

Medicine Buddha

The Great King of Medicine Is Active in Pacifying the Suffering of Beings



Continuing the Very Venerable Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche's teaching on the Medicine Buddha.

We are now going to start going through the text itself, the liturgy for the practice, so that you will understand how to do it. As you will have noticed, the first part of the Medicine Buddha practice is the lineage supplication, which consists of the supplication of the principal Medicine Buddha, the seven accompanying Medicine Buddhas, the sixteen bodhisattvas, and finally, the holders and propagators of the teachings of the Medicine Buddha. The purpose of reciting this supplication at the beginning of the practice is to invoke and receive at the very beginning of the practice the blessing of the Medicine Buddha through the power of your faith in and devotion to the deity and to the lineage of this teaching.

The supplication begins with one line in the language of Sanskrit:

NAMO BEKENDZE MAHA RADZAYE

This means, “Homage to the great king of medicine.” The initial homage to the Medicine Buddha as the great king of medicine is done in Sanskrit because the source of the teachings of the vajrayana in particular, and of the buddhadharma in general—the original sutra and tantra teachings of the

Buddha Shakyamuni—were given primarily in Sanskrit. Moreover, the mahasiddhas, bodhisattvas, and shravakas of India also primarily used Sanskrit as their dharma language. Therefore, in order to maintain a connection with the source of the tradition, and because the Sanskrit language itself is held to bear great blessing, the initial supplication is made in Sanskrit, after which follows the main body of the supplication of the Medicine Buddha in Tibetan.

The first stanza of the supplication is addressed to the principal Medicine Buddha, and is based on the Buddha Shakyamuni's presentation of the Medicine Buddha's initial motivation for his path and the aspirations he made in connection therewith, as recorded in the sutras on the Medicine Buddha.*

**You are endowed with an oceanic treasury of qualities and merit;
By the blessing of your inconceivable compassion
You calm the suffering and torment of sentient beings.
I supplicate you, Light of Lapis Lazuli.**

The meaning of the stanza is that, because of the quality and special nature of his initial motivation and ensuing aspirations, the Medicine Buddha very quickly accumulated vast amounts of merit, as a result of which, while on the path and finally at the time of fruition or buddhahood, he came to embody a vast treasury of qualities associated with awakening. Therefore, because of his initial compassionate motivation and because of the qualities of his awakening, he possesses inconceivable blessing, by virtue of which, in accordance with his aspiration and motivation, he is active in pacifying the sufferings of beings. So in chanting the beginning of the supplication, you mention him by name, referring to him as the Light of Vaidurya.

***Editor's note:** The Medicine Buddha, when understood as an individual buddha who once was a sentient being, predates the Buddha Shakyamuni. Therefore, our knowledge of him is based, at least initially, on the teachings that arose spontaneously out of the supersensible cognition of the Buddha Shakyamuni.

The second stanza is also addressed to the Medicine Buddha, and it continues from the presentation in the first. In the first stanza you were essentially praising the fact that he embodies extraordinary merit and qualities as a result of his extraordinary motivation and aspirations. Upon his initial generation of bodhicitta the Medicine Buddha made twelve particular aspirations. In connection with these, the benefits of recollecting the name of the Medicine Buddha begin to be specified in the second stanza.

**Those bound by very intense greed
Are born in the hungry ghost realm.
If they hear your name, they are born human and
take delight in generosity.
I supplicate you, victorious Menla.**

Recollection of the name means keeping the name of the Medicine Buddha in mind by having an attitude of faith and devotion to the Medicine Buddha. The stanza says that even someone who, as a result of intense greed, is destined to be reborn as a preta or hungry ghost, if such a person hears the name of the Medicine Buddha, they will be reborn as a human being and will delight in generosity. In that way, you supplicate the Medicine Buddha by referring to the power or blessing of his name.

The next stanza gives a second benefit of recollecting and hearing the name of the Medicine Buddha.

