

Vajrasattva Meditation and the Four Opponent Powers

A reconstructed transcript of morning and afternoon teachings by Geshe Tenzin Zopa · 23 August 2026

Editorial note

This worked-up transcript combines the Sunday morning and afternoon sessions. In the morning recording, the opening blessing and extended mantra recitations have been omitted; the spoken teaching begins at approximately 34 minutes. Verbal fillers, false starts, repeated words, incidental exchanges and repeated recitations have been removed throughout. Geshe-la's sequence, explanations, emphases, humour and examples have been retained, with light restructuring where necessary for clarity. Technical terms and the practice sequence have been checked against the accompanying text, *A Short Vajrasattva Meditation: Purification with the Four Opponent Powers*, by Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

Morning session

Settling the mind and remembering that we are cared for

We begin by settling the body and mind in the present moment. Do a few rounds of breathing meditation and let the mind come to rest.

Then understand that all the benefit offered by the buddhas, bodhisattvas and gurus arises from their immeasurable compassion and love for sentient beings, including us. Acknowledge that limitless awakened beings care for us without condition or pause. They wish us to be happy, positive, to follow the virtuous path and to actualise enlightenment.

It is amazing to know that this is happening, and we should wish for every other sentient being to know it too. Many people suffer because they feel that nobody loves them, cares for them or is concerned for their wellbeing. Others believe that they have no good guidance and therefore follow a wrong path. This happens because they have not recognised the existence and qualities of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, whose activity is always to love and guide beings.

Their immeasurable love, compassion and ceaseless work for sentient beings are deeply inspiring. We have now encountered the Buddha's teaching. If not now, when will we decide to become like them? Make the firm determination: "I too want to become a cause of happiness for numberless sentient beings."

From this moment, dedicate your existence (especially this human life, everything you do and every breath you take) to the temporary and ultimate happiness of sentient beings. For that purpose, use this gathering to deepen your understanding of Buddhadharma, purify limitations and accumulate the qualities that lead to buddhahood.

We also recite the Medicine Buddha mantra, dedicating it to healing the world of its troubles and to all those experiencing physical or mental illness, environmental harm or other difficulties. Include your family and yourself, and purify whatever needs to be healed.

[Extended Medicine Buddha mantra recitation omitted.]

The suffering of change and the meaning of renunciation

Virtuous karma is better than non-virtuous or neutral karma, but ordinary virtue can still bring a result within samsara rather than liberation. We discussed the three kinds of suffering: the suffering of pain, the suffering of change and pervasive compounded suffering.

It is difficult for the ordinary mind to distinguish the suffering of change from true happiness. We regard many experiences of change as happiness and aspire to obtain them. Sensual pleasure and every apparent perfection in samsara may be pleasurable at first, but the experience is exhausted and changes. The change is inconvenient and unpleasant and may culminate in great pain.

Good health is an example. While it lasts, we call it happiness, but when it changes we call the result sickness. Long life also appears wonderful, and we do everything possible to sustain it. Yet the life force is eventually exhausted, and this change is death.

From the Dharma point of view, dying involves more than the breath stopping. The elements dissolve and disturbing appearances can arise. Without Dharma, it can be very difficult to meet these experiences.

The dissolution of the elements does not begin only in the last moments of life. From the moment after birth, we are already moving towards death. Hormonal changes, ageing, changes in our senses, failing memory and the gradual weakening of the body are all signs of the elements changing and disintegrating. Before a particular stage of change becomes obvious, we may experience a temporary pause that feels pleasurable. This temporary pleasure is what we call the suffering of change.

Understanding this gives us a sound reason for renunciation. Renunciation does not mean giving up the body, rejecting life or refusing every pleasant experience. It means not attaching to these things or grasping at them as permanent. It is the release of the bondage of grasping.

Without this understanding, Dharma practice does not become a genuine path. Dharma learning and practice must become a path leading to liberation. First we recognise the limitations; secondly, we understand where they come from; thirdly, we apply the antidote; and then we can attain cessation. This is the pattern of the four noble truths.

