
Study Group – Manjushri Prayer Commentary

Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

6 December 2005

As usual you should generate the motivation of wanting to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings thinking, 'In order to achieve that state I am going to listen to this profound teaching, and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

We are going to do a word commentary by Trijang Rinpoche on the Manjushri prayer. Trijang Rinpoche is said to be an actual emanation of Manjushri as well as the incarnation of Chandrakirti, and by receiving the commentary you also receive their blessings.

The prayer came about because at one point many pandits decided that there was a need for a Manjushri prayer, so each of them composed one. Then the salient points of them all were combined into this prayer.

The prayer consists of a threefold praise to the mind, speech and body of Manjushri. Here the qualities of Manjushri's mind are praised first, although it is usually the other way around, with praise being offered to the body first, and then to the speech and mind of the respective buddha.

But here, because Manjushri is the embodiment of the wisdom of the buddhas, his mind is praised first. Also, during the outer offerings in the Yamantaka sadhana the offering of scent to Yamantaka's mind comes before the offerings of flowers and incense. This is because the offering of scent is done to the mind of the deity and as Yamantaka is the wrathful embodiment of Manjushri, he is the embodiment of all the buddhas' wisdom.

Usually when one performs the outer offerings in other sadhanas the offering of perfume comes after the light offering. There are other more elaborate praises to Manjushri that follow the usual sequence of praising body, speech and mind.

1. Praise to Manjushri's enlightened mind

1.1. Praise to his wisdom

1.2. Praise to his love and compassion

1.1. Praise to his wisdom

*He, whose discriminating awareness, by shining
brilliantly like the sun free
From the clouds of the two obscurations, sees all
objects of multiplicity like they
Are, holds therefore a wholesome text.*

Whose refers to Manjushri and *discriminating awareness* refers to his exalted wisdom knowledge. The *two obscurations* are the obscurations to liberation and the obscurations to omniscience. With his exalted wisdom knowledge Manjushri has abandoned the six root delusions and the secondary afflictions together with their seeds and imprints, i.e. the two obscurations.

The *obscurations to liberation* are the six root afflictions and their seeds, and the *twenty secondary or proximate afflictions* plus their seeds. The six root afflictions are anger,

attachment, ignorance, afflicted doubt, pride and wrong view, and they act as the root for the twenty proximate or secondary afflictions. The twenty secondary or proximate afflictions are wrath, resentment (or the wish for vengeance), concealment, spite, jealousy (or envy), greed, pretension, dishonesty, conceit, cruelty, shamelessness, inconsideration, uncleanness (or dullness), excitement, faithlessness, laziness, recklessness, forgetfulness, non-introspection and distraction.

The root afflictions and the secondary afflictions are all contained within the fifty one mental factors. From one point of view the six root afflictions are the root of all unwanted suffering and problems, and from another perspective they are root afflictions because they are the roots of the twenty secondary afflictions. The literal translation of 'secondary' is more like proximate or close afflictions, and they are called that because they are close to their respective root afflictions.

Anger is the root of the proximate afflictions of wrath, spite, jealousy and so forth. Wrath, for example, belongs to the family of anger, because it arises from the root of anger. The difference between anger and wrath is twofold.

Wrath is a very specific accelerated and stronger form of anger that focuses on only sentient beings, whilst anger focuses on anything that is perceived as a cause of suffering, which includes both sentient and non-sentient objects. When one is merely angry one cannot bear the cause of suffering and one wants to harm or destroy the cause of that suffering, regardless of whether it is sentient or not sentient. However one is not really quite at the stage where one would actually inflict harm on another sentient being. Wrath is the accelerated form of anger that more directly precedes the actual harm that one inflicts on another person - it focuses only on sentient beings.

Similarly, attachment is the root affliction for greed. Greed is a proximate or secondary affliction that has attachment as its root, so it belongs to the family of the root affliction of attachment. That is also a good thing to know. All the other secondary afflictions also have one of the root afflictions as their root.

The transcendental wisdom of Manjushri is like the unclouded sun. When the sun is obscured by clouds one does not receive the sun's benefit, and for the sun to be able to shine clearly it needs to be unobscured by clouds. Similarly the transcendental wisdom of Manjushri is not obscured by the clouds of the two obscurations and therefore he can see the truth body clearly.

How does the transcendental wisdom of Manjushri see the truth body clearly? He sees in an omniscient way the unobscured truth body, by simultaneously beholding directly all objects of multiplicity and suchness without any obscuration. The objects of multiplicity are all the different categories of nominal objects from form up to omniscient consciousness. So the transcendental wisdom of Manjushri beholds all objects of multiplicity and suchness without obscurations directly and clearly.

The reason he holds a scriptural text at his heart is because the scriptural text symbolises that his transcendental wisdom perceives all objects of multiplicity and suchness clearly and directly without obscurations. Unlike the particular aspect of Manjushri relating to this prayer, the normal Manjushri does not hold a text at his heart. The aspect of Manjushri relating to this prayer is a red Manjushri that is referred to as the Manjushri Gang-Lo-Ma.