**Violating morality and abusing others,
Beings are born in the hell realms.
Hearing your name, they are said to be born in
the higher realms.
I supplicate you, King of Medicine.**

Those who violate moral commitments and who actively harm or abuse others will be reborn in the hell realms. This refers to those who have no interest in maintaining the dharma commitments they have undertaken, who have no interest in benefiting others, and who are only interested in harming them. But if even such a person hears the name of the Medicine Buddha, they will be reborn in higher realms. By simply hear-

ing the name of the Medicine Buddha, their inherent capacity for virtue will be awakened and they will gradually become interested in acting appropriately and benefiting others. Changing their course of action, they will not be reborn in a lower realm.

The next stanza describes a third benefit of hearing or recollecting the name of the Medicine Buddha.

**Whoever by repeated dissension and slander
Creates serious schisms and takes life,
Hearing your name, they cannot harm others.
I supplicate you, King of Medicine.**

Those who are naturally jealous, competitive, and arrogant, and as a result, find themselves always trying to produce dissension; who, when seeing that others are friendly and harmonious, automatically try to create discord; who create schisms where there is harmony and discord even to the point where it leads to loss either of their own life or the lives of others; even someone with this jealous, competitive, and arrogant nature—if they hear the name of the Medicine Buddha, will be unable to cause harm. Unable to cause harm means that their mindset and their attitudes will change. They will cease to be jealous, cease to be arrogant, and will gradually find themselves unwilling and therefore unable to intentionally bring this kind of harm to others.

There are two sutras principally concerned with the Medicine Buddha. One is the *Sutra of the Medicine Buddha*, which is concerned with the principal Medicine Buddha, his twelve aspirations, and the benefits of recollecting his name. The second is the *Sutra of the Eight Medicine Buddhas*, or the *Sutra of the Eight Medicine Buddha Brothers*. The medicine buddhas referred to in this sutra are the previously mentioned principal one and seven others who form his retinue. The next stanza in the supplication is concerned with the other seven medicine buddhas. They each have their own individual aspirations. Some of them have made eight aspirations; some have made four. And the

recollection of their names brings benefits similar to those brought about by the recollection of the name of the principal Medicine Buddha.

**Excellent Name, Appearance of Stainless Fine
Gold,
Glorious Supreme One Free of Misery, Resounding
Dharma Melody,
King of Direct Knowledge, King of Melody,
And King of Shakyas, I supplicate you all.**

These seven buddhas are named Tshen Lek, or Excellent Name; Ser Zang Dri Me Nangwa, or Appearance of Stainless Fine Gold; Nya Ngen Me Chok Pal, Glorious Supreme One Free of Misery; Chö Drak Yang, Resounding Dharma Melody; Ngön Khyen Gyalpo, King of Direct Knowledge; Dra Yang Gyalpo, King of Melody; and Shakya Gyalpo, King of the Shakyas.

The next stanza is a supplication to the other deities in the mandala of the Medicine Buddha. These are not listed in their entirety, but each set of deities is mentioned briefly and a few of the names of each set are mentioned.

**Manjushri, Kyabdröl, Vajrapani,
Brahma, Indra, the Four Kings of the Four
Directions,
The twelve great Yaksha chiefs, and so forth,
I supplicate you, entire and perfect mandala.**

The first class of deities after the eight medicine buddhas are the sixteen bodhisattvas. Here three of them are mentioned: Manjushri, Kyabdröl, and Vajrapani. The next class are the ten protectors of the world, or of the directions, of whom two are mentioned, Brahma and Indra. The next class are the four great kings of the four directions, who are also protectors, not mentioned here by their individual names. Finally there are the twelve yaksha chieftains, or yaksha generals, and they too are just mentioned as a class. The last line of the stanza indicates that this is the supplication of the entire mandala of the Medicine Buddha.

