed, aversion, jealousy, or another affliction, but we have many thoughts that prevent us from practicing meditation. These are cognitive obscurations. We need to purify ourselves of all these misdeeds and obscurations.

Generally we would apply mindfulness and awareness and confess our misdeeds, but that is the common path. In the uncommon practices of the secret mantra, we meditate on Vajrasattva above the crown of our head because he is the lord of all the buddha families. Then amrita flows from his heart and into our bodies, filling us. This purifies all the illness in our bodies and all the misdeeds and obscurations in our minds.

Sometimes we might practice tranquility meditation. We might be enthusiastic about doing it, but sometimes we have a lot of problems. Our mind will not rest as it is: it is not clear and many thoughts keep arising.

We are not able to develop good tranquility meditation. When we want to tackle this problem directly, we apply mindfulness, awareness, and carefulness.

We look to see if we have any agitation or dullness. We apply the remedies for those. We look to see if there are a lot of thoughts in our mind, and we apply the remedies for those. But sometimes it is better to do this indirectly rather than directly, and that is when we do the meditation on Vajrasattva and visualize that all the imprints from previous lives that prevent us from developing stable tranquility meditation are pacified. This will help our tranquility meditation.

Sometimes when we do visualization practices of the creation stage, we have trouble visualizing clearly and our minds will not rest. This problem can happen, and the main method for getting rid of it is diligence, but Vajrasattva meditation will purify our imprints and help us in practices of the creation stage.

It is also helpful with insight meditation. Sometimes our insight meditation is clear and good, but sometimes it is unstable. When their insight meditation is not clear or stable, many people ask me what they should do. One thing we can do is Vajrasattva practice, which, by purifying our misdeeds and obscurations, is very helpful.

All of this is why we do Vajrasattva practice.

When we do Vajrasattva practice, we can do the visualization and think that we are doing it to purify all our misdeeds and obscurations in general. But we can also think that we are doing it to purify a particular problem. If we often get very angry or jealous, for example, we can do Vajrasattva meditation to purify that. If we have a particular problem in our meditation, we do Vajrasattva practice to purify that problem.

When we do the visualization, we visualize nectar flowing out of Vajrasattva's body and into us. As it flows into us, we think that it is purifying that specific problem: it is purifying our anger, our jealousy, or the particular problem in our meditation. We think that the blessings of Vajrasattva are purifying that very problem. This is a particular benefit of the meditation on Vajrasattva.

We need something very sharp to purify our misdeeds and obscurations. Resting in naturalness is very loose and relaxed. It has great blessings and the power of the dharma nature, but because it is so relaxed, it does not have the sharpness we need to purify misdeeds and obscurations. When we are trying to purify ourselves, we need to have the intention to confess and purify our misdeeds.

The repetition of the hundred-syllable mantra and the visualization of nectar flowing through ourselves and purifying us of our misdeeds and obscurations give Vajrasattva practice the sharp edge and power that purify us of our misdeeds. It is like when you get sick. There are some medicines that work in a very slow and gentle way, such as ayurvedic or homeopathic medicine. If you take these medicines, they will gradually help you feel better, but sometimes you have a particular thing that hurts, and it is better to have an operation. The surgeon cuts the thing that hurts out of you and then you can get better quickly. Vajrasattva practice is like surgery that directly removes the root of the problem.



From Vajrasattva Meditation, from Tantric Practice in Nying-ma, by  
Khetsun Sangpo

Our own non-virtue prevents us from achieving vision and realization of the profound meaning of suchness. Vajrasattva meditation and repetition is a means of purifying non-virtues.

Our mind is like a mirror that needs cleaning although its entity is the essentially pure mind-basis-of-all (*alayavijnana*). If a mirror is not clean, the images it reflects cannot be seen clearly; similarly, in order to see and realize suchness, the mind must be purified. The best among many skilful means for so doing is Vajrasattva meditation and repetition.

Unless you engage in a purifying practice, your misdeeds will become as vast as the largest mountain. Revelation and dismemberment of non-virtue is extremely important and it can be done very quickly through the Vajrasattva meditation. Sins are indeed horrible but they have the good feature of being purifiable.

What non-virtues are to be purified? You might have taken a vow of individual liberation and then have broken part of it, or even if you have not taken it in your present life, you may have done so and broken it in the past. There are also contradictions and infractions of Bodhisattva vows, as well as sins involved in breaking tantric vows.

All these and other misdeeds not involved with vows such as the ten natural non-virtues are objects to be confessed, to be broken up and destroyed. Just as when the sun emerges from clouds it shines with great force and magnificence, so does the mind freed from sinful predispositions. There is not one of the many non-virtues accumulated in the past that cannot be purified through revealing and confessing it...

Perhaps you think it would be possible to commit a sin, confess and then repeat it, but this method will never purify non-virtue. In order to be effective, a confession must possess four powers.

The first is that of the object or base, which is the being to whom you confess- in this case Vajrasattva.

The second power is a strong sense of contrition and dissatisfaction with (recognition and turning away from) whatever misdeeds you have done in the past.

The third is an aspiration towards restraint, a strong intention to avoid repeating the deeds in the future.

The fourth is to apply an antidote to what you have misdone. In general, this can be any virtuous practice; the specific antidote here is Vajrasattva meditation and repetition.

If you are about to start on a particularly difficult journey, you look for a competent guide in whom to place confidence. In this practice he is Vajrasattva. Shantideva says that no matter how dreadfully one has acted, it can be overcome by depending on a guide, just as even a huge mountain of sin can be consumed like a haystack set on fire by a spark. Vajrasattva meditation and repetition has such power.

The first step is to generate a strong sense of contrition for past sins. In order to do this, you must identify non-virtues as such (with clarity) and recognize these as causes of birth in the unfortunate realms. Confession will bless your mental continuum and free you from the fault of hiding misdeeds.

If you behave badly and then through embarrassment or fear hide the fact from other meditators, the force of what you have done will grow greatly even while you sleep. Therefore it is necessary at once to inform your lama

or those with whom you live, 'I have done such and such. I openly confess it.' For example, if you steal from someone and then hide the fact, not only have you robbed one man but the non-virtuous force of your act expands so that you will reap the effect of having robbed many people. If you reveal it, at the most you will only suffer for having robbed one person.

It is also said, 'Without contrition (regret and turning away), no amount of confession will help.' Your own past non-virtues should be considered as poison in your body that must be expelled. You should have a strong sense of shame but not a wish to hide. Even fear would be appropriate because by misdeeds you create the causes for rebirth in lower migrations of extreme suffering. You should have a strong sense that what you have done is wrong and make a strong intention not to repeat it.

*In order to carry out your intention to refrain from non-virtue in the future, you need mindfulness and introspection that are able to catch even slight tendencies towards non-virtue. Coupled with watchfulness there must be a very strong and urgent resolution not to repeat the mistake even if it should cost your life. Without a strong sense of restraint it is not possible to purify sins.*

Once you have visualized the special object, Vajrasattva, generated contrition and created an aspiration to refrain from such acts in the future, you are ready to apply the antidote. Bowing down to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, taking delight in the virtues of others, and dedicating all your virtue to highest enlightenment will counter previous non-virtue.

Generating an aspirational and practical mind of enlightenment together with sustaining the entity of emptiness in meditative equipoise are also strong antidotes.

A very simple fellow who was a student of Gam-bo-ba had traded briskly in religious texts, images and other religious objects. He went to Gam-bo-ba and asked how to purify this sin. He was told, 'You must earn again as much profit as you have made in this way and use it to build a temple.'

He worked hard to establish a temple complete with beautiful images and other works of art, but the task soon became troublesome because it left him no time to meditate. So he returned to Lama Gam-bo-ba and said, 'I am spending so much time acquiring images and books for the temple that I am distracted and can find no opportunity to meditate.'

His lama told him, 'If you can sustain an understanding of suchness for even a moment, this will purify a whole mountain of non-virtue.' This special means of purifying sins depends on realizing the empty entity of the mind. Coupling this with Vajrasattva meditation and repetition is particularly powerful.

Sit in the adamantine cross-legged posture and visualize the seat of Vajrasattva an arrow length above your head. You should not see yourself as a deity at this time, so the seat is above your normal head. It is a white cushion in the form of a lotus with 100,000 petals, the stem of which descends through the top of your head to a depth of four finger widths.

On top of the lotus is a full-moon disc, and above that the letter *hum* in white. Suddenly the *hum* turns into Vajrasattva, who is your own lama appearing in that form. Seated in the adamantine cross-legged posture, his body is pure white, bright as a snow mountain reflecting the light of a hundred thousand suns; he has one head and two hands, the right holding a vajra and the left a bell.

(Describing Vajrasattva...)

His body is like a rainbow shining in space or an image in a mirror. It appears, yet is empty of obstructiveness. Meditate on his form until even the whites of his eyes and dark pupils are sharp and clear. Do not think that his body is a coarse one made of silver, white stone or any similar substance. It is made of light. Do not imagine him as a flat painting but in

three dimensions, vivid down to the finest detail. He is clear and diaphanous throughout.

You should be very ashamed of (or remorseful regarding) past errors and be determined to reveal them to Vajrasattva.

{this is the wisdom of the feeling nature}

Make a petition to him, 'I will cleanse all the sinful deeds that I have done since beginningless cyclic existence. I will purify the ten non-virtues that I have done since time without beginning. I will cleanse the five heinous acts that I have accumulated. In the past I have broken the vows of individual liberation, those of Bodhisattvas, and the tantric ones. Please cleanse all of these. I have lied and broken many oaths; please purify them.'

Next, commit yourself to refrain from non-virtuous accumulations in the future. Fully absorbed in these intentions... with great faith and energy, recite the mantra:

*Om Vajrasattva samayam anupalaya Vajrasattva tvenopatisnha drdho me bhava  
sutosnyo me bhava suposnyo me bhava anurakto me bhava sarva-siddhim me  
prayachchha sarva-karmasu cha me chittam shriyam kuru hum ha ha ha ha ho,  
Bhagavan sarvatathagata vajra ma me muncha vajri bhava maha samaya satta ah  
hum...*

If possible, repeat the mantra twenty-one times each day so as to maintain continuous purification.

As the nectar enters you, it cleanses you from all contaminated actions of the past and the afflictions of desire, hatred and ignorance which are the causes of suffering. As a result, all sicknesses are excreted through the lower parts of the body as pus and foul blood. Many black and rotten substances emerge- dirt, dust, ink and evil spirits in the form of frogs, toads, spiders, scorpions, snakes and tad poles.

The nectar enters through your head and washes these forms out through the lower part of the body- the anal and genital openings and the soles of your feet.

As they begin to flow out, the earth opens to a depth of nine storeys. All the messengers and workers of the lords of death- people whose karmic relationship with you is such that they would cause your life to be shortened- are there, together with all those to whom you have any obligation. For example, in our beginningless continuum of lives we have eaten a great quantity of meat, and the animals whose flesh was used now come to reclaim their loan.

Anyone who has lent us money or goods is also to be repaid at this time. They stand with hands and mouths open upwards. The ugly forms that have descended from your body are transformed into whatever these beings need and want- money, clothes, food, drink, or anything else they may desire. Satisfied and content, they return from whence they came and the earth closes again. In this way you are able to clear all your debts.

Your body is so purified that it becomes clear inside and out, like crystal.

Like milk pouring into a crystal vessel, the nectar from Vajrasattva fills your body from bottom to top. It is excellent to imagine all these processes simultaneously, but beginners usually take them one at a time until they can keep the whole process in mind.