Understanding what must be purified

The Buddha taught that suffering is to be known, its causes are to be abandoned, cessation is to be achieved and the path is to be practised. This pattern applies to purification. We must know what is to be purified; otherwise, we may say, “I want to purify karma,” while attending only to obvious pain and leaving the suffering of change and pervasive compounded suffering untouched.

The first noble truth points especially to pervasive suffering, which is difficult to recognise. To understand samsara at this level, we must understand karma, ignorance and the different delusions: anger, attachment, ego and the rest. Merely knowing the word *karma* is not the same as apprehending what karma really means.

Karma means action, and we commonly divide it into virtuous and non-virtuous action. But that alone is not enough. Pleasant experiences in samsara are results of virtuous karma, yet they are still samsaric experiences. A virtuous action becomes a path leading to liberation when it is transformed by the right motivation, particularly renunciation. Just doing something conventionally good does not automatically make it a cause of liberation.

Why Vajrasattva purification is urgent

Vajrasattva purification is essential because there is hardly a moment in which we do not create karma. Four fundamental characteristics of karma help us understand the urgency.

1. Karma is certain to bring its corresponding result

Negative karma brings suffering. Once an action of body, speech or mind has been created under an unwholesome motivation, it carries a potential for a samsaric result. In this broad comparison, any action that perpetuates the suffering of pain, the suffering of change or pervasive compounded suffering remains within samsara. It is therefore wise to purify as soon as possible.

2. Karma increases

Karmic potential does not remain static. Once created, it grows without any further effort. A small harmful act may appear insignificant, but if it is not purified, its force increases. Geshe-la used the traditional illustration that the karma of killing an ant without purification can, within fifteen days, grow to the weight of killing a human being.

This is not intended to make us panic about an insect. It is meant to stop us dismissing apparently small actions. A minor action infused with ignorance or another delusion can eventually bring very painful results. The same natural law operates whether or not someone believes in rebirth. Even within a human life, people can undergo experiences resembling the sufferings described as hell, hungry-ghost or animal experiences.

3. We experience results only where causes have been created

When an unexpected difficulty comes, we ask, “Why do I have to experience this? I do not remember creating its cause.” The action and result need not occur simultaneously. A cause may have been created a moment, a year, a lifetime or countless lives earlier, and its result may ripen after a long interval. The links of dependent arising can unfold within one life, two lives or over eons.

During that interval the karmic potential remains. This is another reason to use the opportunity, knowledge and method we now possess and purify without delay.

4. Karma does not simply disappear

Once karma has been created, it is not lost merely because we forget about it or time passes. It remains until it produces a result or is opposed by an appropriate antidote. Negative karma can be purified; positive karma also remains and increases unless it is damaged by destructive conditions such as anger or wrong views.

Atisha's example of immediate purification

The great Indian master Atisha Dipamkara, an important source of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, carried a small stupa representing his guru. Whenever he noticed that he had transgressed a refuge, monastic, bodhisattva or tantric precept (or even that his journey may inadvertently have caused harm to an insect) he would stop, place the stupa before him and purify through the four opponent powers.

Even a great master such as Atisha took apparently small actions seriously. When travelling in Tibet on horseback, he would dismount and purify if he suspected that the horse might have crushed insects. If such a practitioner was this careful, we should be even more attentive.

The four opponent powers in everyday language

Purification is not difficult in itself. The main difficulty is remembering to recognise a negative action and honestly accepting it as negative rather than dismissing it as too small to matter.

The four opponent powers can be expressed very simply:

1. **Regret:** acknowledge a mistake as a mistake and a harmful action as harmful. This is not self-hatred; it is the wish to free oneself from the consequence.
2. **Reliance:** bring to mind a trusted witness, guide or source of inspiration. This may be Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, a deity such as Tara or Chenrezig, your guru, your parents, your own wisdom or buddha-potential, or another person whose example reliably draws you away from harm and towards virtue. In their presence, affirm that you recognise the wrong and genuinely intend to purify it.
3. **Remedy:** apply an antidote. Apologise to someone you have harmed, forgive, generate compassion, recite *OM MANI PADME HUM* or a Vajrasattva mantra, or reinforce within yourself the qualities represented by your object of reliance.
4. **Restraint:** determine not to repeat the action. Make the commitment realistic. If you can abandon it for life, promise that. If not, promise for a day, until the next morning or even until you rise from the meditation cushion. A sincere promise kept for a short period is meaningful.

