

Appendix 1: Praise to Manjushri

We begin each session with the recitation of a **praise to the bodhisattva Manjushri**. The name of the praise is **‘Glorious Primordial Knowledge with its Excellent Qualities’**. The name of the praise is about the outstanding qualities of this kind of knowledge called ‘primordial knowledge’ or ‘original knowledge’, therefore being referred to as glorious. It is the kind of knowledge which, without any obstructions or hindrances, knows all perspectives of both samsara and nirvana. The great bodhisattva Manjushri is one of the great men throughout the history of buddhism who have achieved this kind of knowledge.

You have one of the greatest institutions for buddhist studies, popularly known as the **University of Nalanda**. However, one shouldn’t jump to the conclusion that its system is identical to the systems of universities in our part of the world. Education there was much more rigorous and so on. However, that’s usually what this educational institution is known as in the English language. One of its heads was the pandita known by the name **Vajra Weapon**. It is an ancient Indian name and of course, this chief of this institution was exceedingly learned and accomplished in studies and meditation. At one point – you have to know that this educational institution was a very large one – the principal Vajra Weapon informed **hundred and fifty of the panditas** who worked at the institution, those on a higher level (there were many other panditas, also acting as instructors, lecturers and the like at this institution) that he wanted them to, after all classes had been completed, spend the evening **composing a praise to primordial knowledge, keeping the great bodhisattva Manjushri in mind**.

The next morning, they all appeared during the morning assembly and all of them had written the exact same thing: the praise we recite here every morning, the praise in honor to primordial knowledge and with a specific reference to the great bodhisattva Manjushri. There had not been any communication between them, everyone had gone to their room in the evening and written their composition independently of the other hundred and forty-nine – what could be the reason, one may wonder, for having written the same praise? It was – the historical records tell us – because of the spiritual influence of the bodhisattva Manjushri himself.

Therefore, this praise is said to be a praise no different from what the composition would have been had Manjushri himself composed it.

By way of applying oneself to the various perspectives of this praise, of course one recites it but that has to be accompanied by meditative exercises and the like, by way of doing that throughout the centuries both in India and in Tibet, there are many who in consequence of doing just that, have met with the bodhisattva Manjushri face to face, who have achieved high levels of samadhi, and who have achieved high levels of so-called Higher Knowledge to the extent where they have been able to easily give good, authentic expositions of various perspectives of the buddha-dharma. They have become able to write high quality compositions where they comment on the meaning of various perspectives of the buddha-dharma and they have achieved high levels of skills in the art of buddhist debate.

So, more or less in all Tibetan buddhist institutions one starts out any session, whatever the session may be about, by reciting this praise.

Meditating the praise on Manjushri

So, one begins by inviting the noble Manjushri, meditating that he comes into one’s presence, and in terms of his appearance, he’s seated on a lotus flower on top of which there is a slice of the moon, a moon-disk. He is of a saffron colour complexion, he has one face, two arms and so on. You are probably

familiar with his physical appearance. Then you begin by taking refuge in the noble Manjushri while reciting the refuge prayer. Then in his presence you commit to the path of a bodhisattva; you make those commitments by way of reciting that formula. It is important when meditating on his appearance, that one doesn't do the mistake of sort of visualizing the various details of his appearance much in the same way as one would visualise the photograph of someone or as a statue of him for example. This is not how one views his presence. One rather focuses on the fact that the noble Manjushri embodies the great qualities that originate with the primordial knowledge he has achieved, qualities such as wisdom, compassion as well as the capacity to translate his wisdom and compassion into actions for the good of all.

Knowledge, at the level of Buddha, the enlightened state, is about knowledge which knows mind's true nature precisely as it is as well as knowledge of the true nature of each and every phenomenon that exists. One needs to keep in mind that what we call reality according to buddhism has two perspectives: relative reality and absolute reality. And knowledge in the context of absolute reality is the kind of knowledge spoken of at some length during yesterday's session, the kind of knowledge which knows mind's true nature precisely as it is.

