



Medicine Buddha

The Visualization Uncovers the Inherent Purity of Phenomena

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

Yesterday we discussed the lineage supplication of this practice, the refuge and bodhicitta, the consecration of the practice place and the materials, and the meditation on the four immeasurables. Today we are going to begin with the actual visualization of oneself as the Medicine Buddha, which causes the blessing of the Medicine Buddha to enter into one, and the simultaneous visualization of the mandala of the Medicine Buddha in front of one, which serves as an object of one's supplication and a field for the accumulation of merit through making offerings.

The visualization is begun by purifying your perception of the entire world, including your own body and mind. This is done initially through the single recitation of the mantra of the pure nature or the mantra of the purity of dharmata:

OM SOBHAWA SHUDDHA SARWA DHARMA SOBHAWA SHUDDHO HAM

The meaning of the mantra reflects its significance. Following the initial syllable *Om*, the next word is *swabava*, which means the nature, and then *shuddha*, which means pure. Ordinarily the things that appear to us—the world of external appearances and our internal perceiving mind—appear to us as being impure because of the presence of the kleshas and other obscurations in our minds. What is meant here by the pure nature is that, although we perceive appearances and our minds in this impure way, this is not their actual nature. While they seem to be impure, in fact, in their nature, in and of themselves, they are pure. Following the statement “pure by nature,” are the words *sarwa*, which means all, and *dharma*, which means things. So the mantra states that “all things are pure in their nature.”

The term *dharma* usually has one of two meanings. One meaning is *sadharma* or the genuine dharma, the teachings of the Buddha, and the other meaning is thing, things in general, anything that can be known. Here it refers to things.

The mantra continues with the words *swabava shuddha* a second time and then *A Hum*. Because of the way that Sanskrit links words, the second *shuddha* and *A Hum* are joined together to become *shuddho ham*. Again *swabava shuddha* means pure in its nature or their nature; *A Hum* can mean self or the very embodiment of something. Here it is understood to mean that not only are all things pure in their nature, but that they are in and of themselves the very embodiment of that purity. So this mantra is essentially a statement of why the path can lead to the result. Because things are pure in their nature, because this purity is present within the nature of things, then it can manifest as experience and as a result—through taking that inherent purity as a path. For example, because sesame oil is present within sesame seeds, then by pressing the seeds you can extract the oil. If there were no oil present

within the sesame seeds, you could not get oil, no matter how hard you pressed the seeds. Because the hidden nature of things is their purity, then by regarding things as pure, you can directly experience them as pure; you can directly experience their purity. The *swabava* mantra is used here to point this out, and also to introduce or begin the samadhi which will culminate in the visualization of yourself as the Medicine Buddha.

Following the recitation of the *swabava* mantra, you say the Tibetan words, *tong pa nyi du jur*, which means that everything becomes empty or becomes emptiness.

Everything turns into emptiness.

This describes the beginning of the visualization. At this point you imagine that everything disappears, that everything becomes emptiness—not only in how it is but in how it manifests. However, it is important to remember that you are not pretending here that things are other than they are. You are using the imaginary dissolution of things into emptiness as an acknowledgment of the fact that things have been, from the very beginning,* empty in their nature.

The dissolution of ordinary impure appearances into emptiness is the first part of a two-step process that serves to counteract our usual superimposition of impurity onto appearances.** The second step is the emergence from or within that expanse of emptiness of the pure appearances which are the realm and palace of the Medicine Buddha.

From the depth of emptiness, this triple universe

***Editor's note:** Buddhism, of course, does not assert any sort of cosmological beginning, so the use of “beginning here” has the same meaning as “from beginningless time.”

