

TIBETAN BUDDHISM CENTER FOR WORLD PEACE
San Antonio, Texas

Nagarjuna's Precious Garland of Advice to a King

Session 12: Transforming Our Karma

The following is inspired by *“Practical Ethics and Profound Emptiness: A Commentary on Nagarjuna’s Precious Garland”* by Khensur Jampa Tegchok, from the commentary of Gyaltsap Je, a principal disciple of Tsongkhapa; *“Nagarjuna’s Precious Garland, Buddhist Advice for Living and Liberation”*, analyzed, translated, and edited by Jeffrey Hopkins; and teachings by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Geshe Drakpa Gelek, Geshe Lobsang Nima, Gen Lamrimpa, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Geshe Lhakdor, Ven. Passang Gelek, Ven. Robina Courtin, Ven. Thubten Chodron, Bhikshu Steve Carlier, B. Alan Wallace, and Alexander Berzin, with the guidance of Geshe Lobsang Nima.

**Links to mantras, Buddha-figures, and texts used in this series are at the end of this study guide.*

This practice of transforming our karma and increasing our positive potential picks up where the meditation on emptiness left off at the close of the Full Refuge Visualization in Session 10.

The Merit Field

1. Imagine that the object of your luminous awareness is now limitless, blissful, clear space that surrounds you in every direction. Like a reflection of your mind that is projected into the limitless space of bliss and emptiness, imagine you are now standing in a gorgeous green meadow that sparkles like jewels all around you. In the sky before you Buddha Shakyamuni appears seated at the center of a lotus flower. Both the Buddha and lotus appear in a similar way to how a brilliant rainbow appears in the sky. Stretching out on either side of you imagine yourself at various stages in your life—from your earliest memory of childhood up to the present. Stretching out behind you and your present life imagine all of your beginningless past lives. These countless lifetimes, along with your present lifetime, represent your entire continuum of conscious experience.

2. Rainbow-like beams of light in five stainless colors—like bands of colored light that emanate from a prism—extend out in groups from Buddha Shakyamuni: one group of five stainless colors goes out to his left, one group to his right, one group above him, and one group below him. The group of light beams to his right gently curves up to support billowing clouds upon which are seated highly realized beings representing the Lineage of Extensive Deeds. The group of light beams to his left gently curves up to support billowing clouds upon which are seated highly realized beings representing the Lineage of the Profound View.

3. The group of light beams rising above and slightly behind Buddha Shakyamuni support a pillar of billowing clouds upon which are seated highly realized beings representing the Lineage of Consecrated Practices. The group of light beams below and slightly in front of Buddha Shakyamuni support billowing clouds upon which are seated His Holiness the Dalai Lama and all of your Gurus and Spiritual Teachers, Tantric Deities, Bodhisattvas, and Dharma Protectors. This constitutes what is called the Merit Field, a fertile field of positive enlightened energy where

we can nurture and grow the seeds of our positive potential. From here, we follow along with the lines of the Seven-Limb Prayer:

Line 1: *Reverently I prostrate with my body, speech, and mind*

4. With reverence, gratitude, and joy, imagine that your entire beginningless continuum of consciousness prostrates three times before the enlightened and highly realized beings in the merit field before you.

Line 2: *And present clouds of every type of offering, actual and mentally transformed.*

5. Imagine that you and your entire beginningless continuum offer oceans of blissful experiences, wave after wave, sending them all to the enlightened and holy beings in the sky. Mentally transform these offerings into clouds of shining positive energy. Imbue this pure energy with the four most meaningful and supreme offerings that can be made: your intention to uphold the Dharma, to put your Dharma studies into practice, to develop and grow the virtues that have taken root in you through your Dharma practice, and to develop your bodhichitta—the altruistic intention and engagement to become enlightened for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Purification Practice

Line 3: *I declare all my negative actions accumulated since beginningless time*

6. Here we purify our mental continuum and subtle energies of the negative karmic imprints that we have been carrying because of past negative actions. This is done through the application of what are called the four opponent powers: Regret, Reliance, Remedy, and Resolve. Ven. Robina Courtin calls these the four R's.

7. *Regret*: With the first opponent power we regret our past actions of body, speech, and mind that have caused harm to ourselves and others. These actions have arisen because of our own personal decisions, reactions and judgements about everything based on our own personal biases rooted in our own personal feelings of attachment and aversion that have arisen from our own personal sense of lack and neediness due to our own primordial ego self-grasping, which has arisen due to ignorance of the actual nature of self and phenomena.

8. *Reliance*: With the second opponent power we rely upon the Three Jewels and also upon sentient beings. Through the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha we learn how to develop the understanding and wisdom needed to traverse the pathways of consciousness that lead to enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. Through our interaction with sentient beings we learn how to develop stable love and compassion, patience, enthusiastic effort on the path, and bodhichitta.