Then, there is knowledge of each and every phenomenon as to the various perspectives in the context of what those phenomena are. So, that's the kind of knowledge which knows relative reality, all of it, even the most minute detail. Relative reality is a reference to the world in terms of its numberless appearances or phenomena. And that of course includes the various kinds of existence which you find in a so-called impure world system, a world like ours. Here, buddhism explains that you find six basic types of existence. Throughout the individuals inhabiting those existences, their circumstances vary. However, one can sum it all up by referring to happiness and sorrow because fundamentally, these are the two kinds of experiences that all those individuals have. Basically, there are these two types. Of course, you get variations but basically one can speak of two types of experience. These identified as experiences of sorrow and the ones identified as experiences of happiness, in general that applies to all sentient beings, no matter what their circumstances are, no matter which type of existence they inhabit. Then you have details such as the individual circumstances as to each and every sentient being. The perspective of knowledge which knows each and every phenomenon in an unhindered, unobstructed manner, that's the vast scope of this kind of knowledge.

Then there is **compassion, or loving kindness.** In terms of this level of primordial knowledge it is so-called great compassion, great in that this kind of compassion encompasses each and every sentient beings, that is to say all sentient beings in number as vast as the sky, all the different beings found throughout the six existences, human beings, animals and so on. A bodhisattva or a buddha, in terms of his primordial knowledge and his quality of compassion makes no difference between sentient beings, compassion which is equally compassionate to all, comparable to the compassion a mother has for her only child. So, whether the noble bodhisattva in question is in contact with an animal or a god, makes no difference in terms of how compassionate he would be. He would make no distinction. He would feel for any kind of being the same way a mother feels for her only child, her compassion for her only child.

Then you have the capacity of this individual with those qualities as to knowledge and compassion: that individual's prayers for sentient beings have the effect of fulfilling the needs of others. So, **both knowledge and compassion translate into effective actions.**

The noble Manjushri's blessings, in terms of them reaching those who pray to him, these blessings reach their target without any hindrance at all. There is nothing that stands between the individual praying and the bodhisattva prayed to, in terms of the bodhisattva truly having the capacity to respond with his spiritual influence; that influence reaching the praying practitioner.

So, whether you pray to the noble Manjushri here in Dhagpo Kagyu Ling or in the place of Buddha's enlightenment, Bodhgaya, makes no difference in terms of coming in contact with the spiritual influence of the bodhisattva Manjushri.

Presumably, one would pray for the following, as a buddhist practitioner: one has brought about since time immemorial as a worldly individual obscurations which obscure the mind and which have the effect of engaging in worldly actions; thus perpetuating and further strengthening afflictive obscuring states in the mind as well as making ignorance more and more dense in terms of one's mind-set, to the point where one wanders in the darkness of worldly existences, being trapped there because of one's own ignorance because of one's actions by way of which afflictions and obscurations are strengthened. One prays to the noble Manjushri that one may, through his spiritual influence, be able to eradicate all of this and attain progressively the kind of knowledge he has attained, the one described, the kind of great compassion he has attained and the kind of capacity he has attained.

At the end of the prayer, one recites the noble Manjushri mantra, which is the kind of mantra known in Sanskrit as a dharani.

You have this dharani of the noble Manjushri, a specific type of mantra, AH RA PA TSA NA DHI. You may wonder what is the effect of you reciting this mantra? **How can the spiritual influence of Manjushri affect us when focusing upon him while reciting the mantra?** What's the effect of us pronouncing these syllables as it were? One may wonder. There is this specific type of so-called mantra, a dharani; the **Tibetan word for dharani is *zung***, which simply means '**to take hold of**'. For example, once I have gripped this notebook with one of my hands, I hold it in my hand; I've taken hold of it. It is as simple as that in terms of the word's meaning. However, there are then all the perspectives in terms of this specific context, a dharani, what the words 'to take hold of' would mean here.

The noble Manjushri, in terms of his path to enlightenment, evidently, cultivated great compassion for all sentient beings as well as knowledge of emptiness, in terms of all perspectives there, while engaging in the practices of the six deeds which transcend the ways of the world, paramitas in Sanskrit. The six are: generosity, ethics, patience, perseverance, samadhi and Higher-Knowledge-Gone-To-The-Other-Shore.

If we look at how Manjushri practised just one of these six deeds, that of generosity, not regular worldly generosity, but generosity which transcends the ways of the world, what does that mean? It means that Manjushri practised generosity on the basis of great compassion for all beings and knowledge that knows emptiness. As enacting generosity, one looks at just one of his deeds of generosity. Let's say, he was generous with an individual in need. In terms of this act of generosity Manjushri enacted the generosity in question on the basis of his great compassion for the individual he was generous with as well as on the basis of knowledge which knew that he, the practitioner, the deed and the recipient of the generosity, are all empty of a real reality. Whereas worldly generosity which is a good and virtuous deed and should be encouraged – it is not a criticism of it – is being generous with someone without the element of great compassion and without the element of knowledge which knows emptiness. Therefore, the effect of worldly generosity is always a limited one, it is that of good circumstances for a period of time in a worldly existence. Then, the effect of the worldly generosity comes to an end and in terms of the individual's karma, something else kicks in. The good circumstances because of previous generosity have come to an end, they do not continue forever.