Once we understand how karma works, the need to purify even small actions becomes clear. Without purification, a karmic potential does not simply leave our system. With purification, the certainty of experiencing its result can be changed.

Positive karma and the reach of bodhicitta

The principles of certainty and increase apply to positive karma too. Do not dismiss a small virtue while waiting for a grand opportunity. Even a moment of compassion or bodhicitta has immense power and continues to grow.

Bodhicitta is like a communication that reaches all sentient beings. The love and concern of the buddhas extend to us whether or not we recognise them. When we generate great love and sincerely wish all beings to be happy, our own heart also reaches beyond the people immediately visible to us.

Geshe-la explained that many non-human beings may be sensitive to states of mind in ways ordinary humans are not. Generating love and compassion can therefore bring care and comfort to beings we do

not see or know. Human beings may not appreciate our love, but that does not make the thought meaningless. Limitless beings benefit from and appreciate a generous, compassionate and ethical heart.

If one person abstains from killing, the whole world becomes safer because there is one less source of violence. If one person abstains from lying, beings are safer from deception. We may be only one individual and may never meet most beings directly, yet our conduct still changes the world they inhabit.

Protecting the bank balance of merit

We are busy through body, speech and mind. Much of our time is devoted to work and responsibilities because we hope to secure happiness. There is nothing wrong with working for food, shelter and the necessities of life. Yet money, education and worldly success have not produced lasting happiness; otherwise, we would not continue searching for a deeper source.

The real cause of happiness is merit: virtuous action joined with a wholesome motivation. Even the inclination to seek Dharma, hear the words *bodhicitta* and *emptiness*, or wish to solve the problems of the world shows that we already possess great merit accumulated in the past.

Our time to accumulate concentrated Dharma merit may be limited, so we must be careful not to destroy the merit we already have. Think of it as a great bank balance. A person may dress humbly while secretly being very wealthy. In the same way, we may say, “I do not have much merit,” although our meeting with Dharma and our compassionate aspirations reveal immense inner wealth—more valuable than the fortune of the richest person.

Just as financial scammers can empty a bank account with one call or click, mental afflictions can plunder the bank of merit. Anger is the most destructive. Shantideva teaches that a moment of anger can destroy eons of accumulated merit. Anger immediately burns the person who holds it, like grasping a burning coal in order to throw it at an enemy. It also destroys peace, pollutes body and mind and disturbs everyone nearby.

Mindfulness is therefore a major practice: do not create negative karma; if it is created, purify it immediately; and be especially watchful of anger. We already possess much goodness. Protecting it secures causes for happiness, success and enlightenment.

Definite and indefinite karma

Indefinite karma is karmic potential that has not become fully fixed by all its conditions. When the four opponent powers are applied, it can be purified from the root.

Definite karma must produce some experience, but purification is still effective. There is no contradiction between saying that karma is definite and that all karma can be purified. Purification can greatly reduce the intensity and duration of the result. A karma that might otherwise have produced an extremely long and painful experience may ripen as a brief illness, a migraine or another short difficulty. The experience occurs, but in a vastly diminished form.

This is why we should “make friends with purification.” It can remove indefinite karma and transform the way definite karma ripens.

Beginning the Vajrasattva practice with refuge and bodhicitta

The Vajrasattva sadhana begins by refreshing refuge. If you have formally taken refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, renew it. If you have not, recall a person or example who inspires you towards Dharma, virtue and compassion: someone such as Mother Teresa, for example.