****Editor's note:** This superimposition of impurity onto appearances is the same as referred to by Nagarjuna, in *In Praise of the Dharmadhatu*: “The phenomena that appear to the mental consciousness, the chief of them all, are conceptualized and then superimposed. When this activity is abandoned, phenomena's lack of self-essence is known. Knowing this, meditate on the dharmadhatu.” The *swabava* mantra and the ensuing sadhana, as well as all other sadhanas and completion stage practices are methods for training the mind to abandon this activity of superimposition.

becomes

The exquisite palace, where

The first step is to think that all of the impure appearances dissolve into emptiness, and the second is that from within that emptiness the realm and palace of the Medicine Buddha emerge. Now when you imagine that the place in which you are practicing has become the realm and palace of the Medicine Buddha, you do not limit this consideration to this world or to this planet alone. As it says in the liturgy, it is the entire billion worlds of this larger world system, or galaxy.

There are two ways that you can do this practice. The simplest way is to visualize yourself as the Medicine Buddha. The more elaborate way, which is indicated in the liturgy, is also to visualize the Medicine Buddha, surrounded by his retinue, present in front of you as well. It is easier for beginners to do the self-visualization alone; on the other hand, doing the front visualization as well gives one the opportunity to gather the accumulation of merit. In either case, in the midst of the realm of the Medicine Buddha, which you have visualized as emerging from the expanse of emptiness, there is a palace. This palace is square, and quite symmetrical. In the center of each of the four sides is a large gateway, each forming an entry into the palace. If you are doing the practice with both self and front visualizations, you need to visualize two palaces: one in the center of which you will sit as the self visualization; and one in front of you and somewhat elevated, which will serve as the residence for the front visualization.

On lion thrones, each with a lotus and moon disk on top

Appear deep blue HUNGS, the seed syllable of myself and the main figure visualized in the front,

The significance of the lion throne is primarily the sense of utter fearlessness—indicating the deity’s freedom from fear and danger of any kind

In the center of the self-visualization’s palace is a throne made of gold and jewels and other precious substances that is upheld by eight snow lions. The significance of the lion throne is primarily the sense of utter fearlessness—

indicating the deity’s freedom from fear and danger of any kind. On top of the throne is a fully opened lotus flower, on top of the center of which, lying flat, is a moon disc, on top of which you will be visualizing yourself seated in the form of the Medicine Buddha. In the center of the palace in the front visualization, you visualize a sixteen-petaled lotus, in the center of which you visual an eight-petaled lotus. In the center of the eight-petaled lotus, you visualize another lion throne, lotus, and moon disc seat, as in the self-visualization.

There are eight- and sixteen-petaled lotuses in the front visualization because there will be additional buddhas and bodhisattvas in those places.

Next, on top of the moon discs in both the front and self visualizations, you visualize a blue syllable HUM.* The HUM syllable on top of the moon disc in the self-visualization palace represents the essence of the mind or wisdom of the self-visualization deity, and the blue HUM on top of the moon disc in the front-visualization palace represents the essence of the mind or wisdom of the front-visualization deity. This particular syllable HUM is used because HUM is the sound of dharmata, the expression as sound of the nature** itself. It is blue because that is the color of the deity who will emerge from the syllable—the Medicine Buddha is blue, as is Vajradhara—but also because blue represents that which is unchanging and unfabricated.***

***Editor’s note:** These syllables are to be visualized in Tibetan script.

****Editor’s note:** the true nature, the ultimate nature

*****Editor’s note:** This color blue is generally described as deep blue, the color of an autumn sky high in the mountains.

Having visualized the syllables, you then visualize innumerable rays of light radiating from each of these syllables simultaneously. On the end of each ray of light are innumerable offering goddesses holding various offering substances which they present to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas in all the directions throughout space. This vast array of buddhas and bodhisattvas receives these offerings with pleasure, and as a consequence their nonconceptual compassion is aroused, which manifests as their blessings' coming back in the form of rays of blue light which dissolve into the HUM. Rays of light which went out bearing offerings are reabsorbed bearing blessings back into the two HUM syllables. Once again rays of light radiate outward from both HUM's simultaneously, this time purifying the entire external world, the entire universe, of everything in it that could possibly cause harm or suffering of any kind, and also purifying the mental continuums of all beings without exception of any kind of suffering or misery or cause of suffering. Then the rays of light are reabsorbed again into their respective HUM's. At that moment the syllables are instantly and simultaneously transformed into the Medicine Buddha.