Up to this point you have supplicated the principal Medicine Buddha and his retinue, and in doing so have supplicated the body of the Medicine Buddha and the mind or the emana-

tions of the Medicine Buddha. What remains is to supplicate the speech of the Medicine Buddha; having supplicated the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the mandala, you next supplicate the dharma.

**The Sutra of the Seven Tathagatas' Aspirations,
And the Sutra of the Medicine Buddha,
The treatise by the great abbot Shantarakshita,
and so forth,
I supplicate all the volumes of the genuine
dharma.**

Mentioned first are the two sutras taught by the Buddha Shakyamuni about the Medicine Buddha: the *Sutra of the Aspirations of the Seven Tathagathas*, which means the seven medicine buddhas in the retinue, and the *Sutra of the Medicine Buddha*, which is the principal medicine buddha. Mentioned in the same stanza are the shastras,* which also form part of the scriptural source for the Medicine Buddha tradition. These are referred to by mentioning as an example the treatise of the great abbot Shantarakshita, which is one of the oldest or original sources of the Medicine Buddha practice. And then you chant, "I supplicate the genuine dharma in the form of books." The reason for this is that in general, of course, dharma exists in the form of the written word. But it has a special significance in the case of this mandala. The self-generation—the form of the Medicine Buddha with which you identify your own body—is the Medicine Buddha alone, without retinue. But the front visualization is the Medicine Buddha surrounded by all the rest of the mandala. The first circle of the mandala immediately surrounding him consists of the other seven medicine buddhas and the volumes of the dharma as the eighth member of the retinue. During this supplication you visualize the Medicine Buddha seated in the sky in front of you in the center of a fully opened eight-petaled lotus and surrounding him, on each of the seven petals other than the one directly in front of him, the

***Editor's note:** Shastras are commentaries on the original teachings of the Buddha.

seven other medicine buddhas. On the lotus petal directly in front of the principal Medicine Buddha, you visualize the volumes of the dharma, the sutras, and so forth, that present his practice.

The next stanza of the supplication supplicates the lineage of this practice.

**Bodhisattva Shantarakshita, Trisong Deutsen,
and others,
Translators, scholars, kings, ministers,
bodhisattvas,
And all genuine lamas of the lineage,
Powerful One of the Dharma, and others, I
supplicate you.**

First mentioned are those who first brought this tradition of the Medicine Buddha from India to Tibet. Where it says bodhisattva, it means the abbot Shantarakshita, who bestowed this teaching on many students, including the Tibetan dharma king Trisong Deutsen, who is mentioned next. Then supplicated are all of the translators of Tibet and the panditas of India who enabled this tradition to spread to Tibet through translating it, teaching it, explaining it, and so on. Next are supplicated all of the other inheritors of this tradition, bodhisattvas who took the form of dharma kings, ministers and so on. Finally, all the gurus of the lineage of this practice are supplicated, and in particular one's own root guru. This supplication was composed, and the practice in general was edited, by the learned and accomplished master Karma Chagmey Rinpoche, and so he supplicates his own root guru, Chökyi Wangchuk, by name here.

The final stanza of the supplication dedicates the power of the supplication to the ends that you wish to achieve.

**Through the blessing of this supplication,
May the diverse temporal diseases and dangers
of this life be stilled.
At death, may all fear of the lower realms be
calmed.
Grant your blessing that afterwards we are born
in Sukhavati.**

The stanza reads, "Through the blessing of

supplicating in this way,”—which means by the blessing of supplicating the Medicine Buddha, his retinue of buddhas, bodhisattvas, and protectors, and all the teachers of the lineage, with devotion—“in the short run may the various diseases, dangers, and fears be pacified, and at the time of death, after all fear of being reborn in the lower realms has been pacified, grant your blessing that we may be born in Sukhavati, the land of great happiness and great bliss.” You are expressing your wish here to be protected from suffering both in the short term and in the long term. In the short term you are asking to be protected from sickness and various other dangers—from whatever can go wrong—in this life. In the long term, you are asking that you not be reborn in lower states or in lower realms, and that, once the danger and fear of being reborn in the lower realms have been transcended, you may achieve rebirth in Sukhavati, the realm of Amitabha. That completes the lineage supplication.