To take refuge means to place oneself under protection and rely upon guidance. Buddha includes Shakyamuni Buddha and enlightened figures such as Tara, Chenrezig and Medicine Buddha. Dharma is their realised wisdom and the teachings that lead us. Sangha refers especially to those who abide in and embody these principles. We rely upon this guidance not merely for today or tomorrow, but until enlightenment.

Enlightenment is the state in which all excellent qualities have been perfected and all limitations of karma, delusion and cognitive obscuration have been overcome.

Generate bodhicitta and dedicate the purification to the temporary and ultimate benefit of numberless sentient beings:

“I go for refuge until I am enlightened to the Buddha, the Dharma and the supreme assembly. By my practice of giving and the other perfections, may I become a buddha to benefit all sentient beings.”

The “other perfections” are ethical discipline, patience, joyous effort, concentration and wisdom. Together with generosity, they create the two accumulations: the accumulation of method and the accumulation of wisdom.

Love, compassion, bodhicitta, generosity, ethics, patience, effort and concentration create the accumulation of method. Its result is the Buddha’s form bodies: the sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. Understanding the relative truth of ourselves and others gives meaning and direction to compassion. Relatively, we are beings under the control of karma and delusion: we want happiness yet encounter suffering; we do not want to age, become angry, lose loved ones or die, yet these experiences come.

Wisdom understanding selflessness and emptiness creates the accumulation of wisdom. Its result is the dharmakaya, the Buddha’s wisdom body. The complete path therefore joins method and wisdom, relative truth and ultimate truth.

Generate the determination:

“I must liberate all sentient beings from suffering and its causes and lead them to unsurpassed enlightenment. To do this, I must first attain enlightenment myself. Therefore, I must purify all my negative karma immediately by practising Vajrasattva meditation and recitation.”

[The morning session concludes for lunch.]

Afternoon session

The purpose of Vajrasattva practice

We begin by generating the right motivation. We take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and we cultivate bodhicitta. Our practice should be grounded in an understanding of the three principal aspects of the path: renunciation, bodhicitta and the correct view of emptiness.

Vajrasattva is the embodiment of the purification of all the buddhas of the three times. In the same way that Medicine Buddha manifests the enlightened quality of healing, Chenrezig manifests compassion and Tara manifests enlightened activity, Vajrasattva manifests the purity of the enlightened mind.

The name *Vajrasattva* can be understood as “indestructible being” or “indestructible mind.” *Vajra* indicates the indestructible nature of reality, and *sattva* indicates a being or mind. Ultimately, Vajrasattva is the enlightened clear-light mind, the dharmakaya. For our benefit, that enlightened mind appears in the form of a deity, a mantra and a meditation practice.

There are long and short Vajrasattva mantras. Reciting the hundred-syllable mantra twenty-one times, or the short mantra¹ twenty-eight times, has the particular benefit of preventing negative karma from multiplying. If a negative karma has not yet begun to ripen, it can be purified. If it is already ripening, the practice can still lessen its intensity and shorten its duration. In a traditional Vajrasattva retreat one may complete one hundred thousand mantras, often over approximately three months, but even a short daily practice is immensely valuable.

How karma becomes complete

To understand purification, we need to understand karma. Karma means action, and negative karma is an action that becomes a cause of suffering. Four factors make an action complete:

1. the motivation or intention;
2. the object of the action;
3. the action itself; and
4. the completion of the action, including satisfaction or rejoicing in it.

Suppose you deliberately kill an ant. You recognise the object, generate the intention to kill, carry out the action and then feel satisfied that the ant is dead. All four factors are complete, so the karmic result is strong. If you step on an ant without seeing it and without any wish to kill it, the action has occurred, but the karmic factors are not complete in the same way.

¹ Om Vajrasattva Hum

The same principle applies to virtue. If you give something to another person with a kind motivation, understand whom you are helping, actually give it and rejoice in the benefit, the virtuous action is complete. Motivation is therefore extremely important: it determines the character and power of the action.

The power of regret

The first of the four opponent powers is regret. Regret is not guilt and it is not self-hatred. It is the intelligent recognition that an action will bring suffering and that we do not want that result.

