

Vajrasattva Talk 1
2006 Treasury of Knowledge Retreat
The Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche
Tyler Dewar, translator

So today we will start a little discussion on Vajrasattva practice, from Jamgon Kontrul the Great.

The title of the text is The Meditation and Recitation of the Glorious Vajrasattva that Encompasses the Four Classes of Tantra. Like Tara, having the quality of protecting beings from all aspects of fear, Vajrasattva's main quality or aspiration is to purify the negativities and obscurations of beings. It is necessary for us to purify the negativities and obstacles, or obscurations, because they prevent us from experiencing and realizing the profound nature, profound reality. And they prevent us from manifesting true compassion, loving kindness, and wisdom to benefit all beings. That's the blockage here.

The misdeeds or negative actions, obscurations and habitual tendencies need to be purified because if we don't purify them it will be impossible for us to have any of the positive qualities of the path or any of the positive qualities of the result.

Of course our goal is to realize the true nature of mind and greatly help sentient beings. But in order to do that we need to first purify these misdeeds and negative actions and the obscurations.

This meditation on Vajrasattva, therefore, has two main goals. One is the temporary goal of purifying our negativities and obscurations. And second is the ultimate goal, which arises out of the temporary one, which is realizing the ultimate nature of reality, the true nature of mind.

Usually we see these two goals as two completely different endeavors. We might be practicing something that focuses on purifying negativities. And we

might think to ourselves, “I don’t want to do this, I want to move onto something more profound. I want to realize the true nature, or realize selflessness, or attain enlightenment, or something like that.” But really, these two goals mutually assist each other: if we purify our obscurations then we can realize the true nature of reality. And as we deepen our understanding of the true nature of reality, our obscurations become purified as well.

So, if we can practice well the instructions of Mahamudra, Dzogchen and the Middle Way, then the result of that practice will be that our negativities and obscurations will become purified.

However, most ordinary beings find that they cannot immediately connect with the most profound meditations of Mahamudra, Dzogchen and the Middle Way. They cannot rest in the true nature of mind in the way they are advised in Mahamudra, Dzogchen and so forth, right away, when they first begin on the path. And this is because their negativities and obscurations are too numerous to connect with the reality of Mahamudra and Dzogchen and to connect with the meditations of Mahamudra and Dzogchen. So therefore it is often emphasized that we should focus on purifying negative deeds and obscurations at the beginning of our path. And if we focus on that in the beginning, then we will be able to practice Mahamudra and Dzogchen later on. The most profound method, it is taught, for clearing away our negativities and obscurations is the meditation of Vajrasattva. So it becomes a very important practice to do at the early stages on the path.

It is easy to conceptually understand what Mahamudra is saying, what Dzogchen is teaching, what the Middle Way is showing us: the notion of emptiness. Conceptually I am not saying that we are so stupid to understand, right? It is easy to understand conceptually. But in terms of really resting in that nature, or truly experiencing that Buddha-mind, that is a whole different story. Conceptually we get it. But experientially, in the true reality it is a different matter all together.

So for our experience to be genuine, and uninterrupted, free from obstacles, we need to purify our misdeeds and obscurations.

We encounter the phrase, “misdeeds and obscurations” a lot in Buddhist teachings. Or “negative actions and obscurations,” “evil deeds and obscurations,” however it is translated. We are always encountering this pair.

“Misdeeds” are actions that are not skillful. A misdeed is an action that is not guided by right view or skillful means. And due to being not guided by correct view or skillful means, these actions naturally produce suffering. So these again are called, “misdeeds” or “negative actions.”

So this is the understanding we want to stick to for the meaning of misdeeds or negative actions. It is perhaps why we don’t use the word “sin” to refer to these types of actions because we are not referring to transgressing the wishes of a divine being. But rather we are referring to what was just explained.

Then “obscurations” refers to the habitual tendencies of mind. We have all kinds of subtle and course habits in our mind. And by perpetuating these subtle and course habits we develop impurities in our mind, or stains in our mind, so to speak: phenomena that, obscure the seeing of the true nature of our mind. Obscuration, therefore, basically means fixation, reification, thinking of things as being real. It is like having a pair of glasses: if you don’t wipe the glasses frequently, then all kinds of small and large objects get stuck to the glasses. Depends where you are walking. And you won’t be able to see very well.

A few years ago, when we were painting Nalanda West, Robert was doing airbrush painting on a high ceiling. So I was there helping, I went there to work. And he was painting and I was doing something like cleaning and slowly, slowly it is getting more and more misty, I could see less and less. I am wondering why the room is getting darker, the lights were on the same way. Actually, these paints were spraying on my glasses.

Some obscurations are like that, they very densely obscure our perceptions, but it is hard to realize sometimes, difficult to realize them. Sticky. Some forms of reification are also sticky: no matter how hard you try and shake them off, they don’t let go. So Vajrasattva meditation is a method for shaking off our reification, our clinging to things as real.

