

## **Purpose of studying Nagas and a Naga ritual**

Approaching a Naga with an open heart, clear understanding and lack of greed or desire should bring positive results. Nagas want respectful human contact and appropriate offering and a correct way of requesting their intervention should be followed at all times. The last thing one wants is retribution from a Naga, who could inflict illness or trouble upon someone with a wrong intention.

Questions that arise in the light of these aspects are how can we actually call them to our aid to assist us in matters of health and wealth and pacify them when they are wreaking havoc on us as far as illness and poverty are concerned, what needs to be understood about these creatures so that we may respect the landscape they protect in a harmonious way and how should spiritual practitioners interact with them?

You are going to hear a special Naga ritual being chanted by my husband, Jamyang, the purpose of which is to purify sickness and harm that may have already been inflicted by Nagas, as well as prevent them. I am now going to describe in brief, the step-by-step process of the ritual that should also answer the questions that I just raised above.

First of all, there are some preparations that need to take place before the ritual is actually performed. Firstly one should make a torma, which is like a ritual cake designed in a certain way, like a Lingam shape. If it is not possible to make such a torma, then one should use a biscuit without egg for the same purpose.

Then the 7 offering bowls that are ordinarily placed on one's shrine should be prepared, these include water for drinking, water for washing, flowers, incense, light, water tinged with saffron and some food in the form of a tiny piece of torma or biscuit. This is a standard practise in preparation for virtually any ritual.

In addition to these, one thing that is particular to this ritual is that one should find a large pot made of mud, bronze, silver or gold, but specifically not made out of metals or iron. This is then filled with clear and clean water. Actually, you are going to imagine that this is a kind of pond and therefore like in nature, you should place flowers and leaves in it too. There are special types of flowers that are used for this ritual, but these days they are difficult to get hold of, so you can use any flora which is pleasant and nice for the senses to perceive.

After preparing these things, one performs the blessing of the 7 outer offerings that have been prepared on your shrine, which includes the water for drinking, water for washing, flowers, incense, light, water tinged with saffron and some food in the form of a tiny piece of torma or biscuit. If it has not been possible to actually physically prepare these offerings, then just visualising them with positive intention at this point, is sufficient.

Then one sincerely takes refuge in one's Teacher, the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, and promises to attempt to attain enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. Then we generate equanimity, love, compassion and joy towards an immeasurable number of sentient beings, thus opening our heart towards ourselves and others.

Then one recites a mantra that when translated means, 'The nature of all phenomena is pure – maintain that nature'. This is the law of the universe and we have to practise it in order to realise it. Through this practise of generating this wisdom in the mind, it becomes a form of gaining merit.

Within this state of emptiness, you have essentially dissolved your present solid form along with the entire universe and you are now going to create yourself as the supreme deity of compassion, Avalokiteshvara, who has one white face, 2 hands, the right one of which is in the 'giving mudra' on the knee, and the left one holding a lotus stalk at his heart centre. He is sitting in a half posture, which means one leg is slightly outstretched and upon a lotus and moon disk. He is

wearing clothes and has various ornaments adorning his body and behind him is a moon disk surrounding his body like a halo.



Deity Avalokiteshvara

Inside his heart is the syllable 'HRIH' surrounded in a circle by his personal mantra of 'OM MANI PADME HUM', the supreme mantra of compassion.

Then one should recite the mantra of 'OM MANI PADME HUM' and at the same time visualise white light rays emerging from the syllables and touching all the Buddhas (enlightened beings) and Bodhisattvas (supremely compassionate beings) in the universe. The rays are reflected back and in turn purify all sentient beings, especially the earth dwellers and Naga beings etc... and imagine that all their bad things are completely purified by these rays of light. Then invite all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas into the mantra located at your heart centre, with you in the form of Avalokiteshvara.

Recite the mantra as much as you can.

This is followed by an offering by all these sentient beings of the 7 substances that you had offered at the beginning of this ritual - water for drinking, water for washing, flowers, incense, light, water tinged with saffron and some food in the form of a tiny piece of torma, to Avalokiteshvara in gratitude.

There is then a little praise that is recited to Avalokiteshvara after that.

Then one makes wishes that all the negative and harmful aspects and sickness of sentient beings, earth dwellers and Naga beings are purified into the pure state of Avalokiteshvara.

Up to here, this has been a stage-by-stage process of self-creation, which is a bit like setting up the stage for the actual ritual which is going to take place as the main part of it. In all the following visualisations, you yourself remain in the form of Avalokiteshvara.