To repeat: the first step is to focus your attention on the white *hum* standing on the lotus, then on the clear form of Vajrasattva... Next, concentrate on the falling nectar and visualize all the foul entities flowing from your body.

Visualize all male and female beings to whom you are in any way indebted and imagine their receiving your beautiful gifts and being delighted with

them. Imagine that you are repaying these beings for everything they have given you in any form over hundreds of past lifetimes.

Imagine that your own body becomes clear and diaphanous, with the energy centres at the base of the spine, navel, heart, throat and head filled with brilliant white nectar...

Until this point-in the visualization you have been reciting the hundred-syllable mantra. Now stop and consider that as an effect of these abandonments and attainments, you have attained the Four Bodies of a Buddha. These are the ultimate goals of the Mahayana.

Remain in meditative equipoise in this state as long as possible, and then recite:

*O protector, through ignorance I have contradicted and broken my pledges.  
 May I be guarded by the lama protector!  
 I take refuge in the leader of living beings,  
 The leader holding a vajra,  
 Whose nature is great compassion.  
 I earnestly confess all pollution of my pledges of body,  
 Speech and mind- fundamental and secondary.  
 Please cleanse and purify all my masses of defilement-sins,  
 Obstructions, faults, and infractions.*

This is an earnest confession of all past non-virtues, from killing through to wrong views as well as the five heinous deeds. Vajrasattva is compassionate, and you are looking to him for refuge and help.

He smiles and laughs with great delight in your virtue and answers:

*O child of good lineage, all your sins, obstructions,  
 Faults and infractions are purified*

(As soon as he finishes speaking, Vajrasattva melts into light and dissolves into you..)

Consider that you have become fully enlightened with the Four Bodies of a Buddha. This meditation is a future dependent-arising, leading to your eventual transformation into an actual Buddha.

Rays of light from the letters at your heart radiate once more and descend to the hells like a great rain. The rays are like wish-granting jewels bestowing whatever the hell beings want- freedom from heat, cold and so forth.

Like a sun shining in a dark place, the rays clear away all darkness and suffering, spreading first to the hells and then to the realms of hungry ghosts, animals, humans, demi gods and gods. The realms of all six types of living beings are purified and transformed into the eastern pure lands of Vajrasattva, called the Very Joyous...

Throughout the visualization, recite, *Om Vajrasattva hum.*

This practice, known as the eradication of cyclic existence, establishes the future dependent-arising of your ability to eliminate the misery of all sentient beings throughout space and bring about their welfare. Maintain the meditation and repetition for as long as you can.

When concluding the session, imagine that all pure lands and Vajrasattvas throughout space melt into light and dissolve into you...and that your form slowly disappears like a rainbow vanishing in space.

Set yourself in meditative equipoise; let your mind remain fused with this space-like void for as long as you can. When thoughts and conceptions begin to arise, do not be overwhelmed by them but imagine that Vajrasattva's own pure land has suddenly and adventitiously arisen out of clear space.



{the basic space of mind, the clear light nature}

Before leaving your meditation cushion, dedicate the merit of the session to the welfare of all sentient beings throughout space and repeat the mantra once more. If suitable, continue saying it to yourself as you go about your daily activities. Leave your session with the thought that all sentient beings have become Vajrasattvas, and with a small part of your mind retain the thought that you are in a pure land. Consider all appearances as the illusions of a magician.

## Vajrasattva Meditation and Recitation

by Lati Rinpoche

The Vajrasattva meditation and recitation is important because in order to have the realizations of the path, we have to make our mental continuums receptive and ripe for such realizations. Manjushri advised Lama Tsongkhapa that in order to have proper realizations of the high path, three factors must be complete:

1. Requesting to the Guru inseparable from the meditational deity
2. Purifying negativities and accumulating positive potential
3. Practicing the visualization of the sadhana, which is the principal cause of having realizations

Lama Tsongkhapa did many purification practices and later realized the empty nature of phenomena. Although in reality he is the manifestation of Manjushri and so had realized emptiness before, Lama Tsongkhapa did purification practices to set an example for his followers. In that way, we will understand the importance of doing purification practices prior to the actual practice.

One Kadampa master said, “Because the nature of all functional things is impermanent, if someone engages in the practice of purification, accumulates positive potential, practices visualizing the celestial mansion, and does the sadhana with great effort, what may now seem impossible to achieve, like high realizations, will come about one day.”

In India there were many great past masters like Nagarjuna, the Two Jewels and the Six Ornaments. In Tibet there also were many highly realized beings. All of them have experienced these high realizations, whereas we have not. It cannot be that they are the only people who can have

realizations and we cannot. The difference is that our continuum is still obscured by defilements, disturbing attitudes and karma.

Doing the Vajrasattva practice and reciting the 100 syllable mantra 100,000 times is said to purify the negativities if done properly, with all the factors complete.

There is no difference as far as the Buddha nature is concerned. Just as these great beings have Buddha nature, we also have both types of Buddha nature: the natural Buddha nature which is the base for achieving the Dharmakaya, and the transformational Buddha nature which is the main cause for achieving the form body. These are within our mindstreams. The only difference between us and the highly realized beings is that our mental continuums is still obscured by defilements.

Therefore, the practice of Vajrasattva meditation and recitation is very important, as it purifies these obstacles. Unless we do purification practices to eliminate the negativities, our present store of negativities will continue to increase. It is like borrowing a huge sum of money: the interest keeps accumulating.

Doing the Vajrasattva practice and reciting the 100 syllable mantra 100,000 times is said to purify the negativities if done properly, with all the factors complete. This has been explained in the tantra Ornament of the Vajra Essence. If the recitation is done without all four factors present, we cannot purify the negativities completely. However, if the Vajrasattva meditation and recitation is undertaken properly, with the four opponents powers, and the mantra is recited 21 times a day, it is said to prevent the negativities from increasing. If we recite the mantra 100,000 times, it actually purifies the negativities.

The four opponent powers are:

The power of reliance

The power of regret

The power of the antidote

The power of resolve

### 1. The power of reliance

There are two viewpoints regarding the power of reliance. Some lamas maintain that it refers to the object- be it a statue or a living person- in whose presence we disclose our negative actions. However, according to the tradition of the past great masters like the late Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, the power of reliance refers to taking refuge and generating the bodhicitta.

The reason for identifying these as the power of reliance is this: when a person falls on the ground, he/she has to get up by depending upon that very ground. In the same way, when we commit negative actions, they are directed either towards the Buddhas and holy objects, or towards sentient beings. Therefore, purification of those negativities is done in reliance upon the holy objects and sentient beings. Refuge relates to the former and bodhicitta to the latter.

To take refuge, visualize the objects of refuge at the level of your mid-brow, not too high and not too low. They are the distance of about an armspan from you. There, your root Guru instantly appears in the form of Buddha, who is surrounded by all the meditational deities, Buddhas, bodhisattvas and so forth. Their realizations and cessations appear in the aspect of scriptures beside them, with the marking cloth facing towards you. All of the scriptures resonate the sound of the Dharma.

Visualize yourself surrounded by all the beings of the six realms, either in their individual aspects or all of them in human aspect. In either case, they are undergoing the various sufferings of the six realms. Since this is a

Mahayana practice of taking refuge, the three causes for Mahayana refuge should be complete:

1. Dread of both your own and all others' sufferings in samsara
2. Strong conviction that the objects of refuge have the power to free you from these sufferings
3. Strong compassion for all sentient beings, not being able to bear seeing them suffer

With these three causes for taking refuge complete in your mind, recite the refuge prayer in the sadhana. The first two lines of this prayer, *"At all times I take refuge in the Buddhas, the Dharma and the Sangha"* is like a summary of the refuge. "Buddhas" includes all the types of Buddhas, both those who are enjoyment bodies and emanation bodies according to the sutrayana, and the meditational deities like Guhasamaja, Yamantaka, Heruka and so on that are explained in the tantra. Take refuge in all these Buddhas by thinking, *"You are the masters who can really show the path correctly, without any mistakes."*

*"Dharma"* refers to the verbal doctrine and to the actual Dharma which is the realizations and cessations in the mindstreams of the Arya beings. The Dharma refuge appears in the form of scriptures.

*"Sangha"* refers to all of the Sangha mentioned in the sutrayana- the arya beings and arhats- and to all of the Sangha mentioned in the tantras, like the dakas, dakinis, heroes, heroines and so forth. They assist you by overcoming obstacles on your path and gathering the necessary conditions for your practice of the path.

*"...in all of the Three Vehicles, in the dakinis of secret mantra yoga,"* shows taking refuge in the Dharma. It refers to the three vehicles as explained in the sutrayana- the vehicles of the hearers, solitary realizers and

bodhisattvas. “*Secret mantra yoga*” refers to all four classes of tantra. Here, “*dakinis*” refer not to the goddesses but to the tantras of the dakinis, that is, the mother tantras, of which Heruka is the chief one.

“...in the heroes, heroines and powerful goddesses, in the great beings, the bodhisattvas,” is taking refuge in the Sangha. Heroes are those such as Khandakapala. Heroines include Pracandi and others. Empowering goddesses are the partners of the four Dhyani Buddhas and Vajra Varahi. These are the Sangha according to the tantra. Sangha as mentioned in the sutrayana are the bodhisattvas who have attained the irreversible path.

“*And above all, at all times I take refuge in my spiritual master,*” refers to your own root Guru who is inseparable from the principal deity of the celestial mansion.

Understanding the different ways of relating to the Three Jewels, take refuge in them from the depth of your heart. Go for refuge in these noble objects while simultaneously encompassing all sentient beings in the field of your compassion. When you recite the refuge formula “*I go for refuge to the Buddhas...*” imagine that you are leading the chanting and that all sentient beings are going for refuge in the Three Jewels with you. This is the way of going for refuge in the causal objects of refuge.

The second type of taking refuge is to take refuge in the resultant refuge objects. This refers to the resultant state of Vajradhara that you are aspiring to achieve. Develop the strong aspiration to actualize this state. Think, “*I shall achieve the state of Vajradhara.*” Focusing upon your resultant state of Buddhahood, the purified aspect of your own mind, take refuge in that.

Then generate the altruistic attitude, the mind of enlightenment. To do this, focus upon the suffering of all the sentient beings around you. Think, “*Whether or not I remember it, all these beings have been my mothers in my beginningless rebirths. Their kindness to me is boundless both when they were my mother and when they were not. If I think of myself alone and am unconcerned*

*with the welfare of others, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas would be offended. The welfare of the sentient beings is the only thought the Buddhas and bodhisattvas have in their minds. So if I neglected sentient beings, it would not please the holy beings. From my own part, it would not be fair either. Since I have enjoyed the boundless kindness sentient beings have extended to me, it is my responsibility to repay this kindness. Therefore, the responsibility to free sentient beings from their sufferings actually falls upon me.”*

Think that the majority of sentient beings do not meet the proper spiritual path and thus lack the right outlook in their actions. Not understanding what is to be avoided and what is to be adopted, they suffer in this cycle of existence without end. Some sentient beings are fortunate enough to meet the Dharma and some are even more fortunate to enter into the mandala, receive empowerments and so forth, but some of them are not fortunate enough to observe the vows and commitments, and then take rebirth in the vajra hell. Thinking in such a way, develop very strong compassion for each and every sentient being.

Generate loving kindness, the wish to place all sentient beings on the path leading toward non-abiding nirvana, the final state of enlightenment. Develop the special attitude, the determination “I shall bring about the great welfare of the sentient beings.”