After the lineage supplication comes the taking of refuge and the generation of bodhicitta, which, as necessary preliminaries, are always recited at the beginning of any vajrayana practice. Each has a specific function. The function of taking refuge is to prevent your practice from becoming an incorrect path. The function of generating bodhicitta is to prevent your practice from becoming an inferior path. In the case of this practice, each of these aspects—refuge and bodhicitta—occupies two lines of a four-line stanza.

**NAMO to the sources of refuge, the three jewels
And the three roots, I go for refuge.**

The first line of the refuge identifies the sources of refuge, and they are two: the three jewels and the three roots. The three jewels, which are the common sources of refuge,* are the Buddha, in whom one takes refuge by accept-

ing him as a teacher and an example; the dharma, in which one takes refuge by accepting it as a path; and the sangha, in which one takes refuge by accepting the sangha as companions and guides on that path. Identifying the three jewels as the initial source of refuge indicates that by taking refuge in them you are freeing yourself from the possibility of an incorrect path.

Then there are the uncommon sources of refuge, which are unique to vajrayana. They are known as the three roots: the gurus, who are the root of blessing; the yidams or deities, who are the root of attainment; and the dharmapalas, or

dharmaprotectors, who are the root of activity. First of these are the gurus, who are the root of blessing. Blessing refers to the power of dharma—that which in dharma is actually effective, that actually brings the result of dharma. Obviously in practicing we need that effectiveness—that power or blessing of dharma—to enter into us. The original source of this blessing, of course, is the

Buddha, who first taught the dharma in this particular historical period. Unfortunately, we do not have the ability in this life to meet the Buddha or hear the Buddha’s speech directly. But we do have the opportunity to practice his teachings and to attain the same result we could have attained had we met the Buddha, because the essence of his teachings—and therefore the blessing or effectiveness of his teachings—has been passed down through the lineage, beginning with the Buddha himself and culminating with our own personal teacher or root guru. Therefore, the first source of refuge in the vajrayana are root and lineage gurus—and, especially the root guru—who are the source of the blessing of dharma.

The second source of refuge in the vajrayana, the second root, are the yidams, the deities, who are the sources of attainment or siddhi. While the guru is the source of the blessing and effec-

***Editor’s note:** common to all traditions of Buddhism.

tiveness of dharma, the guru cannot simply hand you the result or attainment of dharma practice. The source or root of that attainment is your practice. And your practice is embodied by the yidam or deity which is the basis of that practice. This means that you attain the result of dharma practice through engaging in the techniques of visualizing the body of the deity and engaging in the generation and completion stage practices which are associated with that deity. In this specific instance, the yidam is the Medicine Buddha. By identifying with the body of the Medicine Buddha, you attain the result, the attainments or siddhis, associated with the Medicine Buddha, which include the pacification of sickness and other sufferings.* The reason why these deities are referred to as *yidams*, which literally means mental commitment, is that in order to practice dharma you have to have a clear direction and strong focus in the technique and method of practice. The idea of yidam is that a certain practice and, in the case of vajrayana a certain deity, is identified by you

***Editor's note:** The practice of any yidam deity will result in the attainment of both the ultimate and relative siddhis. The ultimate siddhi is the stable realization of the radiant clarity or clear light nature of mind and all reality which we know as complete and perfect enlightenment or buddhahood. The relative siddhis are such qualities as loving kindness, compassion, intelligence, the wisdom of insight, spiritual power, protection and the removal of obstacles, good health, longevity, wealth, magnetism, etc. The practice of a deity yields first the relative siddhis. If we pray to Chenrezig, the first result beyond the simple development of concentration will be an increase in loving kindness and compassion in our experience. If we pray to Manjushri-Sarasvati, we will gradually experience greater perspicacity, strength of intellect, and facility with music and language. If we practice Mahakala, we will experience protection and the removal of obstacles, if we practice White Tara we will develop greater insight and longevity, if we practice Green Tara we will experience liberation from fear, the quick removal of obstacles, joy, compassion and upliftedness. If we practice Vajrayogini we will begin to develop mahamudra siddhi and increased warmth and magnetism. If one practices both the development and completion stages of any deity with sufficient devotion and application, one will eventually attain full realization, at which point all of the siddhis of all of the yidams will be spontaneously present.