From which, arises Menla, his body the color of lapis lazuli and radiating light.

After this transformation, the self-visualized Medicine Buddha that you are identifying with is now considered your own body, and the front visualization is in front of you. The Medicine Buddha is a brilliant blue in color—the color of a precious stone called vaidurya, generally considered to be lapis lazuli. In appearance the Medicine Buddha is luminous and majestic and radiates innumerable rays of light primarily the color of his own body. Yidams can appear in a number of different ways—peaceful or wrathful and frightening; nirmanakaya or sambhogakaya in form, and so on. The Medicine Buddha is peaceful and in the nirmanakaya form.

He is clothed in the three dharma robes.

Saying that he appears in nirmanakaya form means that, though some yidams appearing in sambhogakaya form wear lots of jewelry and silken robes and so on, the Medicine Buddha manifests in what is called the passionless appearance of a nirmanakaya buddha, wearing only the three dharma robes commonly worn by the monastic sangha: the inner and outer upper robes and the lower skirt.

The Medicine Buddha has two arms.

His right hand in the mudra of supreme generosity holds an arura.

His left hand in meditation mudra holds a begging bowl.

His right hand is extended, palm outward, over his right knee in the gesture called supreme generosity. In it he holds the *arura*, or myrobalan, fruit. This plant represents all the best medicines. The position of his right hand and the *arura* which he holds represent the eradication of suffering, especially the suffering of sickness, using the means of relative truth. Sickness can be alleviated by adjusting the functioning of interdependent causes and conditions by the use of relative means within the realm of relative truth, such as medical treatment and so on. The giving of these methods is represented by the gesture of the Medicine Buddha's right hand.

His left hand rests in his lap, palm upward, in the gesture of meditative stability or meditation, which represents the eradication of sickness and suffering—and, indeed, the very roots of samsara—through the realization of absolute truth. From the point of view of either relative truth or absolute truth, the fundamental cause of sickness and suffering is a lack of contentment and the addictive quality of samsara. Therefore, to indicate the need for contentment, in his left hand he holds a begging bowl.

Because the mind of the Medicine Buddha is stainless and pure, his form reflects this in its excellence and physical perfection.

With the major and minor marks complete, he sits in the vajra posture.

He is adorned by what are called the marks and signs, the primary and secondary indications of the awakening of a buddha. In all aspects of his physical form—the crown protuberance, or *ushnisha*, the image of wheels on the soles of his feet, and so forth—the Medicine Buddha is identical to the Buddha Sakyamuni, with the single difference that the Buddha Sakyamuni's skin is golden in color, while the Medicine Buddha is blue. Because the Medicine Buddha is immersed in an unwavering samadhi of absorption within the realization of the nature of all things, and because this samadhi is utterly stable, he is seated with his legs fully crossed in the vajra posture. You visualize yourself in this form, and you visualize the front visualization in the same form as well.

Everything described up to this point—the palace, the throne, and the Medicine Buddha—pertains to both the self and the front visualizations. In the case of the front visualization, however, you will remember that the lion throne sits in the center of an eight-petaled lotus, which in turn sits in the center of a sixteen-petaled lotus. Now on seven of the eight petals of the eight petaled lotus, which surround the Medicine Buddha in the front visualization—on the seven petals other than the one directly in front of the Medicine Buddha—are the seven other medicine buddhas, the Buddha Shakyamuni and six others. As is the principal Medicine Buddha, they are all adorned by the thirty-two marks and the eighty signs of physical perfection which grace the body of a buddha.