Then cultivate the bodhicitta, thinking, *“At present, I do not have the ability to act for the benefit of sentient beings as I wish to. Therefore, I shall attain enlightenment to be able to lead all sentient beings to the state of Heruka. To do this, I must practice all six perfections according to the sutrayana, and I must also observe the vows and commitments and practice the two stages of the tantrayana.”*

With such virtuous thoughts and mental preparation, recite the passage for taking refuge and generating bodhicitta.

To visualize Vajrasattva on your crown, first visualize just above your crown, but not touching it, a white PAM which is the nature of the wisdom

of bliss and emptiness, the mind of your root Guru, Vajradhara. This PAM transforms into a white lotus, with 1,000 or 100,000 petals. Between the top of your head and the lotus, there is an intervening space of about a handspan.

At the center of the lotus, from a white AH which is the nature of the wisdom of bliss and emptiness comes a moon seat, like a crystal mandala base. Do not think the moon which is in the sky is on your head. It is a moon seat. On it is a HUM which is also the nature of the wisdom of bliss and emptiness. It transforms into a five-spoked white vajra, marked with a HUM at its hub. The vajra is one cubit high.

From the HUM at the hub of the vajra, light rays radiate in all directions, touch all the sentient beings, purify their negativities and place them in the state of Vajrasattva. Again, light rays radiate, making offerings to all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. The rays draw forth their blessings and they absorb into the HUM.

By the force of absorbing rays and blessings, the white five-spoked vajra and the HUM at its hub transform into white Vajrasattva. He sits in the vajra posture and faces the same way as you. He is adorned with celestial garments and ornaments.

Although it is not explicitly stated in the sadhana, Vajrasattva is adorned with six mudras: the crown ornament which has a jewel, bangles, necklace, the elaborate Brahma thread, human ashes and earrings. This is the visualization of the commitment being.

Light rays now radiate from Vajrasattva's heart and invite the wisdom beings which are identical to the deities you have visualized. Many of them are invited, and before they dissolve into the commitment beings, they merge into one. This one then dissolves through Vajrasattva's crown and becomes non-dual with the commitment beings.



When the wisdom beings dissolve into the commitment beings, it is helpful if the field of positive potential (the objects of refuge) dissolve with them, through the crowns of the commitment beings. If not, you can do the dissolution of the field of positive potential earlier. When dissolving the field of positive potential along with the wisdom beings into the commitment beings, first dissolve the field of positive potential into the wisdom beings, and then the wisdom beings into the commitment beings.

As the wisdom beings dissolve into the commitment beings, say DZA HUM BAM HO. When you say DZA, the wisdom beings come above the crown of the commitment beings and face the same way as the commitment beings. With HUM, they enter into the commitment beings. With BAM, they merge, and with HO the merging is stabilized.

Again light rays emanate from Vajrasattva, inviting the empowering deities: the five Dhyani Buddhas, their partners and so forth. Request them to bestow the empowerment. They consent, giving the empowerment to Vajrasattva by pouring nectar down through his crown. This fills his body and the excess which spills out of his crown becomes the ornament of Akshobya.

At the heart of Guru Vajrasattva is a HUM on a moon seat. It is surrounded by the 100 syllable Heruka Vajrasattva mantra. Since Vajrasattva, the moon seat and the mantra syllables are all white in color, it may be difficult to visualize them clearly. Therefore, according to the tradition of the masters, to visualize them distinctly, you can visualize Vajrasattva white like a conch, the moon seat white like a crystal, and the mantra syllables white like silver.

Then request Guru Vajrasattva to purify the negative karma and obscurations of all sentient beings and purify all degenerated and broken commitments. Light rays radiate from his heart, touch you and the sentient beings and purify the negativities. These light rays re-absorb. Again light rays emanate, at the tips of which are offering goddesses who make

offerings to all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions. If you have time, also perform the seven limb practice at this point.

The Buddhas and bodhisattvas are pleased, and light rays from Vajrasattva's heart draw forth their inspirations, blessings and excellent qualities in the form of light rays. The light rays and blessings absorb into the HUM at Guru Vajrasattva's heart. This causes nectar to flow from the mantra letters down through Vajrasattva's body into you. These nectars flow through your crown, fill your entire body and purify the negativities.

## 2. The power of regret

The first of the four opponent powers, the power of reliance, is completed by taking refuge and generating the enlightened attitude. This was done before visualizing Vajrasattva.

The second power is regret. This is developing strong regret for all the non-virtuous actions you have committed. Reflect upon all the negative actions of body, speech and mind you have done since beginningless time.

Although you may think, *"I have not really committed such grave non-virtuous actions,"* remember that you have taken rebirth in cyclic existence since beginningless time, sometimes as a being in the lower realms. You have not always taken a human form with all the necessary conditions for Dharma practice. In all these rebirths in the lower realms, you have had many opportunities to indulge in negative actions, and there was hardly any opportunity to engage in virtue. For example, look at the way animals lead their life, the way they indulge in negative actions with such great readiness. By looking at animals' behavior, you can infer you have committed many negative actions in the past when you were born as an animal.

But even when you took rebirth as a human being, if that rebirth was in a place where Dharma was not prevalent, then how easily and readily you

could have engaged in non-virtuous actions without any moral restraint! You may have taken human rebirth many times in situations where you had no idea how to follow the law of cause and effect, how to restrain yourself from negative actions, how to accumulate favorable conditions for Dharma practice or how to accumulate virtuous actions.

Even if you ignore past lives and talk only about this present life, although you may outwardly think that you have not engaged in any grave negative actions, upon probing deeper, you will find that under the influence of emotional afflictions like hatred, attachment, close-mindedness and so forth, you have actually indulged in many negative actions. If these negative actions were to have form, the three realms would be too small to contain them.

No matter how small a negative action may be, if it is not neutralized by the force of purification, it can produce rebirth in the lower realms. Shantideva said, *“If one has to take rebirth in a lower realm as a result of doing small negative actions, by the force of all the negative actions you have done in previous lives, there is hardly any chance for you to take rebirth in an upper rebirth, like that of a human being.”*

If you probe deeper into your own accumulation of negative actions within this lifetime, you will surprise yourself and wonder, *“How could I ever have done these negative actions? Was I crazy at that time?”* You will be amazed at the quantity of negative actions you have done. You will discover that emotional afflictions like hatred, closed-mindedness, desire and others are generated in your mind so naturally, so spontaneously, hardly depending on any external circumstances. Under their influence, you do many negative actions. If you consider the non-virtuous actions accumulated so far, you will find there is no choice but to take rebirth in the lower realms.

If a practitioner with monastic vows transgresses the secondary vows, he/she takes rebirth in the reviving hell. If one transgresses a vow from the

category of *“individual confession,”* one is reborn in other hells. If one commits one of the four defeats, one takes rebirth in the lowest hell realm.

Recollect all the negative actions you could have done during this lifetime. Though you may not be able to remember the negativities created in past lives, you can reflect upon them through reasoning and inference, thinking, *“I must have done all these negative actions at some time when I was born in all the various realms of samsara.”* By recollecting all these negative actions, cultivate a very strong sense of regret, just as someone who finds out he/she accidentally swallowed poison regrets it immediately.

Cultivation of a strong sense of regret can be induced by reflecting upon the consequences of these negative actions: the maturation result of rebirth in the lower realms, the result concordant with the causes, the habitual result, the environmental result. If you reflect upon these different effects that non-virtuous actions produce, then you will be able to develop strong fear of getting trapped in a lower rebirth, and you will be able to generate strong regret for having committed these negative actions. If a person has accidentally taken poison and then learns of its effects – that he/she could die – then he/she will develop strong fear and regret for having taken the poison. But if a person takes poison without knowing its effects, he/she would not regret it at all.

All of you here have taken certain vows – vows of individual liberation, bodhisattva vows, tantric vows – so you could have accumulated negativities by transgressing these vows and commitments. Also, recollect the ten non-virtuous actions of body, speech and mind you have done, and reflect that they bring rebirth in the lower realms. Reflecting upon all these negative actions, one Kadampa master said,

*“If we look deeper, we will find that the negative actions we have committed even when joking are strong enough to throw us into the lower realms. If that is so, we must have negative actions powerful enough to throw us into the lower realms for a long time.”*

Recollect all these negative actions and develop strong regret. Having sincere regret is the second opponent power, the power of regret. If you have strong regret your purification will be more powerful. If you lack this essential factor of regret, it is difficult to purify the negativities.

### 3. The power of the antidote

The lamrim quotes The Compendium of Trainings, listing six principal antidotes to negative actions: recitation of mantra, meditation on emptiness, prostration, making images of the Buddha, reciting Dharma texts and offering. Among these, the one employed in this purification practice is the recitation of the 100 syllable mantra of Heruka Vajrasattva and meditation on the deity.

The fourth power, that of resolving not to do these non-virtuous actions again in the future, will come after the recitation of the mantra.

To complete the power of the antidote, recite the mantra 21 times or more. The recitation is done in the form of making a request to Vajrasattva. If you cultivated strong divine identity at the beginning of the sadhana, at this point loosen or relax it a little bit. Retain the clarity of the appearance of the deity, but slightly relax the force of your divine identity.

The meaning of the mantra is:

Om = syllable of the vajra body (It is spelled A-U-M, which represent the body, speech and mind of the Buddhas.)

Vajra = indivisible nature, the inseparability of wisdom and bliss.

Sattva = the being who has the wisdom of inseparable bliss and emptiness.

Samaya manupalaya = sustain me by the commitment (protect my commitment)

Vajrasattva tveno patishta = O Vajrasattva, may I achieve you, may I become closer to you (cause me to be supported by you)

Dridho me bhava = may this achievement be stabilized (remain firmly with me)

Sutoshkya me bhava = may your nature become pleased (may you be pleased with me)

Suposhkya me bhava = may you make me into the nature of passion (may you be happy with me)

Anurakto me bhava = may you make me the victor (have affection for me)

Sarva siddhi me prayaccha = grant me all the powerful attainments

Sarva karma suchame = grant me all the activities (make all my actions good)

Cittam shriyam kuru = may your glory abide within my heart (make my mind most glorious)

Hum = (represents primordial awareness)

Ha ha ha ha ho = I shall delight in the powerful attainments and in all the activities (the five types of wisdom)

Bhagawan Sarwa Tatagata = calling out to all the Buddhas by name

Mame muncha = do not part from me (do not abandon me)

Vajra bhava = make me the one who can hold a vajra

Maha samaya sattva = call to Vajrasattva by saying, *“O One with the great commitment.”* The significance of calling out like this is to say, *“Just as I have requested, may this request be granted.”*

Ah = syllable of the vajra speech (shows the empty nature of all phenomena. The main function of Buddhas’ speech is to teach that phenomena lack inherent existence.)

Hum = (blissful state of Vajrasattva’s wisdom)

Phat = destroy all the delusions and sufferings.

When the meaning of these individual phrases are put together, they mean:

*“O Vajrasattva, you have generated the mind to help all sentient beings and you engage in the activities for their welfare. In accordance with the pledge you have taken, when I do good actions always be pleased with me and regard me favorably. Should I uncontrollably do negative actions, please kindly understand and be patient with me.”*

Sometimes you do negative actions out of ignorance. By requesting Vajrasattva to be patient with you even in those circumstances, you become aware of the extreme compassion of the deity.

The request continues,

*“May I have firm realizations of the grounds and paths and all perfections of rebirth in the higher status. May I achieve all activities and powerful attainments in my mind, ultimately leading to the achievement of the glory of supreme enlightenment.”*

Reflecting upon the meaning of this mantra, recite it in the form of a request. The recitation of the 100 syllable mantra done with the appropriate visualization is the actual power of the antidote.