The function of generating bodhicitta is to prevent your practice from becoming an inferior path

as that practice to which you commit yourself, that direction in practice which you will take. A yidam is the deity about which you think, "I will practice this. I will come to attain this result."

The third vajrayana source of refuge, the third root, are the dharmapalas, the protectors, who are the root of activity. Activity here means the protection of your practice from obstacles, so that you can successfully complete it and bring it to the appropriate result, so that you will be able to benefit others effectively in a way that is in accordance with the practice. In order to achieve these ends you need this blessing of activity or protection. This is gained chiefly from specific bodhisattvas who take the form of protectors, and, in certain cases, dakinis. In the specific case of the Medicine Buddha, when the Buddha taught the Medicine Buddha sutras, there were certain deities who committed themselves to protecting these teachings and all practitioners of these teachings, including even those who merely recollect the name of the Medicine Buddha. These protector deities are represented in the mandala, and they include the twelve Yaksha chieftains, the four great kings, the ten protectors of the world, and so on. In this way, you are taking refuge by accepting the Buddha as a teacher; his teachings, the dharma, as a path; the sangha as companions and guides on that path; and you are taking refuge by requesting the blessings of the gurus, attainment through the yidam, and the protection of the dharmapalas and dakinis. That is the taking of refuge, which serves to protect your practice from becoming an incorrect path.

Next comes the generation of bodhicitta, which serves to protect your practice from becoming an inferior path.

**To establish all beings in buddhahood,
I awaken a mind of supreme enlightenment.**

It is true, of course, that our basic motivation

for practicing is that we all wish to be free from suffering. This wish to be free from suffering is good. But it is often somewhat limited, which is to say that it is somewhat selfish, and it is often somewhat petty or small-minded in scope. The idea behind generating bodhicitta is to recollect that all beings without exception wish to be happy in exactly the same way and to exactly the same degree as we do. If you bring that to mind fully, then your aspiration to attain freedom for yourself will expand and become an aspiration to bring all beings to that same freedom. This aspiration has to be a long-term aspiration. It is not enough simply to aspire to free beings from a certain type of suffering, or to free them from the suffering they are undergoing now, or to free them from this year's suffering. For it to be the aspiration of bodhicitta, which is the fullest and most extensive motivation, you must have the attitude of wishing to establish beings in a state that will permanently free them from all suffering. Now, the only way that you can actually make beings permanently happy is to bring them to a state of full awakening, to buddhahood. So ultimately, the only way to protect beings from suffering is to establish them all in awakening, because they simply will not be happy until they have attained it. If you understand this—that all beings wish to be happy just as much as we do and that none of us can be happy until we attain awakening—then you will naturally give rise to bodhicitta, which is the intention to bring each and every being to a state of full and perfect awakening. Bodhicitta also includes within it, of course, the aspiration to be of any other assistance you can to beings along the way to accomplishing that ultimate goal. So it is not limited to any specific form of assistance.

If bodhicitta has been genuinely generated, then your motivation for practice will be re-

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flected in your thinking, “I am practicing in order to bring all beings to awakening; I am not practicing merely because I am afraid of my own suffering or because I wish to protect a few others from suffering or because I wish to protect all others from a few types of suffering.” In that way your motivation for the practice of the Medicine Buddha becomes bodhicitta, which is the attitude: “In order to bring all beings to a state of buddhahood I must first attain the state of the Medicine Buddha in order to be able to do so effectively, because in my present state I cannot effectively protect or benefit others.”