**In particular, on the lotus petals of the front visualization
Are the seven Buddhas, Shakyamuni and the others, and dharma texts.**

On the eighth petal, directly in front of the principal Medicine Buddha, is a volume of the dharma. The reason for this is that in the end it is the dharma that liberates us from samsara and

from sickness. When we talk about the *sadharma*, or the genuine dharma, we are referring fundamentally to the third and fourth of the four noble truths: the truth of the cessation of suffering and the truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering. The truth of cessation is the result of practice, which is the abandonment or transcendence of everything that is to be abandoned or transcended.* The truth of the path is the dharma we practice that leads to that transcendence. The dharma in essence is the experience and realization of the meaning of dharma** that is present within the minds of those who practice it and achieve its result. By extension, the dharma also refers to the tradition of passing on that meaning, and therefore

one visualizes that meaning passed on from the Buddha down to the present day in the form of books on the petal directly in front of the Medicine Buddha visualized in front.

**Around them are the sixteen bodhisattvas,
Around them are the ten protectors of the world,**

And the twelve great chiefs with their respective retinues.

The Four Great Kings are at the four gates.

Surrounding the seven Medicine Buddhas and the volumes of dharma, are sixteen bodhisattvas on the petals of the sixteen-petaled lotus. These are the sixteen bodhisattvas who were the main recipients of the teachings of the Medicine Buddha sutras given by the Buddha. They all manifest in the sambhogakaya form, wearing ornate jewelry and so forth. Beyond the perimeter of that lotus, but still within the palace of the front visualization, are twenty-two other main deities, each of whom has a retinue.

***Editor's note:** Which thereby brings about the cessation of suffering.

****Editor's note:** Expressed variously as the nonconceptual wisdom of emptiness, the nonconceptual wisdom of clear light, radiant clarity, primordial awareness, the empty, clear, and unimpeded nature of mind, etc.

On the Medicine Buddha's right, forming a semicircle to the right of the principal deities, are the ten protectors of the directions—otherwise known as the ten protectors of the world. These are deities such as Brahma, Indra, and so forth. Likewise, forming a semicircle on the left side of the palace are the twelve yaksha chieftains or generals. Each of these figures is surrounded by a vast retinue of their own. Finally, in the four gates or gateways of the palace visualized in front are the four kings of the gods. They are visualized here because they are protectors of the buddhadharma in general. Specifically whenever the Buddha taught, and especially whenever he exhibited miracles, he would emanate a magnificent magical palace like this one, and, to signify their function as protectors of his teachings, these four kings of the gods would guard each of the four gates as gatekeepers.

When you are practicing, if you can, visualize all of these deities. But if you cannot, do not be discouraged. Do not feel that somehow the practice has become ineffective or invalid because you cannot visualize each and every one of them. It is sufficient to generate as clear a visualization as you can of yourself as the Medicine Buddha and of the Medicine Buddha in front of you. If, in addition to that, you can visualize the seven additional medicine buddhas and the volumes of dharma, good. If, in addition to that, you can visualize the sixteen bodhisattvas, that is also good. But you should gauge the extent of the visualization to what you actually can do. In any case, the practice will be effective and will cause the blessing of dharma in general and the blessing of the Medicine Buddha in particular to enter you. It will serve its function and be effective, regardless of how you do the visualization. More important than how many deities you visualize is to understand what you are doing. And most important is to understand that by visualizing yourself as the Medi-

cine Buddha you are not pretending to be something that you are not, and that by visualizing the Medicine Buddha and his retinue in front of you, you are not pretending that they are in a place where they are not. By definition, buddhas are omniscient. Whenever someone thinks of them, brings them to mind, or supplicates them, they are aware of it and respond with their compassion and blessing. In the final analysis, the situation is identical to their actually being present anywhere they are thought of. Therefore, it is always appropriate to regard a buddha that is present in one's mind as actually being

present in front of one. When you think that the Medicine Buddha, together with his retinue, is present in front of you, it is really true that they are.

Visualizing yourself as the Medicine Buddha is also appropriate, because your fundamental nature—what you truly are—is buddha nature. Buddha nature is essentially the potential to attain awakening. At some point in the future you will attain the same awakening or buddhahood as the

Medicine Buddha himself. By visualizing yourself as the Medicine Buddha, you are assuming the appearance of what fundamentally you are even now and what manifestly you will be upon your awakening. It is to acknowledge this truth that you assume the aspect of the body, speech, and mind of the Medicine Buddha, which is, therefore, entirely appropriate.