9. *Remedy*: The third opponent power is the remedy, which is to purify our negative karma and engage in positive karma. In particular, we engage in the ten virtuous actions of body, speech and mind which the Buddha instructed us to uphold and we purify all of the ten non-

virtuous actions which we have done. One of the ways to do this purification process is in conjunction with visualizing Vajrasattva and reciting the Vajrasattva mantra:

OM BENZA-SATO SAMAYA MANU-PALAYA
BENZA-SATO TENO-PERTHIKYA, DRIDRO MEY BHAWA,
SUTO-KYO-YO MEY BHAWA, SUPO-KYO-YO MEY BHAWA,
ANU-RAKTO MEY BHAWA, SAWA SITI MEY TRA-YA-TSA,
SARVA KAMA SUTSA MEY, TSE-TAM SHRI-YAM KURU HUNG,
HA HA HA HA, HOE
BHA-GHA-WANA, SARVA TATHA-GATA BENZA, MA MEY MUN-ZHA
BENZA BHAWA MAHA, SAMAYA SATO, AH, HUNG, PHED

Based on Alexander Berzin's English translation, I have paraphrased the mantra as follows:

The pure essence of my eternal reality is the fundamental clear light mind of diamond-like, indestructible Buddha-nature. This Buddha-nature is the assurance and support for my innate capacity to purify and transform.

May the qualities of the diamond-like Buddha-nature residing in me always remain close to my awareness. May my immeasurable equanimity be accomplished through eliminating my negative karma, my immeasurable love be accomplished through attaining the happiness of liberation, my immeasurable joy be accomplished through attaining enlightenment that is forever free of suffering, and my immeasurable compassion be accomplished through the clear light awareness of emptiness. May all spiritual power in me be gained.

May all karmic actions be excellent in me. May my supreme mind arise through the true nature of my consciousness, which is clear and aware, and the five pathways of consciousness that lead to enlightenment (path of accumulation, path of preparation, path of seeing, path of meditation, and path of no more learning).

O Buddha, and all the Ones Thus Gone who have realized their indestructible Buddha-nature, do not let me lose the clear light awareness of emptiness. O Great Diamond Being, in union with your luminous body, speech, and mind, may the delusions and sufferings of my body, speech, and mind be purified and stabilized.

The practice of Shakpa

1. In Tibetan, this purification process is called *Shakpa*, which means to change direction. We are changing the direction of our actions from destructive to beneficial. Vajrasattva, the “Diamond Being” of your own indestructible Buddha-nature, exists as potential within your clear light continuum of consciousness. Imagine Vajrasattva emerges from the heart of Shakyamuni Buddha in the merit field and comes to the crown of your head. He sits at the center of a lotus with his legs crossed in the full lotus position. Vajrasattva's entire figure, including the lotus, is made of brilliant white light, emanating out in all directions. In his right hand, close to his heart, he holds a *vajra*—a symbol of skillful means representing the

Compassion or Method aspect of the path. In his left hand beside his left hip he holds an upturned bell, a symbol of emptiness and the perfection of wisdom, which represents the Profound View or Wisdom aspect of the path. In this way, Vajrasattva embodies the union of compassion and wisdom in one figure. Now imagine Vajrasattva takes the form of a brilliant ball of white light at the crown of your head. Duplicate Vajrasattvas appear at the crown of all the aspects of your present lifetime on either side of you and all your beginningless lifetimes behind you that represent your entire continuum of consciousness. As you recite the mantra, visualize purifying light from Vajrasattva moving through your body from the bottom up. Imagine that the negative karmic seeds or imprints from each of the ten negative actions are being 'burned' and purified by the light and removed from your mental continuum. At the same time, their opposing positive actions are being imprinted onto your purified mental continuum by the white light. This process continues until the white light and positive karmic imprints fill your entire body all the way to the crown of your head.

2. For each of the following ten negative actions and their opposing positive actions below, recite one round of the Vajrasattva mantra. As you do, picture each negative action as a layer of dark energetic matter in your body that is being burned up by the white light as it moves through your entire body from the bottom up. At the same time, imagine each opposing positive action is being imprinted by the white light into your entire body and mental continuum.

Actions of Body

1. I will not kill—I will protect life.
2. I will not steal—I will be generous.
3. I will not be sexually harmful—I will be sexually harmless.

Actions of Speech

4. I will not lie—I will be truthful.
5. I will not use divisive speech—I will use agreeable speech.
6. I will not use harsh words—I will use encouraging words.
7. I will not speak idly—I will speak mindfully.