If you have close friends or relatives or people that you have to take care of, you can visualize them around the HUM at your heart. When purifying your negativities, visualize their negativities being purified at the same time. If you can manage, it is also good to visualize all sentient beings around the HUM at your heart and do the purification. If not, visualize them seated around you. I have seen a text which explains to visualize the sentient beings around you when purifying, but I have not seen a text saying that you can visualize them around the HUM, but the past masters have given this oral instruction.

While reciting the 100 syllable mantra, visualize nectars flowing from the mantra syllables at Vajrasattva's heart, down through his body, through the moon seat and lotus, and down through your crown into you. When doing the purification of negativities by the nectars descending and flowing through your body, there are three types of visualizations that can be done:

1. Expelling downward
2. Expelling upward
3. Expelling spontaneously

1. Expelling downward

Imagine the nectars and light rays descend from above through your body. They flow down and wash away all the negativities of your body and obscurations in the form of black, ink-like liquids that come out of the anus, the secret organ, and from the pores of your body. Illness in the form of blood, phlegm and pus and harmful spirits, and interfering forces in the form of frightening animals like scorpions and snakes come out from the orifices of the lower part of your body. When a volcano erupts, the lava washes away all the trees and things in that place. Likewise, the nectar forcefully washes away all negativities.



Visualize that the negativities, illnesses and spirit harms in these different aspects go under the earth. If you are doing this purification practice together with the practice of longevity, then visualize a yama under the ground, with his mouth gaping and wide open. All the negativities, illnesses and spirit offenses go into his mouth. He is very pleased and satiated. At the end, his mouth closes and is blocked by either a crossed vajra or a thousand-spoked wheel. Although all the negativities are purified during the visualization of expelling downward, think that chiefly the negativities of the body are being purged and washed away.

## 2. Expelling upward

Imagine the nectars and light rays descend from Vajrasattva into your body and fill you from the soles of your feet up. The nectars fill your entire body and all the negativities, diseases and spirit offenses come out of your sense faculties – your mouth, eyes, ears, nose etc. It is like pouring water into an empty bottle: any dirt on the bottom is carried upward and spills out the top. During the meditation of expelling upward, all the negativities, and chiefly those of speech are purified.

## 3. Expelling spontaneously

Visualize all the negativities, illnesses and spirit harms gather at your heart in the form of a black heap. When the nectars and light rays descend through your crown and strike that heap, it is like turning on a light in a dark room. Just as darkness is dispelled instantly when a light is turned on, the heap of negativities, illnesses and spirit harms instantly disappears when the nectar and light rays touch them. In this visualization, all negativities are purified, with special emphasis placed on the negativities of the mind.

Having done these three visualizations individually, at the end do them simultaneously. The negativities and so forth emerge from your anus, secret organ and come out of the entrances to the sense faculties at the same time

as the heap of negativities at your heart is instantly dispelled. In this way, the three visualizations are performed together at the end and all the negativities of body, speech and mind, together with their imprints are purified.

If you do these three visualizations thinking that the first is for purifying negativities, illnesses and spirit harms of the body, the second those of the speech and the third those of the mind, then do all three visualizations. However, during one visualization, like that of expelling downward, if you imagine all your negativities of body, speech and mind are purified, then it is not necessary to perform all three visualizations during one session. It depends on how you meditate.

According to oral instructions, visualize the bodily negativities are purged during the visualization expelling downwards, the negativities of the speech while expelling upwards, the negativities of mind while expelling spontaneously. The negativities of body, speech and mind and their imprints are expelled by doing all three of the above visualization simultaneously.

If you meditate like this, then divide the 21 recitations of the mantra into groups of five each: five repetitions for expelling downward, five for expelling upward, five for expelling spontaneously and five for all three simultaneously. Recite the mantra once more to make 21. Another way is to count seven each for the first three visualizations to make 21, without doing the three visualizations simultaneously. There are different ways to do it. You can choose.

There are many visualizations that can be done during the Vajrasattva meditation and recitation. At the end of however many mantras you recite, develop the strong conviction, "I have actually purified all negativities." It's important to generate this conviction because having lingering doubts about whether the negativities have actually been purified is harmful.

If this purification practice is undertaken properly, with all the four opponents powers complete, then there is no reason why you should not be able to purify the negativities. The Buddha himself said that certain types of actions are negative and doing them is creating negative karma.

The Buddha also said that negative actions can be purified by certain techniques. So if it is true that committing certain actions accumulates non-virtue, then it also should be true that these non-virtues can be purified by specific techniques and methods that have been prescribed. There is no reason for the Buddha to lie. No matter how strong and forceful the negative actions may appear, they have the nature of being able to be purified by doing the proper practices.

Past accounts prove that negativities can be purified by doing a practice complete with the four opponent powers. For example, King Ajatasattu committed a grave negative action by killing his own father. By the force of having great regret and doing the appropriate purification practices, he was able to achieve realizations within his lifetime. Angulimalla killed 999 people. He later strongly regretted his actions and engaged in correct methods to purify them. Thus he also achieved high realizations in his lifetime.

It is effective to seal this purification practice by reflecting upon the emptiness of inherent existence of the circle of three – the purifier, the purification practice and the object to be purified.

#### 4. The power of resolve

Then recite the prayer in which you take refuge in Vajrasattva and develop firm resolve not to do these negative actions again. *“Through ignorance and delusions...”* This means that you did not foresee the unwanted consequences of these negative actions. *“I have broken and degenerated my commitments.”* This is explicitly the power of regret. Implicit in this is the power or resolve never to do those actions again.

Say to Guru Vajrasattva,

*“I take refuge in you alone, you who are the embodiment of all Three Jewels. By the force of your compassion, please protect me and other sentient beings from doing these negative actions again in the future. With your compassion, protect us and lead us to the final goal, enlightenment.”*

Vajrasattva says to you,

*“O child of a good family, your negative karma, obscurations and all degenerated and broken commitments are now cleansed and purified.”* When he calls out to you using this term of endearment and of intimacy, *“O child of a good family,”* try to experience great bliss. If not, imagine experiencing great delight and rejoice at having purified your negativities.

With great affection for you and being very pleased with you, Vajrasattva now dissolves into you through your crown. He enters your central channel and becomes inseparable with your very subtle body, speech and mind. Concentrate on your body, speech and mind being inseparable from those of Vajrasattva, your root Guru.

To summarize, do the Vajrasattva meditation and recitation with all four powers complete. Taking refuge in the Three Jewels and generating bodhicitta is the power of reliance. Recollecting all the negative actions and developing a strong sense of regret or repentance is the power of regret. Actually doing the meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva with strong and stable visualization is the power of the antidote. Developing a strong resolve never to indulge in such actions in the future is the power of resolve, also called the power of turning away from the negative actions. Several visualizations can be done while reciting the mantra: expelling downward, expelling upward, expelling spontaneously. Or you can imagine receiving the four empowerments in the form of blessing.

By practicing all four opponent powers properly, you can actually purify negativities committed over a long period of time. This is the power of the Dharma, and it is the kindness of the Dharma. Although you may not be able to recall the past lives during which these negative actions have been done, still by the force of strong practice, you can purify all these negativities in a short time. With this, the explanation of the Vajrasattva meditation and recitation is complete.

From the introduction to *Dzogchen Essentials*, by Tsoknyi Rinpoche

The purpose of the general preliminaries is to thoroughly prepare ones mind-stream. Those teachings facilitate turning ones mind to the Dharma. These are followed by the specific or extraordinary preliminaries, beginning with taking refuge in combination with prostrations. Sometimes refuge comes together with forming the bodhisattva resolve.

One takes refuge, bowing down and giving rise to bodhichitta over and over again. The repetition of such a practice causes a natural subsiding of all the blatant, selfish emotions that usually frequent our stream-of-being. The coarse channels and their twists and bends get straightened out. The "unrefined" states of mind, the rough emotions— hate, love, closed-mindedness, and all the rest—settle into the natural state.

You repeatedly devote yourself to refuge practice with prostrations. Again and again you form the bodhisattva spirit. By bowing repeatedly, you offer your entire being, physically, verbally, and mentally. The atmosphere is one of abandon, completely surrendering body, speech, and mind. It is like presenting a mandala offering.

When you surrender yourself in this repeated gesture of taking refuge, all your coarse, selfish emotions will be naturally depleted and begin to vanish. At the same time, you experience your state of mind to be more free and easy, and you begin to be at peace with yourself. Eventually, this relaxed mental state of ease allows you to receive the Dzogchen pointing-out instruction.

When someone receives the pointing-out instruction after the ngondro, it is much easier to recognize the view of the Great Perfection. There is another tradition in which practitioners receive the Dzogchen empowerments and the pointing-out instruction before beginning the ngondro— in other words, a sort of "baby realization" has taken place. They have had a glimpse of the view, but for some reason, and they do not know why, there is no

progress at all. There are some people who are introduced to the nature of mind and then don't seem to get anywhere; no strength develops. The baby rigpa is feeble, like an undernourished plant. Even after a lot of "meditation," it is the same dried-up state of rigpa. They try all kinds of practice methods—shamatha, vipashyana, Dzogchen, Mahamudra—but there is not the slightest bit of progress in realization. It is as if the baby realization simply refuses to grow up. The solution for this hampered growth is to receive the blessings of a qualified master and to use ones body, speech, and mind to make ones blatant, selfish emotions subside. In this way, there are two traditions for receiving the pointing-out instruction, before and after doing the ngondro.

The bottom line is that strong emotions obscure self-existing wakefulness and prevent progress in realization. Therefore, in order to conquer all these emotional states, we offer prostrations, which soften up the rigidity of our body, speech, and mind. Taking refuge again and again in all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, we are protected by their light rays and compassionate influence. We truly receive the blessings, and in this way we are definitely able to progress. These are the benefits and purpose of making prostrations.

Refuge and prostrations are followed by the meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva. We find Vajrasattva mentioned in various contexts sometimes as a bodhisattva, sometimes as a buddha. The Dzogchen tantras describe Shri Vajrasattva as the single embodiment of the compassionate activity of all buddhas.

In the past, Vajrasattva took the pledge *"May the emotional and cognitive obscurations present in the mind-stream of any sentient being who utters my name be naturally cleared away and vanish!"* This was Vajrasattva's aspiration, his vow, and through this auspicious concurrence, such purification does happen.

Vajrasattva's identity is one of compassionate emptiness, and his nature is the capacity to dissolve all types of emotional and cognitive obscurations. This is why glorious Vajrasattva is regarded as so important in Vajrayana practice throughout all four schools in the Tibetan tradition of Buddhism.

It is best to receive the specific empowerment for Vajrasattva. In other words, you should request it, even in the form of a permission blessing. At this point, you don't need the incredibly elaborate version of the Vajrasattva empowerment, which is necessary only if you do a specific development stage retreat based on Vajrasattva. For the ngondro, a permission blessing is sufficient. Having received it, you commence the practice.

Follow the text for your particular ngondro as to how to visualize Vajrasattva.

*At some point, you should feel confident that the nature of your own mind, which is the unity of emptiness and cognizance, is in essence identical with Vajrasattva's mind of unconditioned wakefulness. Then settle naturally into the state in which your mind and his are indivisible.*

This is how to lay the foundation for the practices of the development stage. Every visualization practice shares this same basic principle.

As you continue with the visualization for the "downpour and purification of nectar," radiating and absorbing rays of light, you should feel confident that not only your own karmic misdeeds and obscurations but those of all sentient beings are totally purified.

There are two aspects to purification: One is to be purified in actuality that is, the veils are being removed for real—while the other is psychological (subjective), in the sense of developing the feeling of being totally pure. We know the opposite of this feeling: *"I'm useless! I'm a great sinner, and so are all other sentient beings. We have so many negative emotions; we are so selfish.*



*There's no way I can be enlightened. I am incredibly bad!"* People often develop such attitudes of denigrating their own worth.