While it is entirely appropriate to visualize yourself as the Medicine Buddha and to visualize the Medicine Buddha and retinue in front of you, you may still have some hesitation or doubt that the visualization is anything more than just a visualization. This is understood, and therefore the next phase of the practice is designed to counteract that doubt. In order to alleviate any residual doubts you may have, you next invite the actual wisdom deities and dissolve them into the visualization.

**When you think
that the Medicine
Buddha, together
with his retinue,
is present in
front of you, it is
really true that
they are**

From the three syllables in their three places and
the HUNG in their hearts,
Lights radiate, invoking from their own eastern
buddha realms, countless
Wisdom deities which dissolve into myself and
the one visualized in front.

The first step in inviting the wisdom deities is to visualize in the three places of the self-visualized Medicine Buddha, in the three places of the Medicine Buddha visualized in front, and, if possible, in the three places of the rest of the deities in the retinue, the three syllables, OM AH HUNG. Inside your head you visualize a white OM, which is the essence of the body of the Medicine Buddha; in your throat a red AH, which is the essence of his speech; and in your heart a blue HUM, which is the essence of his mind. Visualizing these in the body of the self-visualized Medicine Buddha and in the bodies of the deities visualized in front, you then think that from these syllables rays of light of the corresponding colors—and most particularly rays of blue light from the HUM syllables in the heart centers of the deities—radiate. This radiation of light invites, from their individual buddha realms, the deities of the mandala. Each of the eight Medicine buddhas—the principle one and the seven buddhas of the retinue—has his own realm, all of which are understood to be in the eastern direction.* From these different pure realms the eight Medicine Buddhas and their retinues of deities are invited and they all dissolve into you as the Medicine Buddha and into the front visualization. In practice you do not think that they immediately dissolve into you, but that they present themselves and are present in the sky in front of you, between the two palaces of the self and front visualizations.

Having described the visualization, you then recite a stanza that is an actual invitation to the deities to approach.

HUNG
The eight Menla companions and all deities

without exception
I invite here to this place. Kindly rain upon us
your great blessings.
Bestow the supreme empowerment on those who
are worthy and faithful.
Dispel false guides and obstacles to long life.
NAMO MAHA BEKENDZE SAPARIWARA
BENZA SAMAYADZA DZA BENZA
SAMAYA TIKTRA LEN

First you invite the eight Medicine Buddhas together with their retinues, saying, “Please come to this place and rain down your great blessing upon me, the practitioner, and upon others.” Then you ask that they, “Bestow the supreme empowerment upon me, the fortunate one, who has faith,” and that, by so doing, they, “Please dispel obstacles, such as obstacles to life and longevity and other obstacles in general.”

The mantra that follows seals and reinforces this act of invitation. The mantra means, “Great King of Medicine, together with your retinue, *vajra samaya jaja*.”** *Vajra samaya* means unchanging commitment or samaya. Here you are reminding these buddhas of their commitment to liberate beings. From their initial generation of bodhicitta, up to and including the moment of their attain-



***Editor’s note:** Unlike Amitaba’s realm of Sukhavati or Dewachen, which is thought of as being in the western direction, these buddha realms of the Medicine Buddhas are thought of as being in the eastern direction. However, it is important to understand how these directions are understood in the practice of vajrayana. All deities are thought of as facing east. If you are visualizing yourself as the Medicine Buddha or as Chenrezig or as Vajrayogini, regardless of the direction in which you would find their individual buddha realms, you are facing east. And the same is true of the deities of the front visualization, who are also thought of as facing east. Therefore, if in “real space” you happen to be facing south or north, as far as the visualization is concerned, you are still facing east. You would not think that the deities resided in their buddha

realms somewhere far off over your left or right shoulder. “To a yogi or yogini,” as Kalu Rinpoche once said, “all directions are east.”

