

A SHORT VAJRASATTVA

MEDITATION

**PURIFICATION WITH THE
FOUR OPPONENT POWERS**

A Short Vajrasattva Meditation

Purification with the Four Opponent Powers

by Lama Zopa Rinpoche

Editor's Introduction

In *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, Pabongkha Rinpoche explains how the great Atisha would purify any negativity, no matter how small, immediately. Even in public or when riding his horse, as soon as he noticed a breach of his ethics, he would stop what he was doing, drop to one knee and then and there, purify it with the four opponent powers – the powers of dependence, regret, remedy, and restraint.

Of course, compared to us, Atisha may not have had that much to purify. Still, he would say, “I never break my pratimoksha vows; I rarely break my bodhisattva vows; but my tantric vows – I transgress those like falling rain.”

Atisha practiced purification in this way because of his deep realization of the psycho-mechanics of negative karma, especially its four fundamentals: negative karma is certain to bring suffering; it multiplies exponentially; if eradicated, it cannot bring its suffering result; and once created, it never simply disappears.

Through the study and practice of Dharma, we should try to attain Atisha's level of understanding. In the meantime, we should try to practice as he did.

Thus, we can be like the great Atisha – whenever we notice we have broken a vow or created any other kind of negative karma, we can purify that negativity with the four opponent powers without a second’s delay.

The Actual Practice

Visualize as follows: On your right side is your father; on your left side is your mother. Your enemies and those sentient beings who make you agitated are in front of you, and your friends and those to whom you are attached are seated behind you. All other universal living beings, in human form, are surrounding you, as far as you can imagine. Visualize your object of refuge, the merit field, in the space in front of you, either the elaborate visualization of “the one into many,” as in Jor Chö; or the simple visualization of “the many into one”: all Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha in the one aspect of Buddha Shakyamuni. As you recite the verse below, think that you and all sentient beings are together taking refuge in the Three Jewels.

The Power of Reliance:

A. Taking Refuge

Sang gyä chhö dang tshog kyi chhog nam la

I go for refuge until I am enlightened.

Jang chhub bar du dag ni kyab su chhi

To the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Supreme Assembly.

Dag gi jin sog gyi päi sö nam kyi

By my practice of giving and other perfections,

Dro la phän chhir sang gyä drub par shog (3x)

May I become a buddha to benefit all sentient beings. (3x)

B. Generating Bodhicitta

But I am not practicing this Vajrasattva purification for myself alone – the purpose of my life is to release all hell beings, pretas, animals, humans, asuras, suras, and intermediate state beings from all their suffering and its causes and lead them to unsurpassed enlightenment. In order to do this I must first reach enlightenment myself. Therefore, I must purify all my negative karma immediately by practicing the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation.

The Power of Regret

First recall the definition of negative karma – any action that results in suffering, usually an action motivated by ignorance, attachment or aversion.

Almost every action I do, twenty-four hours a day, is motivated by worldly concern, attachment to the comfort of this life. It is like this from birth to death in this life and has been like that from beginningless rebirths. Nearly every action I have ever created has been non-virtuous, the cause of suffering. Not only that, but continuously I have also been breaking my pratimoksha, bodhisattva, and tantric vows. Worst of all, I have created the heaviest of negative karmas in relation to my virtuous friends – getting angry at them, generating wrong views, having non-devotional thoughts towards them, harming their holy body, and disobeying their advice. Having these negative imprints on my mental continuum is unbearable. It's as if I've swallowed a lethal poison. I must practice the antidote right away and purify all this negative karma immediately, without a second's delay.

In this way, generate strong feelings of urgency and regret.

Many people my age or younger have died. It's a miracle that I'm still alive and have this incredible opportunity to purify my negative karma.

Death is certain but its time is most uncertain. If I were to die right now, I would definitely be born in the lower realms. Because I could not practice Dharma there I would remain in the lower realms for countless eons. Therefore, how unbelievably fortunate I am to be able to purify my negative karma right now, without even a second's delay, by practicing the Vajrasattva meditation-recitation.

