

The Four Preliminary Practices



By Grand Master Lu
Translated [1] by Janny Chow

One of the **Four Preliminary Practices of Vajrayana is the Vajrasattva (Diamond-Heart) Practice**. This practice is the most important of the Four Preliminary Practices and is considered to be one of the required courses in Tantric cultivation. The Vajrasattva Hundred Syllable Mantra in this practice has to be recited at least one hundred thousand times.

The Vajrasattva Practice is significant for the following two reasons:

- *It can eradicate all transgressions and negative hindrances from time immemorial.*
- *It can strengthen the resolutions and vows of the Tantric practitioner to become as firm as the vajra (diamond).*

Living Buddha Lian-sheng has said, "The origin of the Vajrasattva is no small matter. Transformed from the union of the Five Dhyani Buddhas, the Vajrasattva is a great, pure, white Light. There is a profound and mysterious meaning in the manifestation of this greatest envoy of Vajrayana. Some practitioners just concentrate on the Vajrasattva Practice, taking the Vajrasattva as their Personal Deity, and are able to attain the Great Heart of the Vajrasattva. The Great Heart of the Vajrasattva is as firm and indestructible as the vajra." Living Buddha Lian-sheng says, "In Mahayana, among the fifty-two levels of the development of a Bodhisattva, the fifty-first level is called Equal Awakening. This Awakening is equivalent to a Buddha, and a Bodhisattva of this level has already surpassed the Tenth Stage [Dharma Cloud Stage, the highest stage of Bodhisattva]. Thus this Bodhisattva can be regarded as a Buddha and his name is Vajrasattva."

Living Buddha Lian-sheng regards Vajrapani as the second Patriarch of Vajrayana, and Vajrapani is actually Vajrasattva. They are just different names for the same Deity.

Many people look down upon the Four Preliminary Practices, considering them to be minor practices. But I know that the Vajrasattva Practice is a main practice. In fact, it is an unexcelled practice.

Quite a few American disciples who have taken refuge in Tibetan tulku have told me that they had been practicing Tantric Buddhism for eight to ten years, and the highest level practice they had reached was the Vajrasattva Practice.

One of my refuge students, Rinpoche Tharchin the Tenth, a Tibetan Tulku of the Nyingma sect, told me that most beginning American students are required to practice the Four Preliminary Practices, among which the Vajrasattva Practice is the highest. Thus American students of the Vajrayana all know how to recite the Vajrasattva Hundred Syllable Mantra.

The True Buddha Vajrasattva Practice is as follows:

- Enter the tantric shrine and perform Great Homage.
- Sit down and recite, with both palms joined:

"Namo the Holy Red Crown Vajra Master Living Buddha Lian-sheng." (Three times)

- Recite the Fourfold Refuge Mantra:

Namo Guru bei. Namu Buddha ye. Namu Dharma ye. Namu Sangha ye. (Three times)

- Recite the Four Immeasurable Vows:

May all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness; this is immeasurable loving kindness.

May all beings be liberated from suffering and the causes of suffering; this is immeasurable compassion

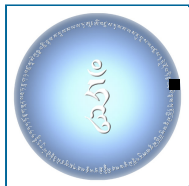
May all beings be free of suffering and always stay happy; this is immeasurable joy.

May all beings be free of grasping and aversion towards others and develop faith in the equality of all who live; this is immeasurable equanimity.

- Recite the Bodhicitta Mantra:

Om, bo-dee-gee-da, be-dza, sa-ma-ya, ah-hum. (Three times)

- Recite the Repentance Verse and Mantra:



All my transgressions committed since time immemorial, which originate in beginningless greed, hatred, and ignorance, And which are manifest through my body, speech, and mind, these I fully confess and repent of them altogether.

"Om, be-dza, sa-ma-ya, soo-deh-ah." (recite at least 108 time. Read as much as possible.)

- At the end of the Repentance Mantra, one can dip one's fingers into some Great Compassion Mantra Water [2] or Kundali Raja Mantra Water and sprinkle the water to the

four quarters of east, south, west, and north. One then also takes a sip of the water to indicate the purification of "East, South, West, North and Center." (The Great Compassion Mantra water or Kundali Raja Mantra water should be prepared ahead of time.)

- Form the Mudra: "The right hand holds a fist, with the thumb over the index finger and the fist facing inward. The left hand holds a fist, with the index finger over the thumb and facing outward." Hold the mudra in front of the chest [3].