****Editor’s note:** Sanskrit, like Latin, is no longer a spoken language. Here the translator is reading the mantra in what scholars suspect was the original Sanskrit pronunciation. The mantras, as they appear in this text, are our English versions of the Tibetan versions of the original Sanskrit mantras. In this case *Vajra samaya ja ja* reads *Benza samaya dza dza*.

ment of full buddhahood, the motivation for their entire path was the wish to liberate beings. They therefore have an unchanging commitment—a vajra-like or indestructible samaya—to the liberation of beings. So when you say these words, *vajra samaya jaja*, you are saying to these buddhas, “You must come here and bless me because you have committed yourself to do so.” At that point, then, think with confidence that all of the wisdom deities of the mandala have actually come and are present in the sky in front of you.

The mantra that follows is *vajra samaya tiktralen*. *Vajra samaya* means unchanging commitment, and *tiktra* means to remain stable. With this mantra you are saying, “Through the power of your unchanging commitment to the welfare and liberation of beings, please dissolve inseparably into me and remain within me stably or permanently.” At that point you think that all of the invited deities, reminded of their commitment and with their compassion aroused in that way, dissolve both into the self visualization and into the deities of the front visualization. And at that point think that your body, speech, and mind visualized as the Medicine Buddha and the body, speech, and mind of the Medicine Buddha have become indivisible.*

We are going to stop there for this morning, but if you have any questions, you are welcome to ask them.

Question: Does the Medicine Buddha ever have a consort and, if so, what is her name?

Rinpoche: In this case, because he is visualized in the form of a supreme nirmanakaya, he does not. There could be cases in which he is visualized in a sambhogakaya form with a consort in order to indicate the unity of upaya and prajna—

it is possible, but I cannot think of an instance, and so I cannot say his consort’s name is this or that.

When you say these words, *vajra samaya jaja*, you are saying to these buddhas, ‘You must come here and bless me because you have committed yourself to do so’

Question: Rinpoche, in the visualization, there are eight petals and then sixteen petals around that. Petals aren’t really that large and so it is difficult for me to visualize each of them containing a bodhisattva and his retinue. Is it like a window to their world or what is the best way to visualize this realistically?

Rinpoche: In pure realms flowers can get really big. But if it makes it easier to relate to, these are basically thrones that are somewhat connected with one another and that have the basic shape or style of

***Editor’s note:** In connection with this process it is helpful to be familiar with two terms: *samayasattva* and *jnanasattva*, which could be roughly translated as “commitment being” and “primordial awareness being.” The *samayasattva* is one’s own personal visualization which one performs in order to maintain one’s commitment to one’s lama and to the practice of one’s yidam. The *jnanasattva* is sometimes thought of as the “actual” deity which is a manifestation of the clear light nature of mind or the radiant clarity of mind and reality, which for the purposes of the visualization is thought of as residing off somewhere in its own particular buddha realm. When the *jnanasattva* finally dissolves into the *samayasattva*, the *jnanasattva* and the *samayasattva* are thought to have become one and indivisible. In the *ati yana*, the *samayasattva* and the *jnanasattva* are considered from the beginning to be simultaneously present.

In *The Heart of the Buddha*, Chögyam Trungpa describes this process from a psychological perspective as it relates to the practice of Vajrayogini: “The visualization of oneself as Vajrayogini is called the *samayasattva*: the ‘sacred bondage of one’s being.’ The *samayasattva* is basically the expression of the samayas of body, speech, and mind. It expresses one’s commitment to the teacher and the teachings and one’s trust in one’s fundamental state of mind.

“Having visualized the *samayasattvas* of basic being, one invites what is known as *jnanasattva*. The *jnanasattva* is another level of being or experience. *Jnana* is a state of wakefulness or openness, whereas *samaya* is an experience of bondage, in being solidly grounded in one’s experience. *Jnana* literally means ‘wisdom’ or, more accurately, ‘being wise.’ One invites this state of wisdom, this level of wakefulness, into one’s own imperfect visualization, so that the visualization comes alive with a feeling of openness and humor.”

flower petals.