The refuge and the generation of bodhicitta are followed by the blessing or consecration of the place and the materials of practice.

**From the expanse of primordial purity come forth
Clouds of offerings filling the earth and sky
With mandalas, articles of royalty, and goddesses.
May they never be exhausted. PUD DZA HO.**

The reason for this stage of the practice is that at any given moment we have an impure perception* of and an impure attitude towards ourselves, towards others, and towards the environment as a whole. The more we invest in that impure perception or attitude—in the perception of things as impure—the worse our situation will become, and the more attachment and aversion and apathy we will find ourselves

***Editor's note:** It is important to note that these impure perceptions and attitudes are not stable, but are constantly changing moment by moment according to changing causes and conditions. Thus, in one moment one might think quite highly of oneself and actually see oneself as attractive, intelligent, and charming, and in a subsequent moment feel quite depressed about oneself and see oneself as tiresome and dreary. These perceptions and attitudes go through myriad changes, but they are all impure in the sense that we are always seeing *projections* of ourselves, others, and the environment, and not things as they truly are.

generating. The remedy for this is simply to change our attitude and to regard things as pure. Initially, of course, this takes some conscious effort. But by regarding things as pure, you will gradually start to perceive things as pure, which will purify the habitual tendency to perceive them as impure.

At this point the liturgy reads, “Clouds of offerings emanated from the primordially pure expanse fill the sky and the earth.” You imagine that the place in which you are practicing is a completely pure realm filled with every imaginable type of pleasant offering substance. This realm and these offerings, although you are imaging them, are not imaginary. They have been there from the very beginning, which is why it says in the liturgy “emanated from the primordially pure expanse.” From the very beginning, this is how things actually are, how things actually have been. You are not creating them by imagining them, nor are you fooling yourselves by imagining them. It is rather that our present mode of perception is like being in the midst of a nightmare from which we hope to wake up; and when we wake up from it, we will see things as they are. It is important to understand that you are imagining things to be what in fact they really are.

The offering substances contained in this pure realm include such things as offering mandalas, the seven articles of royalty, and various other kinds of offerings that are specified in the liturgy, together with gods and goddesses who present them, and so on. All of these offerings are inexhaustible; they are unlimited in amount, they are perfect in quality, they do not just disappear, and they never get used up. This section is both the consecration of the offerings and the consecration of the place of practice. And the attitude with which this is done is that you are starting to purify your otherwise impure perception of your environment—of your body, of your mind, and of

all the other materials and implements in your environment.

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Following the consecration of the offerings is meditation on the four immeasurables. The four immeasurables are four attitudes that are to be cultivated without limit, which is why they are known as immeasurable, or unlimited. Unlimited means no limit on “how much” and no limit on “for whom.” The first immeasurable, in the usual enumeration, is love. Immeasurable love means no limit on how much love and how much compassion you generate, and especially no limit on for whom you generate it.

**May all beings be happy and free of suffering.
May their happiness not diminish. May they
abide in equanimity.**

Intrinsic to all four of these attitudes is impartiality. When enumerated separately, impartiality is the fourth of the four immeasurables—love, compassion, empathetic joy, and impartiality. However, when you actually practice them, you need to begin with the cultivation of impartiality. We all have some degree of love, some degree of compassion, and some degree of empathetic joy. But in order to make these genuine and to make them immeasurable we need to cultivate impartiality, which is why it is to be cultivated first. When we say that we all have some degree of love, we mean that we all wish that some beings be happy and possess causes of happiness. We all also have some degree of compassion—we all wish that some beings be free from suffering and the causes of suffering. The problem is that we generally wish these things only for certain beings and do not particularly care about what happens to other beings. Although our love and compassion are indeed love and compassion, they are partial; and because they are partial,