Whereas generosity which transcends the ways of the world, the kind of generosity described in the context of the actions of the noble Manjushri, here the generosity or the patience, whatever the deed, originates with the mind-set of great compassion and knowledge of emptiness. Therefore, the effects of it never come to an end, simply because the great compassion encompasses all sentient beings in numbers as vast as the sky.

The compassion is boundless, it has no limitations. The same applies to the knowledge of emptiness. It is the kind of knowledge which knows everything, so **it is boundless knowledge**, limitless knowledge. Therefore, actions based in that kind of mind-set in terms of the effects of the actions, the effects never come to an end because the prospect of the boundlessness.

That's how **bodhisattvas like Manjushri have imbued the mantras they invented with the powers of their mind-sets, in terms of great compassion and emptiness**. Therefore, there is nothing that hinders their spiritual influence in terms of reaching those who pray for contact with it, simply. There are no hindrances because there is always this element of boundlessness. Nothing stands in the way of boundless compassion; nothing stands in the way of boundless knowledge of emptiness.

Therefore, when praying to the noble bodhisattva Manjushri for example, on the basis of honest and sincere devotion for him and with this understanding, the praying practitioner is influenced by Manjushri's spiritual influence. There is no doubt about it. There is nothing that stands in the way of this. You have this dharani which came about by way of Manjushri taking hold of the deeds of generosity, ethics, patience, perseverance, samadhi and Higher Knowledge. He took hold of these, i.e. practised them by way of boundless compassion and boundless knowledge of emptiness, thus throughout many, many eons, many, many kalpas, he focused on doing just this, in order to bring about this dharani of his, so that the dharani would have the influence described. So, these great bodhisattvas have worked very, very hard as it were, throughout many, many eons in order to give sentient beings this kind of blessing.

His mantra is imbued with this kind of power, simply because the noble Manjushri has attained the highest level of generosity which transcends the ways of the world; he is not halfway there. He's gotten there. And that applies to each of the six deeds. And that's why spiritual influence can happen. So, when you recite this prayer and you recite the mantra, you should recollect all of this in order to set your mind in the proper atmosphere of the thing, as it were.

And there are many accounts of what has happened when practitioners have done just this, the unimaginable effects of the efforts of some practitioners. And that as was said explains how that was possible.

So, while reciting the prayer, please recollect what was explained, focusing in particular on compassion and emptiness in order to become a practitioner able to truly practice these deeds of generosity and the like in ways which transcend the world.

Now, if you cook a meal and you put it on the dinner table, what's next? Well, you eat it. You'll eat the food that has been served. Similarly, you having been served this information, please use it. And this is what the noble Manjushri has done for all of us and all other sentient beings. He persevered throughout eons and eons in his efforts to perfect his capacity of generosity and other deeds which transcend the ways of the world, thus at the end of all of that being able to imbue this dharani of his with that kind of spiritual influence. It can have the effect, if one uses the information given, of rapidly being able to make progress of the path because of that kind of spiritual influence, which is possible provided one uses it and uses it right.

One of the very early masters in the Sakya school of Tibetan buddhism referred to one of its founding fathers, a master by the name **Kunga Nyingpo**, for six months did the practice associated with this praise of Manjushri, at the end of which he met with the noble bodhisattva Manjushri face to face. Manjushri taught him a set of mind-training instructions which now are of the Sakya tradition, called 'Freeing oneself of the four attachments'. This set of instructions originates with the Sakya school because of Kunga Nyingpo meeting with Manjushri face to face. However, the other traditions of Tibetan buddhism do practice these instructions, too.

Manjushri made a pledge to Kunga Nyingpo during their encounter, telling him that he pledged to remain his spiritual guide till he attained enlightenment. In simple words he said: I'll get you there!

There have been in old Tibet throughout the centuries individuals known as the reincarnation of this master, Kunga Nyingpo, and all of them have very rapidly encountered face to face the noble Manjushri and in this way again become his disciples. It appears that Manjushri is with them till enlightenment, just as he has pledged he would be.

If we're able to pray to Manjushri the way Kunga Nyingpo did, apparently the same thing will happen to us. But it depends on how we pray.