The Buddha taught three broad kinds of suffering. There is the suffering of suffering: the pain and difficulty that everyone readily recognises. There is the suffering of change, in which an experience that appears pleasurable changes and becomes unsatisfactory. There is also pervasive conditioned suffering: our whole samsaric existence is under the control of karma and delusion.

Even an ordinary virtuous action may produce a pleasant result within samsara, yet it does not by itself bring lasting liberation. If virtue is not supported by renunciation, bodhicitta or wisdom, its result can still remain within conditioned existence. This does not make the action non-virtuous; it means that its power and destination are limited. We should learn to distinguish temporary worldly happiness from the true and lasting happiness of liberation and enlightenment.

Only a buddha fully understands all the subtle workings of karma. We cannot see every cause and result ourselves, so we rely upon the Buddha's teaching, examine it carefully and put it into practice.

Dharma means transforming the mind

The word *Dharma* does not merely mean a religion, a tradition or a collection of ceremonies. Dharma is a tool for repairing, cleaning and transforming the mind. If the engine is damaged, we need the right method to repair it. In the same way, when the mind is disturbed by anger, attachment, jealousy, pride or confusion, we need wisdom and method.

Every sentient being wants happiness and does not want suffering. Ultimately, every being is seeking the complete and lasting happiness of buddhahood, even if they do not yet recognise it by that name. Dharma gives us the means to bring about that result.

Our motivation determines the scope of our practice. The most powerful motivation is bodhicitta: the wish to become enlightened in order to free all sentient beings from suffering and bring them to enlightenment. The motivation for personal liberation is also very powerful. An ordinary wish for a good life is virtuous, but its result is more limited.

If, on waking in the morning, we generate bodhicitta—"Today, may everything I do become a cause for the enlightenment of all beings"—then eating, walking, working, speaking and resting can all be brought into the path. Without such a motivation, most of our actions are driven by the concerns of this life alone.

When generating regret, we reflect honestly. We have acted under the influence of worldly concern. We have harmed others through body, speech and mind. We have broken or weakened refuge commitments, individual-liberation vows, bodhisattva vows or tantric commitments. We may have behaved wrongly toward our gurus, spiritual friends, parents or other beings. We recognise these actions without hiding them and without turning the recognition into self-punishment.

Refuge and following the Buddha's advice

Shakyamuni Buddha is our teacher. Even if we do not yet have a personal human guru, we can begin by relying on the Buddha and his teachings. A true spiritual teacher repeatedly asks us to abandon non-virtue, practise virtue, subdue the mind and be happy in a meaningful way. Yet we often disobey this advice by following our disturbed thoughts and choosing the negative interpretation.

Taking refuge means entrusting ourselves to the Buddha's protection and advice rather than surrendering to the deluded mind. The Buddha tells us to be careful, positive and compassionate. Our delusions tell us, "Be angry. Be jealous. You are not good enough. Nobody cares about you." We must decide which voice we are going to trust.

We frequently possess the conditions for happiness but maintain habits that make us feel down, lonely or dissatisfied. The practice is not to deny difficulties. It is to stop giving the disturbed mind authority over our life.

Compassion begins with oneself

The Buddha tells us to care for ourselves and for all sentient beings. This begins with ourselves. Compassion is important at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the path. The Buddha entered the path through compassion, developed the path through compassion and completed the path through compassion.

Genuine self-love means creating the causes of our own happiness. It means protecting the mind from anger, jealousy, depression, discouragement and low self-esteem. It means respecting our true potential (our buddha-nature) instead of believing every limited thought that appears.

The inner voice that says, “I am not good enough; I cannot do anything,” is not the true nature of the person. It is a projection of a limited and temporary state of mind. We should not identify ourselves with it.

Sometimes we call something self-care when it actually increases selfishness, confusion, isolation or depression. That is not really caring for ourselves. If an action makes the mind narrower and more disturbed, it is not producing genuine well-being.