they are impure and incomplete. If you cultivate impartiality, they become unlimited—which means that they become perfect. So the first stage in the cultivation of the four immeasurables is to cultivate impartiality towards beings, which means cultivating the attitude that you have the same amount of love and the same amount of compassion for all beings. And then, on that basis, you can strengthen the attitude of love—the desire that beings be happy and possess causes of happiness—and by strengthening it you will strengthen that attitude towards all beings in general. If you do not cultivate impartiality in the beginning, by strengthening your love for some you may generate aggression for others. Therefore, you need first to cultivate impartiality, and then, on the basis of impartiality, to cultivate the other three—love, compassion, and empathetic joy. However, in the text they are listed in the usual order, which places impartiality—here referred to as equanimity—at the end.

Essentially love consists of wanting others to be happy, and compassion consists of wanting others not to suffer. These two attitudes, of course, are excellent. But if they are present without any way to bring about what you wish—if your love is without any way to bring about the happiness of beings and your compassion is devoid of any way to remove the sufferings of beings—then they will actually become a cause of greater suffering and sadness for you. You will be more sensitive to the sufferings of others because of your attitude, but will feel unable to help. And so, instead of just the other being suffering, two beings will suffer—you will suffer as well. If, however, the attitudes of love and compassion include the understanding of how you can actually bring about happiness and freedom from suffering, then these attitudes do not become sources of depression. Therefore we

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expand the attitude of love from “may all beings be happy” to “may all beings be happy and possess causes of happiness,” and expand the attitude of compassion from “may all beings be free from suffering” to “may all beings be free from suffering and free from causes of suffering.”

While you cannot confidently expect to be able to make all beings happy on the spot, you can gradually cause beings to accomplish or accumulate causes of happiness and to avoid and get rid of causes of suffering. And because you understand that in the long term you will be able to make beings happy and free beings from suffering, then these attitudes of love and compassion become not only confident but actually joyous. In this way, the effect of love and compassion is no longer sadness and depression but empathetic joy, which is the third immeasurable. In this

way, you train or cultivate the four immeasurables as a preliminary for meditation on the Medicine Buddha.

Now to apply the four immeasurables to the specific context of the Medicine Buddha practice: Since the primary cause of suffering in this case is the physical affliction of sickness, and since that is the initial focus of this practice, you can focus on that in your meditation on the four immeasurables. Thinking that it is in order to remove the sickness of beings that you are praying to the Medicine Buddha, meditating upon the Medicine Buddha, reciting the Medicine Buddha’s mantra, and so on, you could formulate the four immeasurables in the following way: Immeasurable love would be the attitude, “May all beings possess the happiness of well-being and the causes of that.” Immeasurable compassion would be, “May all beings be free from sickness and the causes of sickness.” Immeasurable empathetic joy would be rejoicing in the well-being of others and in their freedom

from illness. And immeasurable impartiality would be generating these aspirations and attitudes not merely for those you know, such as your own friends and family, but for all beings without exception.

When you do the Medicine Buddha practice with the intention and aspiration to benefit yourself and others in this way, sometimes you will perceive an evident benefit: Either you or someone else will be freed from sickness in a way that you identify as a result of your practice. This will give you greater confidence in the practice. At other times, no matter how much you practice and how hard you pray and how many mantras you say, you will not perceive any evident benefit. And this will cause you to doubt the practice, and you will think, “Well maybe it doesn’t really

There is always a result from doing this practice, but the way in which the result will manifest is not absolutely definite

work.” But you need to remember that the benefit of this practice is not like the direct physical effect of the function of a machine, such as something that emits a laser beam.

There is always a result from doing this practice, but the way in which the result will manifest is not absolutely definite. So in your attitude towards the results of practice, you need to have a long-term focus. In that way you can keep the practice focused on the four immeasurables.

That completes the preliminaries to the Medicine Buddha practice. I am going to stop there for this afternoon, and we will conclude with the dedication of the merit of this teaching to the liberation of all beings.

[Dedication of merit.]