So when the clear and shiny mirror of mind gets stains on it, we need to wipe those stains away. Milarepa sings about “bright appearance, bright emptiness and wisdom bright.” These are the brightnesses of the mirror of mind. So when the mirror of mind that has these three brightnesses gets stains on it, we need to wipe those stains away.

No matter how small or great negative actions we perform, no matter how subtle or coarse an obscuration we have, there is nothing that cannot be purified by confession.

If you have a good method of confession or purification, there is no negativity that cannot be purified. There is a saying in Tibetan that says there are no good qualities of negative actions except for one: the one good quality of negative actions is that they can be purified. That’s a Tibetan Buddhist saying. So this is perhaps dissimilar to some other spiritual traditions.

Even the Buddha taught that all negative actions can be purified. And examples of this are available in the sutras. There was a character named Angulamala who was perhaps history’s first serial killer. And, to this day, he is the record holder for serial killers because he killed 999 people. He had a goal of killing 1000 people, but he made it to 999. He kept a garland of index fingers from each of his victims. So he obviously had a lot of negative karma to work with. But, through studying with the Buddha and following the Buddha’s instructions, he actually purified all of his negative actions. So his story is an illustration. And, in fact, not only did he purify those negative actions, it is said, in that very same body he attained the state of Arhathood, he attained liberation from samsara. So, if a person like that can attain liberation from samsara, why couldn’t people like us? Forget about killing 999 people, we haven’t even killed one person! I hope not. I can’t tell everyone’s story. Even if you have, don’t tell me. I am bound by law to tell the authorities. Don’t tell me, tell God. Yeah, he’ll keep your secret.

Milarepa also used black magic to kill some of his family member. And it is said that he killed over 30 people. But he also used profound methods to purify his negative actions and obscurations. And he also, in that very same

body, attained enlightenment. So these are very encouraging stories for us, right? If we can be a little more diligent, if we can apply a little more methods, skillful means, wisdom, we have a very, very good chance of attaining realization of the nature of mind, which will liberate us from samsara and samsaric sufferings, existence. So, therefore, the Vajrasattva practice is good purification practice.

Vajrasattva's story begins in a manner similar to that of Tara. He began his career as Vajrasattva, so to speak, by giving rise to bodhicitta. And he made a very strong aspiration. And the aspiration he made was that he wanted people who even heard his name, by hearing his name to attain the ability to purify even the most severe negative actions.

And when his aspiration came to full fruition, there became available this meditation and recitation of glorious Vajrasattva. Vajrasattva is praised as being the embodiment of all the enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities and activity of all the buddhas. And Vajrasattva embodies all of the enlightened qualities of all the buddha families. And for that reason, Vajrasattva is known as "Lord of the Ocean of Mandalas."

So Vajrasattva has a hundred syllable mantra. And this hundred syllable mantra represents the fact that Vajrasattva is the being that pervades all of the enlightened mandalas. In a concise presentation, the mandalas number one hundred. And so there are one hundred deities, peaceful and wrathful deities, who are the main figures of each of these mandalas. And the syllables of the hundred syllable mantra represent the seed syllables of each of these peaceful and wrathful deities. And therefore Vajrasattva, the one associated with this hundred syllable mantra, is the heart essence, or the quintessence, of all of these mandalas.

So that was an explanation of Vajrasattva from the ultimate perspective. From the relative perspective, it is said Vajrasattva is an emanation of Rahula, the physical son of Buddha Shakyamuni. It is said that when the physical son of Buddha Shakyamuni, Rahula, realized the true nature of reality and became a buddha, the form in which he manifested as a buddha is

Vajrasattva. Explanations like this of the origins of Vajrasattva can be found in the writing of the great Kagyu master, the omniscient Pema Karpo.

So, for the kriyayoga practice, or kriya tantra, as the text states at the beginning, the cause of all beings wondering in samsara is ego clinging and the cause of sentient beings suffering are misdeeds and obscurations. And we begin therefore by giving rise to a strong motivation that we are going to purify these things, we are going to exert ourselves. So we give rise to the motivation that we will purify these negativities by using the four powers, which are the method for purification in kriyayoga. For the meditation, one regards oneself to be in one's ordinary form. One is surrounded to one's left and right by all sentient beings. By ordinary form we mean just the way you look now, without changing that at all. In some traditions you visualize all male sentient beings, such as one's father. So they are like "right wing." And all female beings, such as one's mother, on the left side, "left wing." But you can also imagine that all sentient beings are everywhere, mixed, no gender distinction as to where they are located.

In order to make the visualization clear you can start off by just thinking of yourself, and then you can add more people into the mix, people that you know first. People for example who you know are having difficulties at the present moment. You can think of people like your parents, relatives or close friends. And then, after that, you can imagine all sentient beings are there with you. You do this, not because your parent or friends are better than other sentient beings, but because you want to have a clear visualization. And starting in this way will help you have a clear visualization. We have spent so much time with our parents, partners, enough time that we cannot forget. You can clearly imagine them very easily. Anyone can remember their mother quiet easily. I hope. I can think about my mother, yeah. And so, like that, whatever is easiest to come to your mind, first focus on that. Sometimes we see a very strong image in a newspaper, on the TV, we see tremendous suffering on the street, for example. So, when that image becomes very clear in your mind, first visualize that, and then all people.