We cannot reliably offer compassion to others if we have no basis of compassion for ourselves. Bodhicitta means wishing to liberate others, but to do that we must attain buddhahood. To relieve their suffering, we must free our own mind from the causes of suffering. To bring them happiness, our own mind must know genuine happiness. Dharma does not mean forgetting or rejecting ourselves. It means transforming ourselves so that we can be of real benefit.

Regret without despair

When we discover that we have swallowed poison, we do not sit there blaming ourselves. We act quickly to remove it. In the same way, when we recognise harmful karma, we develop an urgent wish to purify it.

Death is certain and its time is uncertain. At death, possessions, reputation and ordinary relationships cannot accompany us. The imprints of our actions remain with the mind. At present we have encountered the Dharma, we have the capacity to understand it and we have a method of purification. This is an extraordinarily fortunate opportunity, so we should use it now.

The power of reliance: visualising Vajrasattva

Above the crown of your head, visualise an eight-petalled white lotus and a moon disc. Upon these sits Vajrasattva, white in colour, with one face and two arms. His right hand holds a vajra at his heart; his left hand holds a bell at his left thigh. He is adorned with the six ornaments and sits in the vajra posture.

For this general practice, visualise the solitary form of Vajrasattva. The father-and-mother form belongs to a practice for which the appropriate tantric initiation is required.

Do not regard Vajrasattva as an ordinary being. Vajrasattva is inseparable from your root guru and is the holy mind of all the buddhas (the dharmakaya) appearing in this compassionate form in order to purify you. This is also the guru-yoga aspect of the practice.

At Vajrasattva's heart is a moon disc bearing a white syllable HUM, encircled by the hundred-syllable mantra like a garland of white light. If it is difficult to visualise every syllable clearly, simply imagine a circle of brilliant white energy and feel the presence of the mantra.

White light and nectar flow from Vajrasattva into the crown of your head and through the central channel. They purify sickness, spirit harm, negative karma and every obscuration of body, speech and mind.

The power of the remedy: mantra and purification

The mantra and visualisation are the power of the remedy. Recite the hundred-syllable mantra seven times, twenty-one times or as many times as you can. There are three principal ways to visualise purification.

Purification downward

First, visualise the white nectar entering through the crown of your head and flowing downward. All sickness, spirit harm, negative karma and obscurations are washed out through the lower openings and the pores of the body. They may appear as snakes, scorpions, insects and worms, or as dark smoke, soot, tar or dirty oil. Your body, speech and mind become completely clean and luminous.

Purification upward

Second, visualise the nectar filling your body from below. As the level rises, all impurities are pushed upward and leave through the crown of your head, like oil floating to the surface of water. Nothing impure remains.

Instantaneous purification

Third, brilliant light radiates from the HUM and mantra at Vajrasattva's heart. The moment it touches you, all darkness disappears. It is like switching on a light in a dark room: the darkness does not need to be pushed out gradually; it is absent as soon as the light appears.

These methods can be related to different difficulties. When thinking of physical sickness, you may imagine diseased substances leaving the body. When thinking of spirit or elemental harm, you may visualise harmful forms such as scorpions or snakes departing. When thinking of karmic obscuration, you may see black smoke, soot, tar or oil being expelled. If you do not know the cause of a problem, practise all three forms of purification.

The three methods may also be used to purify gross, subtle and very subtle obscurations, or the negativities of body, speech and mind. There is no contradiction. Use the visualisation that most effectively strengthens your sense of purification.

At the end, it is important to generate confidence that purification has occurred. Everything arises dependently through causes and conditions. You have created the causes and conditions of purification: regret, reliance, the remedy and restraint. Therefore, do not finish the practice by clinging again to the thought, "I am still completely impure."

Faith in purification and the courage to move on

The buddhas of the past attained results through these methods. Vajrasattva has the power to purify, and we are applying the practice sincerely. On that basis, we develop faith and confidence.

Imagine Vajrasattva saying:

"Child of the lineage, your negativities, obscurations, and broken and damaged pledges have been completely purified."

Trust the enlightened mind more than the deluded mind. Accept this statement as a seal or certificate of purification. Let yourself become a clean, new and pure being, and move forward.

