

Karla Jackson Brewer

*Turning Turmoil into Clarity*

Week Three: The Vajra Family and the Ratna Family

July 21, 2019



Hi everyone, I'm Karla Jackson-Brewer. I am an authorized teacher of Tara Mandala Retreat Center in Pagosa Springs, Colorado, and a Vajrayana Buddhist practitioner. We've been talking about the dakini families and today we are going to have an opportunity to explore two of the five families more deeply. We're going to delve into the Vajra dakini family and the Ratna dakini family.

Let's start with the blue Vajra dakini family. In the mandala, the blue Vajra dakini sits in the east, and her seed syllable is "HA," H-A. Her encumbered emotion is anger, and the wisdom expression is mirror-like wisdom. Her element, or the element of this family, is water. The symbol is the vajra. Vajra roughly means thunderbolt, or adamantine. It's a very direct expression, and so this family is pretty direct. The energy of the Vajra family actually symbolizes indestructibility. Because the element of this family is water, there is also the symbolism of a mirror that reflects whatever goes before it.

The Sanskrit word is vajra, but the Tibetan word for vajra is *dorje*. For the Vajra family, the color is blue. It is the blue of the midnight sky, a deep sapphire blue. Remember that these families are expressions of energy and light, so when we think of the dakini energy we're really thinking of light beings.

The Vajra energy encompasses the expression of anger, but anger manifests in so many different ways. There's anger where you get angry and chew on it. It's like when you have an argument with somebody and wake up in the middle of the night and you're still arguing with them. Anger can block us. It's harmful to us, and it's also harmful to other people. Have you ever said something in a fit of anger that you would really like to take back later? It's very difficult to clean up.

The encumbered emotion of the Vajra family sometimes gets expressed as difficulty in admitting that you're wrong. It is the need to be right, the energy of aversion, and of pushing people away, which anger does pretty effectively. The encumbered emotion can be expressed through sarcasm, edginess, irritation, or prickliness. I like the word "prickly," because sometimes I get an image of actually being like a prickly pear. This energy elicits sharp responses, so there is a sharpness about it.

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When we talk about the encumbered emotion of anger, most people are familiar with hot anger. That's the flame-throwing, destructive type of anger. But then there's also the cool, cold, annihilating anger. It makes you feel as though you don't exist, and it's very painful for those who are expressing it and for those who might be receiving it. Sometimes in this encumbered emotion there is a certain kind of rigidity, like water that's frozen and not flowing, it's just rigid. This energy also can manifest as a kind of territoriality. "This is my space, you cannot come too close." That gives you some idea of these encumbered emotions which we all experience.

The point of being aware of this is to just be able to look at it without denial or judgment, just to see what's there and really recognize that emotions are simply energy. That's why we can work with them and transform them. The wisdom expression of the Vajra family is what they call mirror-like wisdom. Being like a mirror is having a pristine knowing or understanding, or an undistorted, undistracted clarity. With mirror-like wisdom we become like the mirror or the water. When you see the moon reflected in the lake you know the moon is not in the lake, and even when the moon sets and disappears the lake is still unchanged.

The wisdom of this family is about being in the world and being unchanged. That doesn't mean you're passive or not taking action. But your action is coming out of pristine clarity. The Vajra energy reflects its surroundings without distortion or bias, and that is amazing wisdom to walk with. Imagine being around a person who could be in any environment and generate that kind of energy and clarity. To move and transform this energy, I want to share with you a similar practice to the one we practiced last week.

Get into a comfortable position and close your eyes. I want you to recall a time when you were angry, irritated, frustrated, or critical. If any of those feelings come up for you, see if you can hold them, intensify them a little bit, and make them a little extra. As you close your eyes you're going to sound the seed syllable "HA," H-A. As you sound that seed syllable, imagine that every cell in your body is being flooded with this beautiful blue sapphire energy and light. Let's do this together. "HA. HA. HA." Now just scan your body. If you feel the emotion, at what level are you feeling that emotion? You may notice a change.