Next one visualizes Vajrasattva above one's head. One also visualizes a Vajrasattva above the head of each sentient being. So we do this meditation

of Vajrasattva with the intention that we are going to purify the negative deeds and obscurations of all sentient beings as well. The Vajrasattva that we visualize for this stage of practice is the single Vajrasattva, with no consort. Vajrasattva's body is white in color, like the light of an autumn moon. Completely pure and stainless, bright white color. And this color symbolizes the completely pure nature of mind. Sometimes, an example that is given to illustrate the brightness and color of Vajrasattva is 100,000 suns shining on a snow mountain. If there is any snow left! Some of these Tibetan examples are a little bit weird. If that snow mountain can survive a 100,000 suns!

Vajrasattva has one face, which symbolizes the fact that in the true nature of reality all phenomena are of the single nature of emptiness. The true nature of all phenomena is one's own mind, which is emptiness. And in order to realize this singular true nature of reality, this is singular spelled with "s," of the two truths, Vajrasattva has two arms, which symbolize the two truths, the relative truth and the ultimate truth. In order to realize these two truths we need to develop wisdom and compassion, or wisdom and skillful means. Therefore Vajrasattva holds a bell and vajra: the bell symbolizing wisdom, and the vajra symbolizing skillful means. Vajrasattva's right hand holds a vajra at the level of his heart, and rests a bell on his hip.

Vajrasattva is adorned by an array of peaceful garments and ornaments. He has earrings, ankle bracelets, wrist bracelets, necklaces and so forth. No tongue piercing. Sometimes there is an enumeration of nine peaceful ornaments. And there is a lot of teaching about what these ornaments symbolize, but basically they are a symbol of enjoying the sense pleasures without abandoning them. Enjoying the sense pleasures without abandoning them, and enjoying them as an ornament of wisdom. So even while Vajrasattva enjoys the sense pleasures, he realizes the true nature of reality. So this is also a symbol that we also need to practice in this way.

Vajrasattva's feet are in the same posture as Tara, as green Tara, what is called the bodhisattva posture, with the right leg extended and the left leg drawn in. So, the statue on the shrine and most depictions of the single Vajrasattva in thankas that we see are a little bit different from this explanation: they don't match it in terms of the posture of the feet. So, most of the time you see

single Vajrasattva in a picture that Vajrasattva is seated in vajra posture, with both legs crossed. But, actually, when we visualize Vajrasattva in single form, the right leg is extended and the left leg is drawn in. And that is called the bodhisattva posture. And the symbolization is also the same as Arya Tara's posture of the feet: the right leg is extended as a symbol of performing the benefit of sentient beings, and the left leg is drawn in to symbolize Vajrasattva never moves from the state of samadhi. Right leg is extended, ready to go.

So we visualize all of these attributes above the head of each and every single sentient being. It might take a little time. But you can use like Photoshop, clone it. Just first visualize one very clearly above your head and then clone it. Like in Photoshop, right? Like control-c, and then control-v, and then just control-v, -v, -v, -v, -v on every head of sentient beings. Really, it is like that. First you visualize one very clearly above your head, and then the rest you multiply. Cloning Vajrasattva.

So the four powers are the four things we need for a fruitful purification practice. And the first of these powers is the power of support, which is Vajrasattva himself. So Vajrasattva is the support or the basis of our whole purification process. Since Vajrasattva himself is the true nature of mind, the real support, the real power of support for our confession or purification practice is our own true nature of mind. Which is called "buddha nature" sometimes, it is also called emptiness, selflessness, or prajnaparamita, the perfection of supreme knowledge, or the three kayas, its called a whole variety of things. However, as we are now, we don't strongly experience the true nature of mind. We don't have strong certainty about the true nature of mind. We don't perceive it to be something we even have sometimes. Therefore we visualize Vajrasattva as a support that represent this true nature of mind. This is one way we can practice the power of the support, but any number of other figures can be the support for our confession. The support in these four powers, any other buddha or bodhisattva can be our support in the same way Vajrasattva is. And our spiritual teachers can also be the support in this case.

The reason why they can be the support in this context is because they also are symbols of the true nature of mind. The most important point to

understand here is that the power of the support is a symbol of the true nature of our mind. The figure doesn't become a support for our purification because they exist externally and because we tell them what we did wrong. Rather, it is the case that they are merely a symbol of our own true nature of mind and it is for that reason they can be considered a support for purification. And the reason why our own true nature can be considered a support for purification is because the true nature is primordially free from any stain. Appearances of misdeed, obscurations and ethical downfalls are simply appearances from the perspective of confusion, from the relative perspective of the confused mind.

So, by relying on our true nature of mind, by connecting with our true nature of mind, we can realize that misdeeds, obscurations and ethical downfalls have never existed from the beginning and that's why the true nature of mind is the power of support. It becomes a basis for realizing that these obscurations have never existed.