Visualization

Above the crown of my head, seated upon a lotus and moon seat, is Vajrasattva. His body is white; he has one face and two arms. In his right hand he holds a dorje at his heart and in his left hand he holds a bell which is resting on his left thigh. He is adorned with six mudras and sits in the vajra posture.

Vajrasattva is my root Guru, the holy mind of all the buddhas, the dharmakaya, who out of his unbearable compassion, which embraces me and all other sentient beings, appears in this form to purify me and all others.

In this way, your mind is transformed into Guru devotion – the root of all blessings and realizations of the path to enlightenment.

On a moon disk at Vajrasattva's heart stands a HUM encircled by a garland of the hundred syllable mantra. A powerful stream of white nectar flows from the HUM and mantra garland, and I am cleansed of all sickness, spirit harm, negative karma and obscurations.



The Power of the Remedy: Mantra Recitation

OM VAJRASATTVA SAMAYA MANUPALAYA /
VAJRASATTVA TVENOPATISHTHA / DRIDHO ME
BHAVA / SUTOKHYO ME BHAVA / SUPOKHYO ME
BHAVA / ANURAKTO ME BHAVA / SARVA SIDDHI ME
PRAYACCHA / SARVA KARMA SU CHAME / CHITTAM
SHRIYAM KURU HUM / HA HA HA HA HO /
BHAGAVAN SARVA TATHAGATA / VAJRA MAME
MUNCHA / VAJRA BHAVA MAHA SAMAYA SATTVA AH
HUM PHAT

The Meaning of the Mantra

You, Vajrasattva, have generated the holy mind (bodhichitta) according to your pledge (samaya). Your holy mind is enriched with the simultaneous holy actions of releasing transmigratory beings from samsara (the circling, suffering aggregates). Whatever happens in my life – happiness or suffering, good or bad – with a pleased, holy mind, never give up but please guide me. Please stabilize all happiness, including the happiness of the upper realms, actualize all actions and sublime and common realizations, and please make the glory of the five wisdoms abide in my heart.

How to Purify During Mantra Recitation

There are three ways to make purification while reciting the mantra. One can do all three or only one, whatever is most comfortable and depending on one's individual practice.

The First Method

Visualize the white blissful nectar flows down from Vajrasattva into your central channel. It spreads throughout your nervous system, flowing very strongly like water coming from a hose or like a very powerful shower, and flushes out all negativities of your body, speech, and mind through the openings and pores of the lower part of your body. All this negative energy is expelled in the form of snakes, scorpions, ants, long worms, etc. or as black tar or dirty black oil. Feel that you are completely purified, clean clear, especially your gross negativities, and over-come with blissful energy.

The Second Method

The blissful white nectar slowly fills your body starting from below. As the level of nectar rises, your negativities start to rise as well, floating on top of the nectar, like oil floating on water. Your negativities and defilements are slowly pushed upward by the pure nectar energy; it gradually overflows out of your body through your crown chakra. You experience great bliss.

The Third Method

An immense amount of powerful light energy, limitless blissful energy in the form of light, radiates from Vajrasattva's heart. Immediately as it makes contact with your crown chakra, the negative energy, especially your ignorant attachment energy, completely disappears, just as when a bright light is switched on in a dark room, the darkness instantly and completely disappears. You cannot say that the darkness leaves through the window or through the door when a light is turned on. It just disappears, no longer existing anywhere at all.

Recite the mantra seven or twenty-one times or as many times as possible, practicing the three techniques of downward cleansing, upward cleansing and instantaneous cleansing.

Generating Faith in Having Been Purified

From the crown of my head, Guru Vajrasattva says, “Child of the race, your negativities, obscurations and broken and damaged pledges have been completely purified.”

Generate strong faith that all is completely purified just as Guru Vajrasattva has said.