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When you practice this meditation you can do it for 30 seconds or 60 seconds, and just keep sounding the syllable. You could take space between each seed syllable, or you can just sound it back to back on a roll, hearing the sound and feeling that energy moving through your body.

I want to move on to the yellow Ratna dakini family. The symbol for the Ratna dakini family is the wish-fulfilling jewel, which is a multifaceted jewel that resonates and sends out energy in all directions. The seed syllable for this dakini family is “RI,” R-I. The element is the earth, representative of stability, solidity, and abundance. There is enough, you can lean on this energy, and the direction is the south. Did you ever notice how the color yellow, the sun, amber, honey, brass, or gold can give you a sensation or feeling of luxury and richness? This is what we meet in this family.

The encumbered emotion in this family is pride. But it’s important to look underneath the pride. I think of it as false pride, phony pride, or even “grandiosity.” People who are grandiose often don’t feel so great about themselves. That’s the energy of this encumbered emotion, and when you feel like that, what you really want to do is to fill that space up. Working with the earth element is about material things, so it can become about filling your life, yourself, and your body up with different things. It could be with food, with many spiritual practices, with lots of jewelry, with lots of furniture, and then you hang on to and protect your things. It’s not so much about protecting your territory, but your things.

In the encumbered expression of this energy one might also put forward that “I’m so important, I need to be treated like a VIP.” But we only feel like we need to be treated like a VIP when we don’t actually feel like a VIP—it seems counterintuitive. This energy can sometimes feel solid and overpowering. When you’re around people who are expressing this encumbered energy it can feel like it’s too much. But it’s also important to know that the earth, as solid as it is, is still shifting. Being able to be with those two expressions of earth—the solid and the shifting nature—is a good example of equanimity and wisdom.

Another way that this encumbered emotion arises is through hoarding or protecting your reputation. Reputation is everything, because it feels like there’s no substance. A lot of us, particularly if we live in a capitalist nation, are encouraged to be very Ratna-like. *Buy, buy, buy, get the new thing. If your car is three years old, get a new one.* How do we transform this, and

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what does this energy transform into? It transforms into a sense of abundance, a feeling of fullness, and equanimity. Equanimity means that there is enough, we don't have to chase and we don't have to do. I just can be in this peaceful, centered expression. What we learn from the wisdom of the Ratna family is that nothing is permanent, everything is impermanent. The only thing that's permanent and stable is emptiness. The emptiness I'm referring to here is the awareness of the true nature of the universe and our minds. Equanimity communicates that there's enough and we don't have to scramble for things.

The transformed Ratna energy is expressed through generosity. That's where equanimity can be expressed on a daily basis. Generosity is not only about material generosity, but also a generosity of spirit and time. It's really walking with that love, kindness, and compassion, and actually offering it to people through a word, or for people you're close to, through a touch. In this family, wisdom teaches us that wealth is not just about material things, and that's a good reminder. It also helps us not to feel so bad when we don't have. With the wisdom of equanimity we have freedom from attachment.

Let's work with the Ratna energy. Recall a time when you felt like there wasn't enough or that you weren't good enough. A time where you felt you weren't worthy of getting a job, or having a friend, or however this feeling might manifest in your life. Or perhaps there was a time where you had been doing a lot of shopping and yet you still didn't appreciate the things that you had. They're not enough, and they don't do it for you. Or perhaps you've been chasing that perfect lemon meringue pie, and even after that taste, even when you have four pies in your refrigerator, it's still not enough.

Really feel that encumbered energy, feel it in your body, and intensify it a little bit. Now close your eyes, and sound our seed syllable, "RI," R-I. imagine your body is being flooded with beautiful golden, amber light. Do it with me, "RI. RI. RI." Check in and see how you're feeling. Of course, if it hasn't shifted you can do the practice again. But maybe you are experiencing equanimity, just resting in the moment of abundance.

Today we have moved deeper into two of the dakini families, the Vajra family and the Ratna family. You had the experience of using an aspect of the mandala practice to begin to work with this energy within yourself. This week, I encourage you to continue this practice, and also work with the Buddha energy from last week.

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Thank you for joining me and I'll see you next week.