The way that we bring this support into the practice is by going for refuge and engendering bodhicitta in the presence of this support. The refuge is expressed in the first two lines of the liturgy:

With one pointed respect, I along with all others take refuge in guru Vajrasattva, the embodiment of the three jewels.

And so, as we discussed before, there are two forms of refuge: the outer refuge, the symbolic refuge on the relative level; and the inner refuge, which is the ultimate form of refuge, corresponding to the true nature of reality. So it says that we take refuge with one pointed respect. "One pointed" means to be free from doubt. And respect is connected to devotion. So filled with devotion and free from doubt we take refuge in Vajrasattva. And, if we recall the different forms of refuge, the inner and outer refuge, we take refuge in, ultimately, our own true nature of mind, which is the ultimate form of Vajrasattva. And then in a relative sense, we take refuge in this external figure, who is Vajrasattva, the deity that we visualize before us, who is guru Vajrasattva.

The next two lines express how to engender bodhicitta:

In order to establish all beings in the state of the lord of all families I will enter the profound path

So, the lord of all families is Vajrasattva, as previously explained: Vajrasattva is embodiment of all enlightened families, all families of enlightenment, or buddha families. And we give rise to bodhicitta by thinking that we will establish all sentient beings in this state of Vajrasattva. In the state that is inseparable from Vajrasattva, which is supreme enlightenment. So we will establish all beings in this state, or in other words, we will help all sentient beings to attain that state. And in order to do that we will enter the profound path, we will engage in the profound practice of the meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva. So all of this falls into the first category, which is the power of the support.

Bodhicitta is one of the most important aspects of the power of the support because it is said that if you can genuinely give rise to bodhicitta, that bodhicitta itself will purify all obscurations and negative actions. Shantideva writes about bodhicitta in his text the Bodhicaryavatara and it's ability to purify negative actions. He says, "bodhicitta can quickly purify even the most heinous of negative actions. Just like a brave warrior can quickly guide you through the most dangerous of ravines, therefore, why would heedful people not rely on it?" if you are guided by a brave and experienced warrior, that warrior can quickly can take you through even the most dangerous mountain passes, the most dangerous ravines, something that by yourself you wouldn't be able to get through at all. And in the same way, even with regard to the most heinous of negative actions, the most sever of negative actions, if you give rise to genuine bodhicitta, then that negative action will be quickly purified. So therefore, why wouldn't those who possess heedfulness not rely on bodhicitta? Why would they not try and cultivate bodhicitta? They should absolutely rely on bodhicitta. And so, if you have bodhicitta you can quickly pass through the dangerous ravine: that is samsara. The most dangerous ravine of samsara we can quickly pass through with the support of bodhicitta, the great warrior of bodhicitta. And therefore bodhicitta is extremely

important. The essence of all Dharmas is bodhicitta. And the most important power of support is bodhicitta as well.

In those in whom the precious bodhicitta has not yet arisen, may it arise. In those in whom it has already arisen, may it not deteriorate, but flourish further and further.

If we are able to engender genuine compassion, we will quite easily give rise to bodhicitta. And so therefore in order to ensure our bodhicitta is genuine, we must also train in compassion. Therefore I aspire genuine compassion for sentient beings arise in you: if you engender genuine compassion to one sentient being that is equal to engendering compassion for all sentient beings. Conversely, you might try to cultivate genuine compassion for all sentient beings, with all sentient beings as your reference point, but if you can't have genuine compassion towards one sentient being, the compassion that you engender for all sentient beings wasn't so genuine. So therefore, we should first try to give rise to genuine, uncontrived compassion for one sentient being who is in a state of suffering. Or we can try to give rise to such compassion for someone who is close to us, someone we are connected to who is having a hard time. Alternatively, we can try and cultivate compassion for someone who is giving us a hard time.

Vajrasattva Talk 2
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Good afternoon. Continuing our discussion on the Vajrasattva practice from Jamgon Kontrul the great. Yesterday we discussed the power of support. And that power of support, in this particular practice, is the Vajrasattva, who's symbolic form is the radiant light of one's true nature of mind, the primordial, alpha pure *rigpa*, alpha pure awareness. The essence of mind is alpha pure awareness, or primordially pure awareness. And this essence of mind has a glow, which is spontaneously present wisdom. The expression of this spontaneously present wisdom is the forms of the various deities. Or you could say that this spontaneously present wisdom expresses itself in the form of various deity mandalas. Which is, in this case, Vajrasattva. But all of these various forms of deities have a single basis for their appearance. That single basis for their appearance, or the single ground for their appearance, is the alpha pure essence of mind, alpha pure awareness. In brief, the various appearances of enlighten forms, of Buddha, are simply the glow, the radiance of the true nature of mind's wisdom. They are like a reflection in a mirror, and therefore the appearances of the deities and so forth are nothing external to the true nature of mind. Nevertheless, we cannot connect at present to this primordial purity that is our own true nature. We cannot see this true nature of mind in its primordial purity. And for that reason we focus on, or we relate to an external appearance of a deity as a symbol of that primordial purity so that we may deepen our relationship to that purity. That's why when we visualize Vajrasattva, while the visualization itself may seem external, we don't consider Vajrasattva to be a solid, physical form. We view Vajrasattva to be appearing yet empty, empty yet appearing, like a hologram.