The Power of Restraint: Refraining From Creating Negativities Again

Before Guru Vajrasattva, I vow never again to commit those negative actions from which I can easily abstain, and not to commit for a day, an hour or at least a few seconds those negative actions from which I find it difficult to abstain.

Absorption

Guru Vajrasattva is extremely pleased with your pledge. Vajrasattva melts into light and dissolves into you. Your body, speech and mind become inseparably one with Guru Vajrasattva’s holy body, speech and mind.

Meditation on Emptiness

In emptiness, there is no I, creator of negative karma; there is no action of creating negative karma; there is no negative karma created.

Place your mind in that emptiness for a little while. In this way, look at all phenomena as empty – they do not exist from their own side. With this awareness of emptiness, dedicate the merits.

Dedication

Ge wa di yi nyur du dag

Due to the merits of these virtuous actions

La ma sang gyä drub gyur nä

May I quickly attain the state of a Guru-Buddha

Dro wa chig kyang ma lü pa

And lead all living beings, without exception,

De yi sa la gö par shog

Into that enlightened state.

Jang chhub sem chhog rin po chhe

May the supreme jewel bodhichitta

Ma kye pa nam kye gyur chig

That has not arisen, arise and grow;

Kye wa nyam pa me pa yang

And may that which has arisen not diminish

Gong nä gong du phel war shog

But increase more and more.

Due to all these merits of the three times collected by all the buddhas, bodhisattvas, myself, and all other sentient beings, who appear to be real from their own side, but who are empty, may I, who appears to be real but is empty, achieve Guru Vajrasattva's enlightenment, which appears to be real but is empty, and lead all sentient beings, who appear to be real but are totally empty, to that enlightenment, which appears to be real but is empty, by myself alone, who appears to be real but is also totally empty, non-existent from my own side.

May I and all other sentient beings have Lama Tsong Khapa as our direct Guru in all our lifetimes, never be separated for even a second from the pure path that is greatly praised by the conqueror buddhas, and actualize the complete path – the three principal paths and the two stages of Highest Yoga Tantra – the root of which is Guru devotion, within our minds as quickly as possible.

Just as the brave Manjushri and Samantabhadra realized things as they are, I dedicate all these virtues in the best way, that I may follow after them.

Whatever dedication the three time victorious ones gone to bliss have admired as best, in the same way, I also perfectly dedicate all these roots of virtue so that I may perform good works.

Colophon: This teaching was given by Lama Zopa Rinpoche during the Vajrasattva retreat, Land of Medicine Buddha, Soquel, California, USA, 1999, and revised in New York, November 1999. Edited by Nicholas Ribush, 2001. Lightly revised for inclusion in Essential Buddhist Prayers, Vol. 2 by Venerable Constance Miller, FPMT Education Department, 2001. Revised by Thubten Dondrub, December 2023.

Care of Dharma Material

Dharma books contain the teachings of the Buddha; they have the power to protect against lower rebirth and to point the way to liberation. Therefore, they should be treated with respect – kept off the floor and places where people sit or walk – and not stepped over. They should be covered or protected for transporting and kept in a high, clean place separate from more mundane materials. Other objects should not be placed on top of Dharma books and materials. Licking the fingers to turn pages is considered bad form as well as negative karma. If it is necessary to dispose of written Dharma materials, they should be burned rather than thrown in the trash. When burning Dharma texts, it is taught to first recite a prayer or mantra, such as OM, AH, HUM. Then, you can visualize the letters of the texts (to be burned) absorbing into the AH and the AH absorbing into you, transmitting their wisdom to your mindstream. After that, as you continue to recite OM, AH, HUM, you can burn the texts.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche has recommended that photos or images of holy beings, deities, or other holy objects not be burned. Instead, they should be placed with respect in a stupa, tree, or other high, clean place. It has been suggested to put them into a small structure like a bird house and then seal the house. In this way, the holy images do not end up on the ground.



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