Question: Rinpoche talked about the front visualization as being a field for the accumulation of merit. Why does the front visualization have something to do with accumulating merit?

Rinpoche: In this practice, as the liturgy indicates, merit is accumulated through paying homage and making various offerings—the mandala offering and the offering of praises and so forth—primarily to the front visualization. You accumulate merit by performing offerings to that in which you have absolute confidence, which is the actual Buddha. Therefore, it is easier to accumulate merit by making offerings to the front visualization, which you are perceiving as different from and possibly superior to yourself.

Question: When doing the mantra towards the end of the practice, do we focus our attention primarily on ourself and the mantra in our heart or do we alternate attention between the Buddha in front and ourselves?

Rinpoche: You apply it to both. You visualize the seed syllable and the mantra garland within the heart of both the self and front visualizations, and in both cases, you identify it as the embodiment of the wisdom or mind of the deity. Then normally you would think that rays of light radiate from the seed syllable and mantra garland in the heart of the self visualization. These rays of light strike and enter the hearts of the deities of the front visualization, arousing their compassion, causing rays of light to come from the front visualization and to dispel the sickness and suffering of all beings and so forth.

Question: I can't manage to visualize the front visualization and myself as the Medicine Buddha simultaneously. Should I alternate between

them? Should I spend a chunk of time doing the front visualization and then come back to the self visualization for an amount of time?

Rinpoche: That's fine. You can go back and forth.

Question: Quickly or slowly or what?

Rinpoche: The best thing is to go back and forth as frequently as is comfortable.

Question: Rinpoche, does this particular sadhana have any special significance for you? Is this of special significance to the Thrangu lineage?

Rinpoche: This does not have any particular significance for me or my monastery, except that it is one of the three Medicine Buddha practices which is normally done in the Kagyu tradition as a whole. There is a long one, a medium one, and this one, which is the short one. We are practicing this one because it is the short one.

Question: What Tibetan word is being translating as “pure?” And do you translate this word in any other way?

Translator: *Takpa*.

Question: Is it always translated as “pure?”

Translator: By *me*, yes. A lot of people do a lot of different things; I cannot guarantee that they always call it “pure.”

Question: Maybe Rinpoche could say what the word means.

Rinpoche: You can think of synonyms for pure as being “free of impurity,” which by extension would mean “free of defect or imperfection.” It

You accumulate merit by performing offerings to that in which you have absolute confidence, which is the actual Buddha

would indicate that which is stainless, that which is perfect, flawless, and so on.

Question: Rinpoche, is there a particular significance for the light radiating from the eastern Buddha realms?

Rinpoche: In the sutras of the Medicine Buddha, the Buddha described their realms—the principal realm of the principal Medicine Buddha and the other realms of the attendant buddhas—as all being in the east.

Question: When we visualize light going out to the universe, does that include everything? Rocks and trees and chairs and buildings?

Translator: At which point? During the creation of the deity or during the recitation of the mantra?

Question: During the recitation of the mantra.

Rinpoche: Yes. Initially, before the generation of the deity, you purify your perception of the

entire universe by visualizing that it all dissolves into emptiness. Theoretically, from that point onward all impurity has ceased. But when you get to the repetition of the main mantra you can renew that purification by once again bringing to mind impure appearances and purifying them with the rays of light which emerge from the heart of the deity.

Question: Rinpoche, in other visualization practices, sometimes there's a sense of seeing one's own root teacher in the form of that deity. Is there anything like that in this practice?

Rinpoche: Yes, it is appropriate to identify the front visualization with your root guru. People relate to the front visualization in slightly different ways. If they feel particularly devoted to the Medicine Buddha, then they will primarily think of the front visualization as the actual Medicine Buddha. But they can also think of the front visualization as in essence their root guru.

So we will conclude by dedicating the merit.