I don't remember where, but one museum had a very nice hologram picture of Manjusri, it was amazing. They had other deities, but the Manjusri was very nice, beautiful. Even though your hand couldn't grasp the image of

Manjusri, you could see everything about Manjusri very clearly, in 3-d and everything. So like, in the Imax, 3-d, then pop, right in front of you, like they are going to hit you. But it is just a light image. So this is how we visualize Vajrasattva, an image of light.

And so, to this point, we have visualized the support, which is Vajrasattva. And we go for refuge and engender bodhicitta in the presence of Vajrasattva. The next stage is the power of applying the antidote, which refers to the main practice, which is the meditation and recitation of Vajrasattva. So, as we discussed yesterday, our body remains in its ordinary form, for this visualization, and we imagine above our head is a lotus. In the space above our head, so the lotus isn't directly touching our head, or sitting upon our head. But rather it is floating: it is suspended in the space above our head. And the lotus being suspended in the middle of space symbolizes emptiness. That space itself is open, spacious, and relaxed, which is symbolizing the true nature of mind: open, spacious and relaxed emptiness. So that is the space, which is really the first component. And in that space there is a lotus, above our head, and on top of that lotus is a moon disc. The lotus, by the way, can be visualized to have many petals. It is traditionally said that it is a thousand petaled lotus. So it's a very big lotus. And, in this lotus, there is a moon disc seat, so it is horizontal. And in the center of this is the white syllable HUM. This syllable HUM is the embodiment of all of the Buddha's wisdom, and it is also the embodiment of our very own true nature of mind. This HUM is the essence of our awareness, at the same time it is the embodiment of all of the Buddha's wisdom.

We place our attention one pointedly on this HUM, keeping these contemplations in mind that it is the essence of our own mind and is the embodiment of all the Buddha's wisdom at the same time. And, moreover, the HUM is glittering and flickering like the light of a candle flame. So it is flickering like a fairly stable candle flame, it is not flickering rapidly. And the next thing that happens, after that visualization and focus on the HUM becomes stable, the HUM, in an instant, becomes Vajrasattva. So the visualization or the appearance of Vajrasattva, as explained yesterday, has one face, and two arms, and so forth. This is above the crown of our head. After we stabilize this visualization of Vajrasattva, we then contemplate that

Vajrasattva is gazing upon ourselves and all sentient beings with a heart of great loving compassion. We contemplate that Vajrasattva is looking upon all sentient beings, but especially ourselves at this stage. With this heart full of loving kindness towards us and towards all sentient beings Vajrasattva smiles and radiates white light rays in all ten directions that strike all sentient beings. And in the heart center of Vajrasattva, again, is a lotus and moon disc, on top of which sits the syllable HUM: a white HUM, radiant and bright. And this white HUM is encircled around the edges of the moon disc by the hundred syllable mantra. And the visualization for that is the same as in ngondro. So the hundred syllables are arranged counter-clockwise. They are facing outwards and are encircling the HUM counterclockwise so that when they rotate, they rotate clockwise, and they are legible as they rotate. And then following this, once we have this visualization completed, we begin reciting the hundred syllable mantra. So, up to this point, covers the second power, the power of applying the antidote.

So there is a line here that says:

Samaya and jnana become, as they have always been, inseparable within spontaneous presence.

This refers to the samayasattva and the jnanasattva. The samayasattva is the deity that we visualize: it is the mentally created image of Vajrasattva. And the jnanasattva is the actual embodiment of all the Buddha's wisdom. And so therefore the jnanasattva is the ultimate Vajrasattva. So the samayasattva and the jnanasattva become inseparable. This stage of the practice, when we visualize Vajrasattva in this way, is called the stage of applying the antidote because we are applying the antidote for negative actions. We are applying the antidote that will purify negative actions. And the way that we purify negative actions here is by visualizing the relative, or symbolic Vajrasattva as a way to connect with the ultimate Vajrasattva, which is the true nature of mind. So we visualize this relative form of the Buddha Vajrasattva as a way to connect with the ultimate Vajrasattva: the true nature of mind. And when we practice in this way, the true nature of mind, which is primordially pure awareness, or alpha-pure awareness, this meditation becomes the supreme method, or the supreme antidote, for purifying negative actions. So that is

why this section of the liturgy falls under the category of “applying the antidote.”

The Buddha stated in many sutras and tantras that the supreme method for purifying negative actions, obscurations, and habitual tendencies is to gain familiarity with, or, in other words, meditate on, the true nature of reality: emptiness. The deity yogas of the Vajrayana, which involve the creation stage of deity visualization, are profound skillful means that allows us to meditate on this true nature of reality.

