
In Praise of Manjushri

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By this merit may His Holiness the Dalai Lama and
Geshe Doga have long and healthy lives and
continuously turn the wheel of sutra and tantra.

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.

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

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

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

This is 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. 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 each were combined into this prayer.

The prayer consists of a threefold praise to the mind, speech and body of Manjushri. 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.

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.

Praise to Manjushri's Enlightened Mind

This has two parts: praise to his wisdom and praise to his love and compassion.

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 afflictions and the twenty related 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 related afflictions together with their seeds.

The six root afflictions are anger, attachment, ignorance, afflicted doubt, pride and wrong view, which act as the root for the twenty related afflictions.

The twenty related afflictions are: wrath, resentment, concealment, spite, jealousy, greed, pretension, dishonesty, conceit, cruelty, shamelessness, inconsideration, unclearness (or dullness), excitement, faithlessness, laziness, recklessness, forgetfulness, non-introspection and distraction.

The root afflictions and the related 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 root of the twenty related 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, which 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 wants to harm or destroy the cause of that suffering, regardless of whether or not it is 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, greed is a related 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; 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 the unobscured truth body in an omniscient way, 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 directly and clearly, without obscurations.

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.

Praise to his compassion

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

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

All sentient beings lack true happiness and are caught *in the prison of the five realms of existence, 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.

Manjushri loves all these *migrators*, who are pained, burdened and squeezed by these sufferings, like a mother loves her *only child*. 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 child refers to the love of a mother for her only child. If a mother has no other children then she will have a very special type of love in her heart for that child. This very strong love is used as an example of the great compassion and great love, that buddhas and

bodhisattvas feel for each and every sentient being. It is the type of love and compassion that one needs to generate in one's own practice. If you are interested in that type of practice you generate it gradually, first generating it for one person, then two, three and so forth.

Praise to Manjushri's Enlightened Speech

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 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, Manjushri's 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.

Praise to Manjushri's Enlightened Body

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. He clears 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.

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,

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 definitive 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.

Beautiful with one hundred and twelve ornaments refers to eighty minor marks and thirty-two major signs of the body of a buddha. In his commentary on Manjushri, Lama Tsong Khapa listed the marks and signs of an enlightened body, and the sixty features of enlightened speech.

I prostrate to Manjushri who clears away the darkness of my mind.

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