There is no inherently existing negativity somewhere inside us. Negative karma exists dependently; it can be opposed and purified. If we continue grasping at the identity "I am a bad and impure person," we keep ourselves imprisoned in a projection created by the limited mind.

This does not mean becoming careless. We practise purification every day until the mind is safe and stable. But after we have purified, we should not immediately pick up the burden again.

Purifying on behalf of others

We can also practise with others in mind. Visualise Vajrasattva sending light and nectar to family members, friends, those who are ill, those who have died and all sentient beings. We cannot simply take away another being's karma in the same way that they can purify it through their own mind, but our prayer and practice create supportive causes and conditions. They are an expression of compassion and can be of great benefit.

The power of restraint

The fourth opponent power is restraint: making a sincere determination not to repeat the harmful action.

If an action is easy to abandon, promise never to do it again. If it is difficult to stop immediately, make a realistic commitment for a day, an hour, a few minutes or even a few seconds. For example, while sitting in one place you can resolve, "Until I stand up, I will not knowingly harm any insect." Then keep that promise. A small commitment kept honestly is stronger than a grand promise that we immediately break.

The four opponent powers are therefore:

1. regret for the harmful action;

2. reliance upon Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, together with compassion for sentient beings;
3. application of the remedy, especially mantra and visualisation; and
4. restraint from repeating the action.

Absorption and the recognition of purity

Vajrasattva is pleased with your sincere promise. He melts into concentrated white light. The light descends through the crown of your head and the central channel to your heart.

At your heart is your own clear-light nature, symbolised by a lotus and moon seat. The external Vajrasattva merges inseparably with this innate purity. The lotus closes and the union is sealed. Your body, speech and mind become inseparable from the holy body, speech and mind of Guru Vajrasattva.

Now identify with the pure being rather than with the miserable, fixed and impure identity. This is called divine pride. It is not ordinary pride or ego. It is the courageous recognition of the enlightened potential of the mind.

If I genuinely see myself as Vajrasattva, I must also learn to see others as pure. I cannot say, “I am the deity, but those people are bad and beneath me.” That would only be ordinary pride wearing religious clothing. Divine pride should produce humility, humanity, compassion and respect.

Tantra protects the mind from impure appearance and impure conception. The real effect of initiation is seen when wisdom begins to transform impure view into pure view and ordinary pride into divine pride. Merely attending an empowerment or learning ritual details is not the same as accomplishing the practice.

We may collect initiations, know how to arrange ritual objects, and be able to say, “I have received this highest yoga tantra empowerment.” If renunciation, bodhicitta and the wisdom of emptiness are missing, however, the practice can become another support for ego. We may look down upon others and feel spiritually important.

The sign of genuine Dharma practice is increasing humility. The more one learns, the more one respects others and recognises how much remains to be transformed. When a geshe or teacher sits on a throne, the throne honours the Dharma being taught; it is not a declaration that the person is inherently superior. Motivation is essential.

Emptiness completes the practice

Finally, reflect upon emptiness. The “I” who has purified, the action of purification and the negative karma being purified do not exist inherently from their own side. They appear and function through dependent arising, but when searched for under analysis they cannot be found as independent entities.

Purification is possible precisely because negative karma is not fixed and inherent. Causes can be opposed by other causes. Conditions can change. The mind can be transformed.

Sometimes purification also makes the mind feel lighter. Stress, anxiety and heaviness begin to loosen. Dharma practice need not make us grim. A wise teacher may use humour and laughter to open the mind. Lightness itself can help release our rigid grasping, provided it is joined with wisdom and compassion.

Dedicate all the merit without grasping at inherent existence:

“Because of the merits of the three times created by me and by all buddhas and sentient beings, may I attain the state of Guru Vajrasattva and lead every sentient being to that enlightened state. May the precious mind of bodhicitta arise where it has not arisen, and where it has arisen may it never decline but increase more and more. May I and all beings follow the examples of Manjushri and Samantabhadra, and may the teachings of Lama Tsongkhapa flourish forever.”

This completes the Vajrasattva purification practice.