Vajrasattva practice is radically different from training in low self-esteem. Instead one develops this attitude: *"Through this practice and visualization of glorious Vajrasattva, all my negative traits from all my past lives are totally eliminated. I have no more negative karma. Its totally gone!"*

By repeating this attitude over and over, we make room for a sense of delight, of not being burdened by the thought of so many negative actions. The basic feeling of guilt that we all share begins to vanish. Then a clear and uplifted spirit—you could call it clear conscience—facilitates our ability to connect with the true instructions of Dzogchen. We have a very lucid and sincere feeling in our heart and feel ready to face even the most profound instruction. That is one of the important reasons for Vajrasattva practice.

Please do not regard Vajrasattva as merely a trick to alleviate psychological guilt. There is a real Buddha Vajrasattva presiding right now over his own buddhfield. He is not nonexistent. Someone who approaches him through the practice of Vajrasattva's body, speech, and mind does receive the blessings for removing karmic, emotional, and cognitive obscurations and for realizing the vajra body, the vajra speech, and the vajra mind. Even though it is possible to eliminate both the cause and the subtle obscurations during the ngondro practice, the main emphasis in the teachings is on diminishing the effects—the coarse, selfish emotions.

The subsiding of negative emotions is an extremely meaningful discovery, otherwise one is stuck with a self-defeating attitude: *"I cannot attain enlightenment! I'm totally wrapped up in negative karma and selfish emotions!"* Such a habitual attitude makes our hearts shrink, and that timidity is a barrier that prevents liberation. It is my personal experience that the meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva is extremely beneficial in such a situation.

## Vajrasattva, by Tsoknyi Rinpoche

Now we will do a meditation on Buddha Vajrasattva. Keep the body straight but relaxed. Remain loose, and leave your breath and mind free, without conceptualizing anything. The mind should be vivid and wide awake. Don't follow any thought about the past, don't invite any thought of the future, and don't think about the present. Leave your mind open and empty, like a blank piece of paper. Within this state, you can keep your eyes either open or closed, as you like. Now imagine in the sky before you a white lotus flower with eight petals.

Upon this sits our teacher, Buddha Shakyamuni, with a body that is golden, as radiant as pure gold. His left hand is in the gesture of equanimity, his right hand in the earth-touching mudra, and he is smiling. He looks upon all sentient beings with the same love that a mother has for her only child. Bring to mind the fact that the Buddha is endowed with inconceivable qualities of enlightened body, enlightened speech, and enlightened mind. Imagining that this remarkable being is present in person, form this resolve: "From now until complete enlightenment, I will rely upon you. I take refuge in you until my view, meditation, and conduct are equal to yours."

The form of the Buddha is insubstantial and transparent, visible yet devoid of any solid substance. He is not made of stone or clay but rather is like a rainbow. Remind yourself, "From now until attaining supreme enlightenment, I accept you as my teacher, my guide. I will put the words you have spoken, the Dharma, into practice; I will take the two levels of truth as my path." Until we have fully realized ultimate truth, we will take refuge in the Dharma. Similarly, we take refuge in those who are following in the Buddha's footsteps: the shravakas, the pratyekabuddhas, and all the bodhisattvas. We take refuge with them as our companions.

After that, imagine that rays of light stream forth from the body of the Buddha and dissolve into yourself. Through this, boundless obscurations

and negative karma are purified and removed. Imagine that you accomplish the vajra body.

Now imagine that from the throat of the Buddha, boundless rays of light shine forth and dissolve into your own throat. Through this, all the negative karma and obscurations created through your past words are purified, and you accomplish the vajra speech.

Now imagine that from the Buddha's heart, countless rays of light shine forth and dissolve into your own heart. They purify all negative frames of mind, ill will, wrong view, craving, ignorance, and dullness. Not only that, but the qualities of the enlightened mind- the knowledge that sees the nature as it is and the knowledge that perceives all possible existing things- are fully developed and perfected.

Now imagine that the Buddha melts into light and that this light mingles indivisibly with yourself. The Buddha's body, speech, and mind and your own body, speech, and mind are of one taste. Without following any thought about the past or the future, and even letting go of the thought "I am the Buddha," remain in the state of primordial purity which is unconstructed.

(Rinpoche rings the bell. Period of silence.)

Don't focus on anything as the meditation, but don't let your attention wander either. Whatever is experienced, all the various different contents— don't hold any of that.

Do not conceptualize anything perceived, not a single thing. Like Patrul Rinpoche said in his *Tsigsum Nedek*, *The Three Words Striking the Vital Point*:

*Nothing whatsoever- totally disengaged.*

*Disengaged, yet utterly open.*

*A total openness which is indescribable.  
Recognize this as the dharmakaya awareness.*

Or like Milarepa sang:

*In the gap between two thoughts,  
Thought-free wakefulness manifests unceasingly.*

Now we will chant the refuge three times:

*In order to liberate myself and all sentient beings from suffering,  
I take refuge in Guru Vajrasattva, the Three Jewels,  
The yidams, and all the dakinis;  
Until enlightenment, I will regard you as my refuge.*

Remain free and completely at ease. Within this open state of mind, remind yourself that all sentient beings possess this awake openness as their basic nature. Everyone has buddha nature, yet, unaware of this, they suffer in all sorts of terrible samsaric states. Contemplate how utterly sad this is, and form this resolve:

*"Through the method of this training, I will remove the delusion of all sentient beings. I will do away with this temporary delusion of seeing things as they are not."*

Develop that confidence, that courage. Remind yourself that all the confusion of samsara, all deluded experience, comes about through clinging to the notion of me and mine. It all originates from cherishing oneself.

Breathe out deeply and slowly, a long deep breath, and imagine that the exhalation carries all your virtue, positive karma, and merit to all sentient beings. Gently breathing in again, gather all their negative karma,

obscurations, and suffering. Take it into yourself, and again send them your positive merit. Practice like this for a while.

(Period of silence.)

Now imagine that all the suffering of sentient beings really does dissolve into yourself, that you really do take it on yourself. When their suffering enters you, it vanishes completely, melting into the state of primordial purity, like snow on water.

Imagine that your positive karma, virtues, and merit are truly given away to all sentient beings and that they receive it and it dispels all their suffering.

Lets chant the bodhisattva vow three times.

*Like the deeds of the victorious ones of the past,  
I will endeavor in the ultimate goal of all beings  
To take those across who have not crossed  
and liberate those who have not been liberated.  
I will give assurance to beings and establish them in nirvana.*

*May all beings have happiness and be free from suffering.  
May they achieve the sublime happiness and dwell in equanimity.*

(Rinpoche rings the bell. Period of silence.)

Now remain in equanimity without sending out, without taking in, without accepting, and without rejecting. Remember the statement "Seen by merely looking, free by merely seeing." What is seen? The absence of concreteness and all attributes. No center and no edge. Without past, present, or future. Empty, awake mind.

(Period of silence.)

You don't need to be afraid that a thought may arise. You don't need to be afraid that rigpa will slip away or that you will become distracted. If you nevertheless do think this, simply look into the thinker. When seeing no thinker there, rest evenly in the seeing of this absence.

This vivid emptiness, free of center and edge, is the primordially pure dharmakaya. At the same time, we are not oblivious or knocked out. There is a sense of being wide awake. That is the sambhogakaya quality. Within this, any perception can unfold, and while perceiving, nothing is held or fixated upon; it is utterly empty and yet perceiving. There is no barrier between being empty and perceiving. That is the nirmanakaya quality, the seed of nirmanakaya. In this way, in one moment of rigpa, the basic substance, the seed, of dharmakaya, of sambhogakaya, and of nirmanakaya is fully present.

We recognize that our essence is empty, our nature is cognizant, and its capacity is unconfined. That is rigpa. Now, remain evenly like that.

(Rinpoche rings the bell. Period of silence.)

Remain without even an atom of a focus being meditated upon and without being distracted for even an instant.

Undistracted nonmeditation.

Your mind is doing nothing.

There is nothing you need to do.

However it is, leave it like that, without modifying.

However mind is right now, let it be exactly like that. You don't need to improve it or correct it in any way.

The five senses are wide open and clear. You don't need to block that.

And you don't confine your attention to only one of the senses.

(Period of silence.)

This kind of rigpa, this kind of awareness, is the ultimate and real guru. The mind of the guru is dharmakaya, by nature. When recognizing that our own nature is dharmakaya, then without supplicating, without effort, but spontaneously and naturally, our minds are indivisible from the mind of the guru.

(Period of silence.)

Now destroy your meditation. Move a little bit around. You don't need to stand up. Now continue the training, immediately.

(Rinpoche rings the bell. Period of silence.)

Now destroy the meditation, immediately. Now continue.

(Rinpoche rings the bell. Period of silence.)

Now destroy your meditative state totally, so that nothing remains.

Now get angry. Recognize the essence in that.

(Rinpoche rings the bell. Period of silence.)

Now continue the training. There is no need to block anything. It is nothing exciting. However it is, leave it naturally as it is. Within this state, remind yourself of the thought "I am Vajrasattva," without losing the essence.

You can see the painting of Vajrasattva on the wall over there. In that picture he happens to be single, but you can also imagine him with consort. The Vajrasattva with consort symbolizes experience and emptiness together. It is not that Vajrasattva needs a consort. Rather, it symbolizes the indivisibility of experience and emptiness.

Now, let's chant the Vajrasattva practice. Our meditation got a little distracted, but that's okay. If you don't feel like imagining yourself as Vajrasattva, you can imagine Vajrasattva in the sky before you.

Vajrasattva is an extraordinary deity, the embodiment of all buddhas in a single figure who has the power and ability to remove all negative karma and obscurations.

Imagine that Vajrasattva is seated on a multicolored lotus flower, alive and vibrant, fully present. He has a very awesome presence. He is very beautiful, very handsome, very compassionate.

First imagine this radiant form, then recite the hundred-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva. This mantra is unique in that it purifies broken commitments, failings, and conceptual obscurations. Also, it is the dharani-mantra, the syllables that are the life force of the hundred peaceful and wrathful deities, the hundred families of the victorious ones. These deities are present right now within our own bodies and will fully manifest at the time of the bardo. In order to prepare ourselves to realize that the hundred peaceful and wrathful deities experienced in the bardo are nothing other than our own display, we chant this mantra. For these two reasons, the hundred-syllable mantra is extremely profound.

Chanting the hundred syllables gently and slowly, we imagine that countless rays of light radiate from the form of Vajrasattva in all directions. The stream of nectar flows from his body down into the crown of our head, totally purifying our body, like a stream of white milk slowly filling up a



hollow crystal ball. All impurities, karmic and otherwise, leave our body from the lower openings.

This does not only apply to ourselves. Imagine that a Vajrasattva also sits at the crown of the head of every other sentient being. We are the main chanter, and all sentient beings chant along with us, all of us together.

It's like we are all taking a special shower that washes away all impurities. It is best if we can remain in the state of rigpa while imagining that this takes place; if not, simply consider it as being like a magical show, visible and yet empty.

*Om bendza sato samaya, manu palaya, bendza sato tenopa, tita dridho mebhava, sutokayo mebhava, supokayo mebhava, anu rakto mebhava, sarva siddhim me trayatsa, sarva karma sutsamey, tsittam shreyah kuru hung, ha ha ha ha hoh, bhagaven sarva tathagata bendza mame muntsa bendzi bhava maha samaya sato ah*

(Vajrasattva mantra continues.)