- First empty the mind. Visualize from the Empty Space the appearance of Vajrasattva. His body is white, and he is adorned by a Five-Buddha Crown and the bodhisattva ornaments, necklaces, etc. Sitting on a Moon Disc supported by an eight-petalled lotus, the Vajrasattva holds, against his heart a vajra scepter in his right hand (in the Fierce Mudra) and, by his left thigh, a vajra bell in his left hand (also in the Fierce Mudra). At the level of his heart is a recitation wheel containing, around the circumference, the Hundred Syllable Mantra. This wheel revolves and radiates brilliant white light.
- This great white light arcs over and down, pouring through one's crown and flooding one's entire body. Thus one's whole body also exhibits a great white light, and impurities and negative karma are expelled as black smoke through all skin pores. One's body thus becomes crystal clear, radiating light. One enters into a state of joy in meditation.

Recite the Vajrasattva Hundred Syllable Mantra twenty-one times. (It is not necessary to hold the Mudra during recitation.)

"Om, be-dza-sah-do-sa-ma-ya, ma-nu-bah-la-ya, be-dza sah-do deh-nu-bah-de h-cha, zhe-jo-mi-bah-wa, soo-do-ka-yu-mi-bah-wa, soo-poo-ka-yu-mi-bah-wa, an-nu-la-do-mi-bah-wa, sa-er-wa, sid-di, mi-bu-la-ya-cha, sa-er-wa, ka-er-ma, soo-cha-mi, ji-ta-moo, see-li-yam, gu-ru-hum, ha ha ha ha hoh, bah-ga-wan, sa-er-wa, da-ta-ga-ta, be-dza-ma-mee-mun-cha, be-ji-ba-wa, ma-ha-sa-ma-ya, sah-do-ah, hum-pei."

After reciting the Vajrasattva Hundred Syllable Mantra twenty-one times, one can visualize Vajrasattva transform into a point of white light which enters one's body through the crown of one's head and rests on the heart. The body, speech, and mind of Vajrasattva become the body, speech, and mind of the practitioner. The two are completely merged and united into one. The practitioner is transmuted into Vajrasattva.

- In this moment of utmost importance, if one can, indeed, let one's body and mind turn completely into "Emptiness," then the Supreme Spiritual Consciousness will definitely enter into oneself. In other words, there will be the total union of the Supreme Consciousness of the Universe with the inner Light of oneself. This kind of extremely subtle and great union (yoga) is indescribable and beyond verbalization. This kind of unique achievement can only be experienced directly. Only people who succeed in this kind of union (yoga) will know what it is like and attain the True Realization.

- Exit from Samadhi [deep meditation]. Make the following dedication:

***Living Buddha Lian-sheng teaches the Great Tantric practice,
Transforming Vajrasattva into Vajra-Heart,
An authentic spiritual response when the two merge into one,
Eradicating negative hindrances to attain Purity.***

- Perform Great Homage.
- Exit from the tantric shrine.

Today, I want to tell everyone honestly, if one can learn all of the Four Preliminary Practices and receive responses in all of them, one is already attaining the Fruition of the Equal Awakening stage of the Bodhisattvas - this is the wonder of the True Buddha Tantric Dharma. Although these Four Practices are preliminary practices in Vajrayana, they are really the important foundation of all Tantras. In my opinion, when one attains authentic response through the Four Preliminary Practices, one becomes the Vajrasattva.

The True Buddha Vajrasattva Practice is the secret key to the eradication of time immemorial transgressions and negative hindrances.

The True Buddha Vajrasattva Practice results in the attainment of the Fruition of the Equal Awakening, which surpasses the Tenth Stage [Dharma Cloud] of Bodhisattvas.

The True Buddha Vajrasattva Practice is not just a preliminary practice; it is also a Personal Deity Yoga practice.

The key of the True Buddha Vajrasattva Practice is the visualization of the entering of great white Light and the expulsion of black smoke. The most important aspect is the unexcelled achievement of the union of the Vajrasattva and oneself. Thus, I write the following verse:

Within the Preliminary Practices is a wonderful vista,
Which alleviates hindrances as quick as a flying arrow;
The achievement of Union through Visualization of Emptiness is spectacular,
This is the Vajrasattva Hundred Syllable Practice.

Footnotes

[1] Translated from the fourth chapter of True Buddha Dharma: The Actual Practice, published in 1986.

[2] Water that is empowered by the Great Compassion Dharani, a long Kuan Yin mantra.

[3] In public, Grand Master Lu taught to place the right fist before one's chest and the left fist near one's left thigh.

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