The third power is the power of regret, or remorse. At this stage we supplicate the guru Vajrasattva on the top of our head with great faith and devotion. So as the liturgy says, we ask the guru Vajrasattva to consider us, and we supplicate Vajrasattva to bless ourselves and others, all sentient beings, limitless as space.

That all misdeeds, obscurations, wrongdoings, habitual tendencies and downfalls, without exception, that we have accumulated from beginningless time until now, be swiftly cleansed and purified.

In terms of the negative actions we have committed, in all of our existence, there are some that we remember committing and some that we do not remember committing. Maybe the ones we don't remember are more numerous than the ones we do remember. And then in terms of obscurations, we are continually fortifying our obscurations of clinging to true existence and clinging to duality. So they are obscurations we are cultivating all the time, over and over again. So, at this time at the power of regret, we should bring these negative actions and obscurations clearly to mind. So this is confession time, Sunday morning. We can have a Vajrasattva booth! On the other side we will just have a Vajrasattva statue. And so, at this point, we have to reflect on a few major negative actions that we have committed in the past, with ignorance. We can remember, or try to remember, at least a couple. And then also try to remember how we are fixating on duality. How we are intensifying duality, the obscuration of mind, of wisdom, all the time. Remember these faults. And we need some kind of regret here. This regret or remorse, from the Buddhist point of view, is connected with the notion of

wisdom. Regret or remorse here is seeing the causes being ignorant, how we knowingly, or unknowingly, with great ignorance, we keep falling back into the same pattern of creating negative karma. We keep back falling back into fortifying our duality, our clinging and fixation. And so this regret, from the Buddhist sense, must come from yourself. You must see that this is not right. We must see that this has been painful for us, and for others, towards who we have committed these negative actions. This kind of confession or purification process here is based on wisdom. We must come to this understanding ourselves. We do not have to do this just because someone says we need to purify negative actions, every Sunday. That doesn't work.

So when we confess our negative actions and ethical mistakes, we do so by understanding our negative actions and mistakes. And that understanding is wisdom, it is prajna, because we are seeing a fault as a fault. You don't need any further encouragement to confess something. You really don't need any further action of confession once you give rise to that wisdom of seeing a fault as a fault because that, in itself, will naturally lead to purification. In the monastic ritual of sojong, the bi-weekly restoration and purification ritual for monastics, there is section of liturgy where the preceptor says to the monks or nuns, "have you seen your faults as faults?" The monks and nuns respond by saying, "yes, I have so seen." Supposedly. You know, sometimes it just becomes ritual, and we just go there and say, "yes sir." We just want to get over that, and then go home and do it again. But the best way to do this is not to do it like that, but rather recognize your faults as faults, or recognize mistakes as mistakes, from the depths of your being, from the depths of your hearts. And we do that by having this wisdom that knows faults as faults.

This is also a very good way of working with your mind on the path: it is really powerful. Like, if we are hurting our partner, for example, our friends, our family, or our colleagues at work, sometimes we don't even see this, that we are hurting them. We just keep doing it, and doing it, and doing it. We think we are doing the right thing! But at some point if we can gain this wisdom that actually we are hurting ourselves, in the process of hurting other. If we can see this, this becomes a tremendous chance to transform that pattern, that habit. Not only is it a ritual for confessing you do every day, but it is a process of transformation, of transforming your mind. If we see something we did before as a fault, if we see a mistake we made before as a mistake, we won't

really feel like doing that again. We won't really want to do it again. If we know and see it was a mistake. The desire to do it again comes from not seeing it as a mistake, not fully seeing it as a mistake or as a problem.

Now, we are not talking about falling into doing it again. When we fall into the habit of doing it again, it is not really a desire to do it that we've been harboring for a while. We have been harboring the desire to want to stay away from that action, but sometimes we slip, and do the action again. Not really because we want to, but because we kind of slip into the force of our habit. So that is a different situation. But if we really see something negative as something negative, then this insight very much helps us. It becomes very powerful for completely relinquishing this pattern.

So, therefore, at this stage of the power of regret, we regard our past wrongdoings as wrongdoings and supplicate Vajrasattva. And, in reality, we are supplicating our own true nature of mind. We are supplicating so that our own enlightened wisdom and knowledge and compassion and ability will increase to become so strong they overcome all negative actions and tendencies.

The liturgy continues:

Through supplicating in that way from the life force syllable and mantra garland descends a stream of amrita, filling his body and leaving through his toe.

So the life force syllable is the HUM syllable at the heart center. And the mantra garland is the hundred syllable mantra that encircles the HUM. There is a little more to the visualization than is explained here in the liturgy. The next thing that we visualize is that, due to our supplication from the above verse, the hundred syllable mantra garland begins to rotate clockwise. And light rays radiate from the HUM syllable at Vajrasattva's heart center. These light rays go to the pure realms of the buddhas of the ten directions. The buddhas and bodhisattvas in these pure realms are pleased and delighted by these light rays, and the light rays collect all of their blessings. These blessings travel back through the medium of the light rays to the heart center

of Vajrasattva and dissolve back into the HUM syllable. So these blessings from the light rays dissolve back into the HUM syllable, they also dissolve back into the mantra garland and into the moon disc. Then the stream of amrita begins to flow. The amrita descends from the HUM syllable and from the mantra garland and from the moon disc. The amrita or nectar that descends from the HUM syllable contains the blessings of enlightened mind. The amrita that descends from the hundred syllable mantra garland contains the blessings of enlightened speech. And the amrita that descends from the moon disc contains the blessings of enlightened body.