Now imagine that Vajrasattva melts into light- the Vajrasattva above you as well as the Vajrasattva above everybody else - and dissolves into each of you, so that everyone becomes indivisible from the body, speech, and mind of glorious Vajrasattva.

Ones whole experience becomes the buddhfield of Vajrasattva, so that whatever is seen is divine, all sounds are the hundred syllable mantra, and all movements of mind are the mind of Vajrasattva.

Now we will chant the short version of the Vajrasattva mantra. While being indivisible from Vajrasattva, our form is Vajrasattva, everything perceived is divine, all sound is mantra, and all mind, all thoughts and memories, are the play of luminous wakefulness.

*Om bendza satto ah*

Finally, we dedicate the roots of virtue, taking all the goodness that has been created through the meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva and dedicating it to the enlightenment of all beings.

On the exhalation, keep this attitude:

*"Through this, may the age of strife, famine, and warfare be pacified.  
May all sickness be relieved.  
May there be peace in the world, and may all beings have happiness.*

*And may I in all future lives always take rebirth in a precious human body,  
connect with qualified masters,  
and quickly progress to liberation and complete enlightenment.*

*In all future lives, may I be a male or female bodhisattva  
endowed with the noble mind of benevolence,  
acting for the welfare of all sentient beings."*

Lets do the dedication chant.

HOH

*Through the pure and endless merit  
Arising from unexcelled wisdom,  
May all beings equal to the sky  
Attain the state of Vajrasattva.*

*May there be the auspiciousness of true awakening,  
Indivisible from the spontaneous awareness-wisdom,  
The permanent and firm vajra abode  
Of the changeless innate nature.*

(Period of silence.)

Now it is all right to arise from the meditation state. What we just did here is considered a traditional Vajrayana practice.

We start with taking refuge, forming the bodhisattva resolve, and developing the four immeasurables of boundless love, compassion, joy, and impartiality. Each of these has a relative and an ultimate aspect:

Relative refuge involves visualizing the object of refuge in the sky before us, with the attitude of placing our complete trust in it. Ultimate refuge involves resting in the state of mind in which we are indivisible from the objects of refuge.

Bodhichitta as well has two aspects, relative and ultimate. To send out ones goodness and take upon oneself the suffering and obscurations of others is the basis for relative bodhichitta. The ultimate bodhichitta is simply remaining without any mental constructs, without anything whatsoever formed in one's mind.

After that comes the yidam practice, in this case, Vajrasattva. The foremost way to practice is to imagine that we ourselves are the deity, having the form of Vajrasattva, and at the same time to recognize the nature of mind. The development and completion stages are thus simultaneous and indivisible. This is the unity of means and knowledge.

While chanting the mantra, we accomplish the welfare of all beings by means of the four activities with the emanating and reabsorbing of the rays of light.

Finally, we experience all sights as the divine deity, all sounds as mantra, and all movements of mind as the play of original, luminous wakefulness. We remain in samadhi like this for some time.

We can also practice by alternating these, reciting the mantra for a while and then resting in equanimity, in the view, and continuing like this.

When we get tired of chanting, we simply let be into equanimity. When we get tired of letting be into equanimity, we continue reciting the mantra.

At the end, dedicate the merit, make good aspirations, good wishes, and then rest in equanimity as the unconditioned dedication.

This is the traditional way, and if you can practice one session with this structure, it is excellent. Once a day is very good. If you do it quickly, it doesn't take longer than half an hour. If we speed it up, we can do it in five minutes! Practicing very gently and slowly, we can easily spend two or three hours. In general, two or three hours is a good duration for a session. If we do four three-hour sessions a day, that is called staying in retreat.

If in a three-year retreat the three-hour sessions are too short, we can do sessions lasting three and a half or four hours. In a normal retreat, three-hour sessions are long enough. We need to be diligent in the beginning.

If you are in doubt about this, read the life stories describing how other practitioners acted in the past, how they trained, and what difficulties they undertook. And especially explore how the masters in the Dzogchen transmission practiced. We can learn from the lives of the Kagyu and Nyingma lamas.

There are two ways to deal with spiritual practice. If you are interested in being totally free, completely liberated, and attaining full enlightenment, you'd better hurry up and practice with great diligence. The other approach is to take spiritual practice as a sort of vitamin or dietary supplement. When you feel a little low on energy or a little upset, you sit down and practice a little in order to feel better.

We try to balance ourselves through practice, then later we return into activity. This approach advocates a little dose of spiritual practice once in a while. Which of these particular ways we want to follow is up to us.

I personally feel that it would be better to eliminate confusion from its very root, so that we no longer have to powerlessly take rebirth within the three realms of samsara. On the other hand, if we want to get through life without hurting too much, if we feel that doing business and getting rich or being successful in a career is not quite enough, and we need a little meditative stability to embellish our life or make it a little more beautiful, that is all right too.

If we choose to use spiritual practice in that way, it's entirely up to us. It's like giving our life the Dharma-polish! Some people have this attitude, believe me! We tell ourselves that we need some spirituality in our lives, that we can't be totally materialistic. So we give ourselves a little dose in the morning and evening to give the gloss of spirituality to our normal life. This is also a particular solution or style, and certain teachers- not masters, but teachers- teach in this way. They instruct their students in five-minute meditation sessions. They are trying to make spiritual practice easier, more appetizing or palatable, trying to bend the Dharma to fit people's attitudes. That is not the true Dharma. You might encounter this type of "convenience Dharma." Don't make the mistake of confusing this type of practice for the real thing.

We can practice only five minutes and do it in a genuine, true way, in which we establish a sincere attitude, and then train in the main part with genuine focus, then dedicate in a genuine way afterwards. In this case, even five minutes becomes something authentic. Otherwise, you could also just give it up altogether. There are a lot of other things on which we can spend a life.

If we try to practice the Dharma but don't really practice it, we do a disservice to the Buddha's teachings. We become an embarrassment to the Dharma, and we waste our lives as well. Even if you practice just a little bit, try to do it in a genuine way, with genuine view, genuine meditation, genuine conduct. Even if it is for a short while, let it be real. Otherwise, it is better to give it up all together, because not only are we caught up in

confusion, but we use the Dharma to tie ourselves up as well. That is really a wrong road, a wrong attitude.

To pretend to be a spiritual person and wear a rosary in one hand is useless if it's false. If it happens naturally, it is okay. There's no problem if we really are that way. But if our intention is to be respected by others, to be regarded by others more highly because we meditate or are spiritual, that is a fake or wrong attitude.

Regardless of whether we are new or advanced students, we should always be certain not to fool ourselves. If somebody else fools us, there's not much we can do about it. But to fool ourselves is much worse, isn't it? So try not to do that. Make use of spiritual books that teach authentic practice, not Dharma-polish. The former cuts through confusion and clears up delusion; the other glosses over the confused state. The latter type of spiritual practice can make our deluded state appear prettier, more pleasant.

One can advertise the value of spiritual practice, like advertising an exciting machine, "Use it two times a day for three weeks, and it's guaranteed you'll have a flat abdomen and lose five kilos!" In the same way, "Use this practice daily, only five minutes a day, and your confusion is guaranteed to clear up!" It sounds nice, but does it really work? We need to think about this.

Let's not fool ourselves. We need to exert ourselves and persevere. When you get bored, just be bored, but continue the training. I feel that being bored is very good. The more bored one is, the more opportunity there is for progress. Meditation practice is not meant to cater to short attention spans, like TV ads where every twenty seconds there is a new and exciting thing to catch our attention. Something interesting does not happen every twenty seconds in meditation!

You can see this tendency in movies also. Old movies are long, with long conversations and not so much happening. Nowadays the scene changes every few seconds, and there is so much action. Peoples expectations have

become like that. Its a combination of what movie producers believe people need and want, and also that people expect something exciting all the time. It's a kind of mutually reinforced confusion. People can also be deluded by the movies they see.

A lot of young Nepalese, both boys and girls, are really influenced by the role models presented in Indian and American movies. They try to act like that, they try to dress like that, and so forth. They become imitations. This type of delusion is like mutual dependency, a coincidence of factors from both sides.

What we need is to have a natural mind: unconfused, unmistaken, undeluded. We need a natural, fresh, original state of wakefulness to cut through the stream of confusion. Original wakefulness cuts deluded experience into pieces, so that it becomes insubstantial. You can also think of confusion as a knot fashioned of burned rope - something totally insubstantial.

*\*The basis for realization is a happy mind, along with diligence.* When we are unhappy and uneasy at root and we try to be diligent on top of that, we might go a little crazy. Don't do that. On the other hand, if we go astray into feeling happy, feeling good, we can become stuck in blissing out. We become like a Hare Krishna practitioner! We get caught up in the emotion of feeling good, being happy and blissed out, singing "Hare Krishna."

True spirituality is not a training in being overtaken by bliss, allowing ourselves to get caught up. On the other hand, as long as we retain the innate stability of wakefulness, it's all right to look like a Hare Krishna devotee, to sing loudly and have tears of devotion rolling down our cheeks. As long as the stability of wakefulness within is not lost, it's perfectly okay to behave like that, because we are not getting caught up in the emotion.

Questions?

STUDENT: Could you explain more about this Vajrasattva practice we are doing? It seems quite unelaborate.

RINPOCHE: This Vajrasattva practice is one of utmost simplicity. There are not that many words, but if one personally wants to fill in more of the meaning, one can. In itself, however, it is complete, sufficient.

One takes refuge and bodhichitta; then for the main part, beyond concept, you can either see yourself as the yidam or else imagine Vajrasattva in the sky before you. At the end, when you chant OM BENDZA SATTO AH, imagine yourself as Vajrasattva, and feel that whatever is seen has the nature of Vajrasattva, all sounds have the nature of mantra, and so forth.

"All sights are the deity" doesn't mean that we literally see Vajrasattva everywhere, holding vajra and bell. It's more that all sights possess the quality of the unobstructed; visible emptiness is itself the form of Vajrasattva.

Among the traditional three samadhis of deity practice - the samadhi of suchness, the samadhi of illumination, and the seed samadhi - what evolves out of the seed samadhi is insubstantial and transparent, with a sort of see-through quality. It is not something solid or concrete, like solid matter. Nor is it like imagining that everything else we normally see becomes empty and disappears and that only Vajrasattva's real, concrete form is left behind. The whole development stage has that insubstantial quality, and that is the form of Vajrasattva.



From *The Mountain Dharma of Karma Chagme*, by Khenpo Kathar Rinpoche

### The River of Ambrosia That Purifies Obscurations: Vajrasattva Practice

To be authentic and fully effective, any act of confession must contain all four of the following components. The first is called *the power of reliance or support*. This means taking as the witness for your confession "supports," or representations of the Buddha's body, speech, and mind that have blessings, such as a statue of the Buddha, a volume of Dharma, and a stupa, which have blessings when they have been properly prepared and consecrated. Alternatively, you could rely on some other support, such as a Vajrayana mandala or your guru. If you lack any of these and wish to perform a confession, you may visualize all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, which means you simply invite them to witness your confession. This is valid because, with their omniscient wisdom, buddhas and bodhisattvas can actually hear anything that is intentionally addressed to them by a sentient being.

The second power is *the power of regret*. This means sincerely regretting unvirtuous actions as intensely as you would regret having drunk poison. If you were to drink poison, the type of poison for which there is no remedy and which will definitely cause your death, having discovered that you had drunk it, you would certainly wish you had not done so. Your wish must have that degree of intensity. In truth you have more reason to regret unvirtuous actions than you do to regret drinking poison, because drinking poison will kill you, but it will do so only once. Unvirtuous actions not only cause your death once, they eventually cause it innumerable times.