Actions of Mind

8. I will not covet jealously—I will delight in others' good fortune
9. I will not intend harm—I will always intend benefit.
10. I will not hold wrong views of inherent existence—I will hold correct views of emptiness.

When the ten rounds of the mantra are completed, Vajrasattva and all the Vajrasattva duplicates return to the heart of Shakyamuni Buddha in the Merit Field.

3. *Resolve*: The fourth opponent power is the power of resolve. We resolve to not commit the ten negative actions in the future.

The last four limbs

1. Then we move to the next line of the Seven Limb Prayer:

Line 4: *And rejoice in the merits of all holy and ordinary beings*

2. The fourth of the seven limbs is rejoicing. We rejoice over our own virtue and we rejoice over the virtue of others. This is a Bodhisattva's practice, and if it is done well, there is no better way to build up our accumulations of positive potential and root virtues.

Line 5: Please remain until samsara ends

3. In the next limb we petition all of the beings in the merit field to stay until cyclic existence ends. Imagine your entire being makes this earnest request for the benefit and joy of all beings, and that the beings in the merit field consent to stay until cyclic existence is no more. Requesting your Gurus to live long and remain with you in this way purifies the negativities of disturbing their minds.

Line 6: And turn the wheel of Dharma for sentient beings

4. The next line in the seven limb prayer is requesting the wheel of Dharma to be turned. We are asking our Gurus and all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas to continue to teach and transmit the Dharma until all sentient beings have attained complete enlightenment.

Line 7: I dedicate the merit created by myself and others to the great enlightenment

5. In the last line of the Seven Limb Prayer we dedicate whatever virtues have taken root in us through these practices so they will not run out.

Offer the World Mandala

1. We now make an offering of a World Mandala to the Guru-Buddha and all the beings in the merit field. Imagine a universe in which all consciousnesses and appearances are completely purified and functioning in a perfectly balanced system of wholesome interdependence. Visualize this in the form of a beautiful circular mandala that is placed before the Buddha in the merit field. Imagine you and your entire beginningless existence chant the following mantra as you offer the mandala to all the beings in the merit field:

*Sa zhi pö ki juk shing me tok tram
Ri rab ling zhi nyi de gyen pa di
Sang gye zhing du mig te ül war gi
Dro kün nam dak shing la chö par shok*

The World Mandala melts into light and dissolves into the heart of the Guru-Buddha as you say:

Idam guru ratna mandalakam niryatayami

The beings representing your countless past lifetimes, along with the aspects of your present lifetime dissolve back into you. All the highly realized beings, Gurus and Spiritual Teachers, Bodhisattvas, Deities and Dharma Protectors in the merit field melt into light and dissolve into the heart of Buddha Shakyamuni. As you once again stand in the sparkling green meadow make

the following supplication to Buddha Shakyamuni in the sky before you, who is the embodiment of your root guru:

*I take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.
Please bless my mindstream. May all wrong thoughts which
hinder progress on the path to enlightenment cease
And not generate further in the mindstreams of myself and others.
May we easily develop in our mindstreams every sort of
Right thought that helps us progress on the path.
Please bless us so all internal and external hindrances to
Realizations on the path are completely pacified.*

*Magnificent, precious root Guru,
Please stay in the lotus of my heart.
Care for me with great compassion,
And bestow the means for realizations
Of body, speech, and mind.*

Light comes from Buddha Shakyamuni, purifying you so that your body becomes like clear light. You feel that all external and internal obstacles in this life and your past lives are pacified. The Buddha becomes smaller and smaller while coming to the crown of your head and, facing in the same direction as you, enters into you at your crown. The Buddha, who is one with your root guru, descends to your heart where there is an open lotus of light, and sits upon it. The lotus closes and holds the Guru-Buddha very securely within its light. You hold and keep within you always these purifying practices of the Buddha in the form of your Spiritual Guru seated within the lotus at your heart.

Once again, briefly contemplate the meaning of emptiness: there is nothing in existence with an independent nature; everything continually, moment to moment, arises dependently and is empty of being independent in any way.

Compiled and edited by Tenzin Dhondup Sherab/Christopher Moroney

*Links to mantras and Buddha-figures used in this series:

[Mantra Meanings](#)

[Chenrezig mantra](#)

[Manjushri mantra](#)

[Vajradhara-figure](#)

[Full Refuge Visualization](#)

[Precious Garland text translated by Jeffrey Hopkins](#)

[Shakyamuni Buddha mantra](#)

[Chenrezig-figure](#)

[Manjushri-figure](#)

[Vajrasattva mantra](#)

[Manjushri Heart Lotus](#)

[Shakyamuni Buddha-figure](#)

[His Holiness the Dalai Lama](#)

[Manjushri prayer & mantra](#)

[Vajrasattva-figure](#)