So, these streams of amrita fill the body of Vajrasattva. And then, after the body of Vajrasattva is filled, the amrita begins to flow out from Vajrasattva's big toe. This drops down to the crown of our head, and begins to enter our body through an aperture at the crown of our head. So, at this time, we try to connect with vivid freshness. Just like sometime when we are feeling sleepy or torpid we splash our face with cool water that makes us feel fresh and awake. In a similar way, when this amrita strikes the top of our head, we become very fresh, awake and lucid. And then, gradually, we imagine that the amrita fills our entire body and also washes the outside of our body too. So the amrita completely cleanses our body on the inside and the outside. And through this all of our negative actions and obscurations and habitual tendencies are completely washed away and cleansed.

And we visualized that the negativities that are purified in this process leave our body in the form of dirty water, for example. You can imagine water that is so dirty it is black. You can imagine that this water is leaving your body, this dirt is leaving your body, and that represents the negative actions. You can also imagine that illnesses and diseases are all leaving your body, are being cleansed from your body. And they depart in the form of blood, and puss and substances like that. So you don't need one place in your body for these things to come out. You can contemplate that they are being washed out, they are coming out of all your pores, and they are being washed away by the nectar as they exit from the pores.

In some instructional treatises the instruction given for this stage is that you visualize the negativities coming out in the form of rainbow light. They don't

instruct you to visualize dirty water or puss or anything like that. Rather you visualize these things coming out like rainbow light. And mainly, they say, you concentrate on the blue and red. This is a good visualization because the negative actions and obscurations as well are appearing yet empty, empty yet appearing themselves, like a rainbow. So this rainbow becomes a reminder of this fact. And if we realize that quality of our misdeeds and obscurations, that realization will purify our misdeeds and obscurations.

So at the end of this purification process of receiving the nectar from Vajrasattva, we contemplate that our body becomes of a completely pure nature on the inside and out. So pure that we no longer need fleshy organs in our body, we become completely transparent like a crystal vase, or a water body. So this contemplation of the crystal body or the water body is illustrating the absence of barrier between inside and outside. So our body at this time becomes free of distinctions of inside and outside, it is free of solid, physical existence. It is clear yet empty, empty yet clear. And then, from within this state of clarity, we continue reciting the hundred syllable mantra.

The little creatures, the little furry things, represent what are called dons, or evil spirits. It is said that the chief of all evil spirits is self-fixation. There are many other types of evil spirits. There are many other types of evil spirits such as pride and jealousy and so forth, but the king of all evil spirits is self-fixation. So there is really no externally existent evil spirit, aside from our own self-fixation. As Milarepa sang to one of the evil spirits that appeared to him in a confused state, as a confused apparition, he said, “evil spirit, I know one more powerful than you, and his name is self-fixation!” So he was kind of insulting this evil spirits, saying you are nothing compared to the evil spirit named self-fixation, you don’t have any game at all! So, we might think of all kinds of evil spirits existing outside of ourselves but really the biggest evil spirit exists inside of ourselves, which is self-fixation. So don’t point your finger outside, point your finger inward.

The fourth power is called the power of resolve, or the power of turning away from recommitting any wrongdoing, the firm resolve that one will not commit misdeeds in the future, even if it costs one’s life. It is said that in order to

fully purify, or properly purify any negative action we need to resolve not to commit it again. Otherwise the negative action won't be completely purified.

What we are trying to purify is one particular negative action. Let say, for example, harms caused by anger. And it is said, what does it mean by purification: to be free from that action. And it is very clear that how can we be free from that action without resolve? If you want to be free from that action, without really developing this power of resolve then it is a contradictory thought. You want to be free from it, but you still want it. How can you be free from it if you still want it? You can't. That's why the power of resolve is said to be so important. So if you really want to purify any negativity, if you really want to be free from any negative action, then we need this power. The fourth power, which is a clear determination saying, I really, truly don't want to repeat this. I don't want to engage in this action again that caused so much pain to myself, actually, more than the other person. If you really think about it, you bring more pain to yourself than the other person. There is a funny little Tibetan story that is about a teacher beating a student. The student was misbehaving, but the student was very clever. You should be careful about having a Tibetan teacher! You probably don't want a Tibetan teacher. The student was very clever, so when the teacher was beating the student he said, "teacher, you shouldn't beat me, your hand will get sore! You will hurt your hand, I don't care if you beat me from my own side but you are going to end up hurting your hand." So like that, if we harm other people we end up getting harmed. Like if we hit someone, punch someone, how much does that hurt our hand? It hurts a lot! In the same way, all negative actions cause the committer of those actions, if we commit negative actions, they cause ourselves harms and, of course, cause others harm. So we resolve not to commit them again.