The third power is the actual mechanism or procedure of purification, *the power of remedy for harmful actions or conduct*. This can be any virtuous action whatsoever that is specifically dedicated to purification. It can be physical acts of virtue, such as prostration or circumambulation. It can be verbal acts of virtue, such as the recitation of scripture, liturgies, and mantras. Among these, the meditation and mantra recitation of Vajrasattva is considered supreme for purification.

The fourth power is the one we have the most trouble with. It is usually translated as *the power of resolution*, but you can call it a commitment or a promise. It means that you have a strong commitment never to commit the wrongdoing again. This is the hardest thing for us because the nature of unvirtuous actions is that they are habit-forming.

When you do something wrong, one of its results is that it reinforces the habit to do the same thing again. The position we often find ourselves in is analogous to that of children who are constantly being given clean clothes and as soon as they put them on, they immediately run out and five minutes later they are filthy again. Every time we confess our wrongdoing, we immediately go out and do it all over again.

Unfortunately, even though we have the other three powers, if this fourth power is not present, we will not successfully purify our wrongdoing. For example, certain attitudes can obstruct this power, such as the arrogant thought "I can take care of this action of wrong-doing, I can handle it, it is not that important, it is not that big a deal," or "I am clever enough, or strong enough, to withstand its effect."

Another attitude that can obstruct the power of resolution is actually being proud of whatever it was one did. I do not know how prevalent it is in this country, but in Kham, in eastern Tibet, it was quite common to be proud of unvirtuous things one had done, especially if they were "macho."...

In any case, if there is a lack of commitment, a lack of resolution, then even

though one takes measures to purify or counteract the wrongdoing, they will not be successful.

Another attitude that can be problematic is the thought "I have to do such-and-such thing as part of living in the world, but I will purify it later."

The thought "I can confess it and purify it later" presents a threefold problem. First of all it is habit-forming. If we do it once because we think we have to, we may thereafter do it again because we liked doing it. Second, the length of our lives is uncertain, and there is no guarantee that we will be alive long enough to confess or purify the wrongdoing. The third problem is that if we go through our lives that way and let the accumulation of our wrongdoings creep up on us bit by bit, we can end up being smothered or crushed under a mountain of wrongdoing from which it may seem almost impossible to escape. In any case, it is taught that if we do not have the resolution that will keep us from repeating the unvirtuous action, whatever it is, we will not be able to purify it even though we have admitted or confessed it.

The primary method that we use for the act of confession is the hundred-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva. If you are in retreat and are doing something else as your main practice, you would recite the hundred-syllable mantra every day between sessions at least twenty-one times. That way your previous wrongdoing, including violations of commitments, will not increase.

Chakme Rinpoche adds that this is not simply an arbitrary number he alone has made up, but is taught in all of the Indian and Tibetan texts on this subject and was taught by all the scholars and siddhas from India and Tibet. It is also said in several places, for example in *The Tantra of Hayagriva* that reciting the hundred-syllable mantra even once will purify all your wrongdoing. It makes sense to interpret this statement as meaning that the mantra would have this degree of effectiveness by reciting it with the utmost conviction, but realistically speaking, we probably cannot expect

that to happen for us. It is, however, by no means impossible...It all depends upon our degree of faith.

The usual number that is given for the effective recitation of the hundred-syllable mantra is 100,000. It is also taught that nowadays all of the numbers that are found in the tantras need to be multiplied by four. The reason for this is that we live in a time of degeneration, which means that our kleshas are much stronger. We engage in much more wrongdoing in general than people did in the past. At the same time, our faith has actually decreased, so while we have more to purify, it is harder for us to purify anything because of our attitude. Therefore it is taught that it is best if you can recite the mantra 400,000 times; this will be extremely effective.

Even if someone has committed a root violation of samaya, which is a fundamental violation of the commitments of Vajrayana, if they recite the hundred syllable mantra 400,000 times, unmixed with other speech (which means that they are doing it in formal meditation sessions, not just reciting it while they are walking around and talking), their violation will be purified. This is taught in both the old, or Nyingma, and the new, or Sarma, traditions.

At this point Chakme Rinpoche offers a compassionate concession to the needs of individuals. He says that if you find the hundred syllable mantra too difficult to recite, you may recite the six-syllable mantra, OM BENZA SATO HUNG, 600,000 times, and it will have an equivalent effect of purification...

For people like ourselves who are afflicted by a large amount of ferocious or intense wrongdoing, this instruction of Vajrasattva is more valuable than a hundred or even a thousand wish-fulfilling jewels. Legend tells us that there exists a wish-fulfilling jewel that will fulfill any wishes upon request, but this practice is even more precious than that because it can purify or remove the fundamental reason behind all of our suffering.

At this point Chakme Rinpoche says, "Therefore, Lama Tsondru Gyamtso, perform great benefit for beings and always teach this practice at the beginning of any course of instruction."

Regardless of whatever practice you do, you will see that close to the beginning of all of them the instruction in the practice of the hundred-syllable or six-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva is always presented. The reason is that the most fundamental condition for the rest of the practices to be effective is an initial effort on our part at purification.

Chakme Rinpoche gives an analogy for this. He says that if you are dyeing wool, for example a wool blanket, before you dye it, you have to thoroughly clean it and get all the dirt out, otherwise the color will not take. The dye will not take hold because it will be inhibited by the dirt. If it is properly cleaned and prepared, then the color will be beautiful, exactly as you intend.

What this analogy is implying is that if you prepare yourself through the purification practice of Vajrasattva, then whatever further practice you engage in will have the full effect it is supposed to have, and all of the indications of your practice's effectiveness that are described in the traditional commentary will be present in your own experience.

Once you purify wrongdoing and obscurations, it is actually easy to generate meditation experience and realization...

In short, the cause of everything that goes wrong for us- our sickness, demons, and afflictions of all kinds- is our previous wrongdoing and obscurations.

Often we become somewhat superstitious and say, "I am experiencing an obstacle. Where did this obstacle come from? Oh no, an obstacle!" But all obstacles stem from our own previous wrongdoing, therefore it says in the text, "If you have no wrongdoing and obscuration, then how could sickness

or obstacles ever arise for you? Where would they come from?" That is why Vajrasattva practice is the single most effective and most profound method of averting obstacles and misfortune.

When we practice yet do not experience the results described in the practice manuals, it is because we are obscured, because we have not gone through the necessary practice of purification. This is because the signs or indications of the practice are in fact themselves obscured by our obscurations.

Therefore the most profound single method for increasing our realization and our experience of purity or sacredness is the Vajrasattva meditation.

The only reason that we do not see Mahamudra, that we do not see the nature of our mind as it is right now, is because of our obscurations, which in this case stem from what is called connate, or coemergent, ignorance. If we remove those obscurations, which can be done most effectively through the practice of Vajrasattva, there is nothing preventing us from seeing the nature of our mind as it is, and we will. Therefore there is no more profound method of generating realization of Mahamudra than the Vajrasattva practice.

Chakme Rinpoche concludes this part of the chapter by saying, "There is no point in my continuing to say the same thing in many other ways. In short, it is taught that you can attain full buddhahood through this method alone. Therefore, Tsondru Gyamtso, practice it."

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### The Actual Instruction in the Use of the Hundred-Syllable Mantra

Now we come to the second part of the chapter, which gives the actual the instruction in the use of the hundred-syllable mantra. This part of the chapter also begins with a Sanskrit invocation, NAMO GURU

VAJRASATTVA YE, "Homage to the guru, inseparable from Vajrasattva," and, as usual, the injunction "Listen, Lama Tsondru Gyamtso."

Chakme Rinpoche gives an explanation of the four parts of the meditation on Vajrasattva and the recitation of his mantra.

This is the style that we employ in the preliminary practices:

For this purpose, you begin by visualizing yourself in your ordinary form, and above your head you imagine a white lotus flower on top of which is a moon disk. Standing upright on top of the moon disk you visualize a brilliantly white and luminous HUNG syllable from which radiate innumerable rays of light, which make offerings to all buddhas and bodhisattvas, thus purifying the obscurations of all sentient beings. These rays of light are then withdrawn back into the HUNG, which is now suddenly transformed into Vajrasattva, who is also brilliantly white in color, or, as it says in the text, "the color of crystal."

This means not that he is without color but rather that he is insubstantial, translucent, and almost transparent, so that you can see through him; you can see his inside from the outside and his outside from the inside. He is adorned with silken garments and much jewelry. His right hand holds a golden vajra to his heart, while his left hand holds a silver bell, the top part of which is a vajra, to his left hip. He is seated with his legs half-crossed, which is to say that his right leg is extended slightly forward.

Next, having visualized him, you think that from his body, and especially from his heart, rays of light radiate outward, and these again make offerings to all buddhas and bodhisattvas, this time inviting all of them in the form of light to dissolve back into Vajrasattva, who at that point becomes inseparable from all buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Next, as a result of your devotion and supplication to Vajrasattva, ambrosia issues forth from his heart in the following manner:

You visualize in the heart of Vajrasattva a moon disk on top of which is a white HUNG syllable, and surrounding that is his hundred-syllable mantra. Through the force of your supplication, you think that from the syllable in his heart a stream of wisdom ambrosia flows forth. This fills his entire body. The excess that cannot be contained by his body flows out through the big toe of his right foot.

The ambrosia flowing out of his toe enters you through the aperture at the center of the top of your head, and as it fills your whole body, it drives out all of your wrongdoing, all of your obscurations, in the form of filth and impurities that are expelled primarily out of your lower door and out of the soles of your feet. You can visualize the obscurations, impurities, and traces of wrongdoing in the form of a smoky liquid, such as creosote. As this is expelled or driven out of you, you think that it dissolves under the ground.

Continuously visualizing that, you recite the hundred-syllable mantra, or if that is too difficult, you may simply recite the six-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva.

At the conclusion of each cycle of purification, you think that your body is completely emptied of all obscurations, which also means all substantiality such that your body has become, for example, a crystal vessel filled with milk-like ambrosia. This does not mean that you think that your body is made of crystal. It means that it is insubstantial and translucent so that, for example, it is a little bit like a crystal vase filled with milk.

At the conclusion of each session of the practice, you think that Vajrasattva addresses you as follows. He says to you, "Child of good family," and then addresses you by name, "your wrongdoing and obscurations have been purified."

Having said that, he melts into light and dissolves into you. The reason you visualize Vajrasattva dissolving into you at this point is that once all of your



obscurations have been removed, in essence you have become identical to Vajrasattva. It is therefore appropriate, once you have removed the obscurations, to think that he dissolves into you since you are no longer separate from him anyway. Then you rest in the confidence of your inseparability from him and look at the nature of your mind.

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Karma Chakrme Rinpoche quotes Tilopa's *Mahamudra Upadesha*, or *Instructions on Mahamudra*, saying

*"The darkness accumulated throughout a thousand aeons is dispelled in one instant by the illumination of one lamp or torch. In the same way, at the very instant at which you realize your own self-aware mind to be the clear light, all of the ignorance, wrongdoing, and obscurations accumulated throughout innumerable aeons are burned up."*

Therefore this is referred to as the torch of the teachings, or the torch of the doctrine.

No matter how long a place has been without light, as soon as a light is turned on, it becomes light at that instant. The amount of time that has passed is no longer relevant. The darkness does not need to be separately removed; it is removed simply through the act of illumination. In the same way, all wrongdoing and obscurations fundamentally obscure the nature of your mind. Once the nature of your mind is recognized, that in itself removes all obscurations.