¹ The Tibetan word *nye* literally means close or proximate

1.2. Praise to his compassion

He loves those who exist in the prison of existence dazed by the darkness of ignorance, all the groups of migrators that are afflicted by suffering, like an only son.

Those refers to all sentient beings who are devoid of true happiness. *True happiness* is the happiness of liberation. Samsaric happiness is always transitory, finite and unstable.

All sentient beings that lack true happiness and are *caught in the prison* of the five realms of *existence* are *dazed by the darkness of their ignorance*. Their actions of body, speech and mind have been afflicted by the ignorance of grasping at 'I' and mine since beginningless time. They are overwhelmed by the three sufferings: the suffering of suffering, the suffering of change and pervasive compounded suffering. In the lower realms of cyclic existence they experience the sufferings of extreme heat and cold, and even in the higher realms they experience the sufferings of change and pervasive compounded suffering.

All these migrators, who are pained, burdened and squeezed by these sufferings, are loved by Manjushri like a mother loves her only son. This shows that the compassion that is generated by Manjushri is the non-discriminatory kind of compassion, because it is an equal compassion for all migrators.

The example of the love for an only son refers to the love of a mother for her only son. If a mother has no other children apart from one son then she will have a very special type of love in her heart for that son. This very strong love is used as an example for the great compassion and great love, that buddhas and bodhisattvas feel for each and every sentient being, and is the type of love and compassion that one needs to generate in one's own practice. It comes about gradually, first generating it for one person, then two, three and so forth, if you are interested in that type of practice.

2. Praise to the speech of Manjushri

His melodious speech, endowed with sixty features, reverberates dragon-like, Awakening from the stupor of the afflictions, liberating from the iron chains of karma.

Motivated by this great love and compassion Manjushri teaches migrators the different points of the path - what has to be adopted and practised and what has to be abandoned. Even just one word of the enlightened speech of Manjushri is *endowed with the sixty features* of enlightened speech. That his speech is motivated by great love and compassion does not mean that there is a preceding motivational thought, because that does not happen with an enlightened being.

Then comes the example of the sound of a dragon. This is a poetic description that is used as a synonym for thunder. Even though one is sleeping deeply, thunder can be so strong that it cuts through one's sleep and wakes one up.

Out of great compassion the thunder of Manjushri's speech explains all the points of the path of what has to be practised and adopted and what has to be rejected, which is really the only explanation that will help sentient beings to be free from suffering. This thunder will cause them to arise from *the stupor of the sleep of their afflictions* and free them from *the iron chains of their karma*. Here karma refers to projecting karma, establishing karma, completing karma and so forth. In short, his speech frees migrators from the bonds of cyclic existence, which are karma and afflictions.

He holds the sword that cuts any sprout of suffering and clears the darkness of ignorance.

The *sword* symbolises the power to be able to *cut* any *sprout of suffering* such as the suffering of birth, aging, sickness and death, and to *clear* away *the darkness of ignorance*.

Manjushri has the power to clear away any sprout of the sufferings of aging, sickness and death and so forth, and to *clear away the darkness of ignorance* of grasping at 'I' and 'mine', by teaching sentient beings the different points of the path with his enlightened speech that is endowed with the sixty features, and which is based on his love and compassion. If one practises what one is taught then one will be rid of the grasping at 'I' and 'mine', and through that one will also be rid of all the different sufferings. The sword symbolises that Manjushri has this power to clear away sufferings in this way.

3. Praise to the enlightened body of Manjushri

The body of a foremost child of the Conqueror, pure from the beginning and Naturally complete with the qualities of having perfected the ten grounds, Beautified with one hundred and twelve ornaments, I prostrate to Manjushri Who clears away the darkness of my mind.

Child of the Conqueror means a bodhisattva. From an interpretive point of view Manjushri manifests as the senior bodhisattva disciple of the Buddha, but from a definite point of view he is perfectly enlightened. *Pure from the beginning* means having being pure for many eons. *Naturally complete with the qualities of having perfected the ten grounds* means having a body that is naturally complete with the qualities of abandonment and realisation of the ten grounds: the qualities of the abandonment and realisation of the first ground, the qualities of abandonment and realisation of the second ground up to the qualities of abandonment and realisation of the tenth ground. *Beautified with one hundred and twelve ornaments* refers to eighty minor marks and thirty-two major signs of the body of a buddha.

I prostrate to Manjushri, who has perfected in such a way all qualities, and *clears away the darkness of my mind*.

Regarding the marks and signs of an enlightened body and the sixty features of enlightened speech there is a commentary on Manjushri by Lama Tsong Khapa that has been translated into English, so you can look them up there.

There are also other translated commentaries explaining the major and the minor marks and signs.

*Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version
© Tara Institute*