So making this resolve is extremely powerful in helping us to relinquish that action completely. Very important! But it is not a guarantee that we won't do that action ever again. It is possible for us to do that action again out of habit. But it becomes much more difficult to do that action again out of an intentionally constructed motivation. So, in terms of getting rid of the motivation, the intentional motivation to do that action, this type of resolve is very beneficial. Legally, also, it is also very good for you: there is no motive!

No, just kidding, I'm not trying to teach how to go around it! But it is really good, powerful, very powerful. When you look at the legal system it is very much like the Vinaya, the Buddha's teaching on Vinaya. Buddha said that for negative karma to be complete, you must have the motivation to commit that crime, that negative action. You must have the right object. Lets say I want to beat someone called Tyler. Not that I want to! But mistakenly, I beat someone up, like Acarya, in the darkness. And then Buddha said, in the end, the action is not complete, not a full negative action. Right object, and then the action, let's say beating that person. And then at last satisfaction, yeah, now I have achieved! And then it is a complete course of action this is then called negative karma. It is very similar to the legal system here: you need motives, and all these things come together and then you are locked up! So we should try as best we can to make a very strong resolve not to commit these negative actions, that we have confessed, again. And if we are able do that, as was said before, it helps us very much not to recommit the action, except for instances of slipping into the action due to habit. But you can see there is a big difference between doing an action out of a constructed motivation and doing an action out of falling into a habit of doing it.

When we slip back into a bad habit we usually try to do many things not to fall into that bad habit. But it seems, in the end, we are powerless and we slip anyway. But we shouldn't consider it to be a huge problem, when that happens, when we slip back into that negative habit. Because we have already been trying to purify that negative action, and so therefore the action that was performed just through slipping back into it is already been largely purified by of the efforts we've been previously engaging in. And what further negativity that was produced by slipping into that action will be easily purify-able because of the work we've already been doing. All the efforts we've put into not falling into that again. We try very hard, but sometimes we slip.

There are many different types of negative actions that we may find ourselves associated with. We may! But we should concentrate, at first, the main negative actions, or one main type of negative action that we find ourselves caught up in frequently. So, we should keep that type negative action in mind when we are making the commitment not to recommit. And then we can gradually touch in on the other types of negative actions.

Through the intensity of devotion his mind stream is invoked. He forgives me with delight and dissolves into me.

So these lines are like the dissolution stage of the practice. So we have been supplicating Vajrasattva with devotion. And through this devotion we invoke the mind stream of Vajrasattva. We invoke the wisdom of our own true nature of mind. We call upon that wisdom of our own true nature of mind and we take delight in the presence of wisdom and compassion inherent in our own true nature of mind. And Vajrasattva is very pleased by this, by our calling upon this wisdom of our true nature of mind. Vajrasattva becomes very pleased. Very happy, so don't forget to call him! And this word, "with delight" means great bliss. Because, when we purify our negative actions and obscurations, or when we rest in the true nature of our mind, the wisdom of great bliss is naturally present. So, he forgives me with delight, from a relative point of view, Vajrasattva says, now all of your negative actions and obscurations have been purified. But from the real Buddhist perspective, the phrase "he forgives me," simply means, "I gain confidence." Because we know that we have fully practiced the four powers therefore we gain confidence and we enjoy the confidence that all of our negative actions and obscurations have been purified. So we have no doubt at this point. So this is what forgiving is referring to here: achieving confidence. We've already discussed how Vajrasattva doesn't exist external to our true nature of mind, so we can bring that understanding to bear on this line that says, "He forgives me with delight."

Next Vajrasattva dissolves into light or melts into light and then dissolves into oneself. If you sit outside in Texas too long, you will dissolve, melt into light. So there are many approaches to the dissolution that are taught in the various instructions. But one approach that we can do is that Vajrasattva dissolves into the lotus, the lotus dissolves into the moon, which dissolves into the mantra garland, which dissolves into the HUM. And then the HUM dissolves into a sphere of light, which dissolves into ourselves. After that sphere of light dissolves into us we contemplate that we have become inseparable with Vajrasattva. We contemplate the enlightened body, speech and mind of Vajrasattva become inseparable with our own body, speech and

mind. And then, after contemplating in that way, we rest in our own true nature of mind. We rest in clarity-emptiness inseparable, awareness-emptiness inseparable. And then finally, after that, we dedicate the merit.

So, this completes the explanation of the meditation that accords with the outer level that is kriya tantra. So this whole practice that we have gone through thus far matches the different stages of practice in the ngondro Vajrasattva meditation. It matches the practice of ngondro Vajrasattva, but it goes into a little more detail. The liturgy goes into a little more detail than the ngondro liturgy.

So, it would be good for us to do this practice as an aspiration for world peace, because we visualize Vajrasattva not only above the crown of our own head, but above the crown of all sentient beings.