Therefore the entire process we go through of purification of the obscurations, gathering the accumulations of merit and wisdom, and the effort to receive the blessing of the root and lineage gurus - the purpose and function of all of this without exception is to bring us to a realization of the nature of our mind. It is that realization itself that truly and finally removes all of our obscurations. Therefore that realization is called the

torch of the teachings.

That quotation refers to this aspect of purification, which is called the ultimate purification, or purification in suchness. It is possible because your mind in itself- that is to say, the nature of your mind- is indestructible. It is indestructible and unchangeable because it is without any substantial entity or substantial existence whatsoever.

Finally realizing the nature of your mind, therefore, is realizing what is called the true vajra. All of the uses of the word *vajra*, including the one in the name Vajrasattva, are metaphorical and refer to this nature. To understand that is to realize what is really meant by the concept of "vajra."

The cultivation of that realization, the cultivation of that familiarization with and meditation on that nature of your mind, is the true "Vajrasattva." This is what is really meant by the vajra-being, or Vajrasattva.

Therefore, at that level of purification in suchness, one does not look for purification from outside oneself. One simply observes one's mind. One simply fosters the experience and recognition of the nature of one's own mind. That is the ultimate meditation and mantra recitation of Vajrasattva.

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In summation, If you practice them properly by reciting the requisite number of mantras and doing your best to have a clear visualization, there is no doubt that all of your wrongdoings and contraventions of commitments will be purified. By practicing in this way, you make your human life meaningful. Although we have wasted innumerable lifetimes up to this point, and therefore have not attained awakening, if we make good use of our present human life, then we ensure at least our eventual awakening. Certainly, having engaged in such practices in this lifetime, you will proceed from happiness to happiness, which means that you will not

be reborn in lower states and will gradually progress along the path until you attain buddhahood.

When you do a practice such as Vajrasattva- that is, a practice of purification- there are likely to be indications in your experience of something happening, some kind of change occurring in you. These indications can take different forms. What is explained in the text are indications that we would normally find pleasant and that we would assume mean that the practice is going well, and they do. You should not, however, think that everyone is definitely going to have the same experience of the practice.

The typical signs described in the text are that you will feel physically well; you will feel vigorous, tranquil, and at ease. At the same time, your mind will become clearer than it was before. You will experience an attitude of renunciation because you will experience a recognition of the futility of samsara and the value of liberation. At the same time, you will have greater faith or confidence through an appreciation of the qualities of the Three Jewels and a wish to attain those qualities yourself.

Also, some kind of meditation experience or possibly realization will arise apparently spontaneously within you through doing the practice. For some individuals there will be experiences like this, which occur in the waking state, or direct experiences of the mind.

For others there will be dreams that indicate that you are going through a process of purification, for example dreaming that you are washing, or putting on bright, or white, new, clean clothes. You could dream that you are drinking some kind of ambrosia or milk, or dream that you are flying. All of these are considered to be indications, in this context, of purification. You could have all kinds of positive experiences like that, an increase in your experience of sacredness, and so on.

Not everyone is going to experience purification as a pleasant thing. Because purification is the removal of the imprints of previous

wrongdoing, you could experience it as somewhat unpleasant. You could find that your mind is becoming more and more agitated as you continue the practice. You could actually even experience some kind of external upheaval in the circumstances of your life. It is natural for us, when this happens, to assume that we are doing something wrong, that we are doing the practice wrong or that we are not doing it enough or something like that, otherwise these bad things would not happen. That is not necessarily the case.

Do not forget that when you are doing a practice like Vajrasattva, because you are purifying your previously accumulated negative karma, that karma may show up in your life. This is like washing dirty clothes. When you immerse dirty clothes in the washing solution, initially they seem to get even dirtier because the dirt starts to emerge from them, and they may even smell. But they are not getting dirtier; this is the beginning of the dirt coming out of the clothes. If these experiences arise for you while you are doing a purification practice, be patient. Recognize that it is the eradication of negative karma, not the accumulation of it, and continue to do the practice.

That completes the chapter on the Vajrasattva practices of purification.

From Questions and Answers

Student: You mentioned that a violation of a root samaya is particularly serious. What is a violation of root samaya?

Rinpoche: The generic meaning of a samaya violation is that when you are practicing Vajrayana, if you violate the commitments, which form the parameters for the practice, then the practice will not work. No qualities will arise as a result of the practice. A root samaya violation is defined as one that eradicates all benefit from the practice. A branch samaya violation is one that diminishes, impinges upon, or impairs the benefit of the practice. Thus if you violate branch samaya but not root samaya, there will

be benefit to the practice but there will also be problems because of the violation.

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Fundamentally what needs to be understood about actions is that any action that is motivated by a mental affliction, such as anger or aversion, including irritation, or any action that is motivated by ignorance, is unvirtuous. It is because of that, as you indicated in your question, that we have so much trouble recognizing our constant minor unvirtuous actions, because the very nature of an unvirtuous state of mind is that it is obscured and obscuring. It covers up its own unvirtuousness through its being an ignorant state of mind, which is one that is not fully aware of itself.

Although this manifests in our experience and our behavior in all kinds of ways, it often manifests as a feeling of irritation or frustration, which many of us know best as getting angry at yourself or getting angry at an inanimate object. Normally we would not think of that as unvirtuous because we are not directly harming anyone else, but it is an unvirtuous state of mind because it is ignorant and also because it is founded upon aggression or aversion. In any case the fundamental root of all of these unvirtuous states of mind and unvirtuous actions is ignorance, and ignorance by its nature is the hardest to recognize.

Student: This is in reference to confession and the form it should take, for example the way to work with confession that is most complete and helps develop the resolve not to repeat habitual patterns. If I were to go into all the things I have done wrong, not to mention all the right things that I did not do, it would take too much time. Instead can I go on to some of the things I was doing right. Is this okay?

Rinpoche: What you say is precisely true. None of us can actually remember all of the wrongdoings we have engaged in, even in this lifetime. Even if we could remember them, enumerating these actions one by one would take almost forever.

In addition to that, we have been accumulating this kind of negativity throughout beginningless time and we have no memory of all of the things that we have done prior to this current lifetime. Nevertheless we do bear the imprints of those actions and are at risk of experiencing their results unless we confess them. Therefore any act of confession has to be stated in such a way, in such language, that it is inclusive of all of the actions, all of the wrongdoing that you have ever committed in any way. So the specific liturgy can vary, but it will always include the words and the ideas that "I confess all of the unvirtuous actions or wrongdoing I have performed throughout beginningless time, or throughout beginningless samsara, with body, speech, and mind."

You also have to be aware, when you are making or performing the confession, that you cannot remember all of the wrongdoings you have committed. You are directing the confession to all buddhas and bodhisattvas with the understanding that since they are omniscient, they can and do remember all of your unvirtuous actions even though you do not.

You are essentially saying, "All of those actions that I have ever done wrong, which you know about in detail but I do not remember, I am confessing and admitting. May I never perform any of them again." With such an attitude that is all-encompassing, you can actually purify all of your previous actions.

Student: Is the Chenrezik visualization, when you have him over your head and he sends the purifying rays to remove your obscurations, similar to or the same as the Vajrasattva? Specifically, if you feel that you need more purification, can you extend the part where you get the flow of amrita, or do you need to do a totally separate sadhana, such as Vajrasattva?

Rinpoche: You can definitely do the practice of Chenrezik in order to purify wrongdoing and obscurations, and you should not think that it is necessary to shift to a different practice in order to do it.

\*Ultimately all of these deities, all of these practices, have the ability to purify anything because they are all fundamentally embodiments of the same nature, the same wisdom.

For example, because it says that Vajrasattva is the embodiment of all deities, it also follows logically that Vajrasattva is present in all other deities, so that when you meditate upon Chenrezik, he is no different in essence from Vajrasattva. If any one of them includes all of them, then it must follow that they are all included in any one.

With regard to the technique of the Chenrezik practice, immediately before you recite the mantra, you recite the section of the liturgy to which you were referring, in which you say, "Rays of light come from the body of the Noble One and purify ...," and so on, and you describe the purification not only of your wrongdoing and obscurations but of your perception, so that the entire realm becomes Sukhavati and all beings become Chenrezik.

You can continue with this visualization while you recite the mantra, continue to visualize Chenrezik above your head, continue to have, the rays of light purify you and all beings, and transform your perception as well. This does not have to be done just briefly and then discarded.

Student: I would like to return to the subject of the four powers. You taught that if you do not have 100 percent regret, then you are not going to get the result, so that you really have to have those first three powers before you even get to the fourth power. I know, sometimes, that something is not right and that I should regret it, but I do not really want to regret it. Is there any way that I can generate more of a sense of regret in my practice?

Rinpoche: You are perfectly correct in saying that the reason we have so much trouble generating the power of resolution not to commit an action again is that we lack sufficient remorse. You are absolutely correct in saying that. Therefore you are also correct in saying that we need to exert ourselves in some way in cultivating regret or remorse for our wrongdoing.

\*The first step is to recognize what we are doing, which means thinking about it until we are certain what it means to say that any act of wrongdoing only leads to suffering. There is never any real profit or benefit in it; it always leads to suffering.

The second step is actually to contemplate the details of what suffering really means, especially in its more intense form. To this end you can turn to books such as *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* or similar texts in which the sufferings of the hell realm, the preta realm, the animal realm, and so on are described in detail. When you study this material, you need to actually imagine it. You need to contemplate it in the sense of imagining yourself in your present body experiencing the sufferings described in the text...

What is important to bring to mind when you are doing this contemplation is that that which experiences the suffering is the same mind that experiences the human realm today.

The way you experience sensations is pretty much the same. Of course, the environment is different and the body is different because the environment is different, but the way that the body experiences sensation, its degree of sensitivity to pain, is, if anything, greater and more sensitive than what we experience in the human realm.

Fundamentally what this comes down to is a belief. *If you actually believe in the results of actions, you will have no trouble generating regret for unvirtuous actions or wrongdoings because you will know what they lead to. If you have that regret, you will have no problem resolving not to repeat the action.* It is like discovering that you had drunk a deadly poison—you would experience intolerably strong regret for having done so, as well as the wish to do anything possible to remove the poison. It depends on how much you believe it. If you think, "Well, there is a slight possibility that what I drank had poison in it, but I do not really know," then of course your regret will be less strong, and as a result your resolution will be less strong and intense. It comes down to whether or not you really believe in karma.



Again, the hardest thing about confession is the regret. Without the regret there will not be the commitment, and therefore the purification will not take place.

*The key to regret is that before you begin the accumulation aspect of the preliminaries, or ngondro, you should seriously and intensely contemplate the four thoughts that turn the mind, because only through doing so will you be inspired enough to have stable renunciation for samsara.*

The four thoughts need to be contemplated to the point that what you previously regarded with attachment you now regard with revulsion and disgust. Only at that point will you have sufficient revulsion to truly regret your actions.

Student: Is the aspiration to purify oneself the key to developing regret, and is this to be cultivated before the practice of ngondro begins?

Rinpoche: It is important and beneficial to have the aspiration to purify your wrongdoing and obscurations, but you do not need to stop there just because you have not yet begun the preliminaries. Again, what is most important is to recognize how serious a problem wrongdoing is. Once that recognition is established, then any virtuous action is an act of purification. As it said in the text, "Any virtuous action or practice will suffice." Therefore it can be circumambulation, prostration, anything you like.

Student: Do the purification and realization happen simultaneously?

Rinpoche: Yes, but neither occurs all at once. To the extent that obscurations are purified, there will be realization of the nature. However, until all the obscurations have been purified, the realization of the nature, while authentic, will not be complete. That is why there are different stages and paths.