One should then bless the torma and then purify and bless the large pot filled with water and flowers, to become like an ocean of wisdom nectar. At the same time, you should visualise a very nice place, with attributes like diamond rocks, an ocean, ponds, a nice green spring and palaces and parks, as well as visualise the water in the pot as a nectar for purifying Naga sickness.

Now you should visualise the Nagas above the torma, in 9 positions, including one at the centre of a lotus with 8 petals around him, each sits on a moon disk upon the petal.

There are 10 Nagas of varying colours, including white, red, black, yellow and green. The 9 sitting on the lotus petals (as described above) and 1 in front.

These 10 Nagas are all similar in features having 1 face, 2 hands held together in a 'Namaste' posture, the half upper part of their body is godlike and transparent and very clear and clean, see through like glass. They wear ornaments, jewels, earrings, rings, necklaces etc..., and a wish fulfilling crown on the top of their heads and above that each one of them has a crest of 7 snake heads. Their lower body is that of a snake.

On the left side of each Naga, and with the same demeanour as themselves are 10 Naginis; same features, colours, ornaments etc...

After creating this visualisation, one should send out many rays of light and then invite all the actual Nagas in this world, especially those who are sick or damaged, blind and with disabilities and dissolve them into your creation. Now you should visualise all these Nagas in this created vision surrounded by fence of the rays. The reason for this is to keep them contained so that they can't leave before the offering of the torma (ritual cake) to them, because this is what will entice them not to harm us in the future.

Then visualise offering a lotus petal to each of the Nagas there and recite the outer offering prayer, in which once again you make offerings of water for drinking, water for washing, flowers, incense, light, water tinged with saffron and some food in the form of a tiny piece of torma or biscuit.

Then recite the Naga recitation mantra, along with the following visualisation. From the mantra OM MANI PADME HUNG in your heart, rays go out and at the same time, a lot of milk water comes out of the palm and all the fingers that are pointing upwards, of your whole hand. This wisdom nectar enters the water in the large pot where you put the flowers and leaves at the beginning of the ritual and merges with that water. Then all the Earth Dwellers and wrathful Nagas etc... climb into that pond. They drink and wash in the water, which purifies all their sicknesses, whereby the disabled ones get better, the blind can now see, ones who had previously missed some limbs are now whole again and whatever they need they will get and whatever they wish is instantly granted.

This is the most important part of the ritual, because it is through the negative actions of humans on the Earth that causes Nagas and Earth dwellers etc... to get sick, when we damage the environment in so many ways, like digging out metals, polluting water, throwing rubbish here and there, destroying forests, building cities etc... There is no way that they can be cured from these sicknesses, unless we make these special offerings to them, so this makes them happy and fulfilled. Further to this, once the Nagas have purified their troubles, then human beings who have troubles due to their negative actions towards the environment automatically get better too.

Then offer the ritual cake, the torma to all the various Nagas, saying their names and offering them health and whatever they wish to be fulfilled. At the same time you're requesting them to remove their poison from everyone who has already got any Naga sickness affliction and also not to harm anyone in the future and instead grant them whatever they need.

All those Nagas are very happy and fulfilled, and hold their hands together in the Namaste posture, after which they promise to listen to whatever we say.

Then Avalokiteshvara gives dharma teachings to them, after which time there's a kind of dedication prayer.

Because of this process, the Naga kings and all different types of Nagas' bodies become whole again and free of sickness, their status of wealth is repaired and all things that had been damaged get better, their celestial enemy Garuda will not harm them, hot sand will not burn them etc..., all Earth Dwellers and harmful Nagas promise never harm this world, rain will come on time, the sickness of human beings and animals will be purified and they give everyone whatever they need.

Then recite the long mantra of Avalokiteshvara and at the same time visualise white rays going out from your heart to so many Nagas, so that all their sins and negative things are purified by the rays touching them.

Then another dedication prayer follows, wishing all different types of Nagas to have clear minds. It mentions that Avalokiteshvara has given so many things to the Nagas so now they must remember all those things and promise to keep practise and keep in mind the teachings, and let their anger become peaceful.

At the conclusion, one recites the Vajrasattva 100 syllable mantra, for purification of any wrong things or mistakes that have been made throughout the ritual, expressing sorrow for that and anything that may have been omitted.

Now remove the boundary of rays around the Nagas held in the visualisation and send them away. Because of the blessings of milky-white medicine and mantras, all sickness and harm is purified and everyone goes off to their places, remembering what they have promised.

After the ritual is complete, all the tormas and water must be throw in a very clean place at which time, one will continue to make dedication prayers, wishing that all beings may attain the state of enlightenment through these virtuous deeds that have just been performed, thus exponentially increasing the merit of the recitation of this action of undertaking this ritual.