

MEDICINE BUDDHA

teachings by

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DEDICATION

To my main teachers

John Garrie Roshi, Namgyal Rinpoche and

Norbu Namkhai Rinpoche

who tirelessly shared their wisdom and compassion,
and to the many students who attended the teachings.

A bow of deep gratitude for your support.

MEDICINE BUDDHA

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MEDICINE BUDDHA

Motivation

Medicine Buddha is a practice to strengthen the wholesome states in us, to enable us to support others facing challenging times.

In the Medicine Buddha meditation the first aspect to contemplate and to adjust is our motivation. The text says to '*Reflect on our illness and pain and on the illness and pain experienced by others and generate a strong desire to be free of pain and suffering and to help others to be free of pain and suffering*'. This is asking us to meet and to know the inevitable truth that there is suffering, to be moved yet not overwhelmed by this truth. That in turn cultivates compassion, which is the ability to experience the suffering of others plus the ability to do something about it. This reflection on the pain and suffering experienced by ourselves and others is not meant to be depressing, on the contrary it can foster an unshakeable desire to be of service in whatever form is possible.

The second sentence in the text recognises that this is quite a task and that we need some help to be able to support others in times of shock, despair and pain: '*As an effective means to do this, we will commit ourselves to invoking the healing forces within us, embodied in the Medicine Buddha. To the means of actualising those forces and to those who are able and willing to support us in this process.*' This takes into account that we all have limitations and if we do not want to feel overwhelmed or inadequate when faced with the suffering of self and others, we need to train ourselves, to find a suitable practice, teacher and friends who will support us in this journey. Here, what is offered is the practice of the Medicine Buddha but there are many other practices which will do just as well.

Establishing Blue in the Body

Preparatory Practice

- Lying on your back, knees up and big toes slightly pointing inwards, place your hands in a triangle around the *hara* (three fingers width below the navel) – thumbs meet at the navel, index fingers touching to form the triangle. Breathe in the blue colour of *lapis lazuli* which is the colour of anti-fear, anti-paranoia; breathing out, visualise the thumbs and fingers going deep into the body, as if touching the spine.
- The hands again meet in a triangle on the *hara*. Visualise deep blue in the belly, the hands sinking in; send it down into the pelvic area, sacrum, legs, then up the spine into the arms and head. Vibrant, radiant blue and flecks of gold, like stars in deep space.
- Place a stone of *lapis* on the *hara* with your fore-fingers and thumbs around it in a diamond shape. Feel the blue entering deep into the spine then spreading through the energy channels as a slow liquid.

Whole body practice

Look at something of the colour blue; breathe in the colour through the nostrils, to the finger tips, and into the whole body. Feel it going through the body.

1. Lie flat on your back, your head resting on a blue cloth; breathe in the blue, and breathing out, let it spread through the body. Imagine a light (in weight) *lapis lazuli* blue cloth covering the whole of the body; something that makes you feel good, like silk. If a cloth feels oppressive, imagine a blue mist, or light, or a hand.
2. Through the left foot, breathe in the blue colour up the leg to the hip and out down to the left foot. The same on right side. Seven times for both.

3. Then breathe in the colour through the left foot up to the hip, across (still on the in-breath) to the other hip and back down the right leg on the out-breath. *Is the order essential?* Yes it is, left to right.
4. Breathe in the colour through the left hand, up to the shoulder and back down on the out-breath, to the hand. Do the same on the right side, seven times for both.
5. Then breathe in the blue colour through the left hand up the arm, across the shoulders, and down the right arm on the out-breath.
6. Breathe in the colour from the base of the spine to the base of the skull and back down the whole spine on the out-breath.
7. Then from the base of the skull to the forehead (on the in-breath) and back again on the out-breath. Coming over the outside of the skull, but if you go through the inside it doesn't matter. By this stage you should be already blue all over.
8. To finish, breathe in blue from the toes to the top of the head and breathing out down again to both feet, focusing on the whole body, like a wave.

The instruction is to do each step seven times. Don't be too technical about it, it is just a device to feel the effect of the lapis lazuli blue in the body. It is good to have a system, to keep the mind focused. The idea at this stage of the practice is to be gentle with yourself, to calm down, slow down, walk with the blue colour. Make notes on how this practice is changing you which could be in just one word. If your mind becomes agitated, bring in the colour blue. Study the effect of the colour.

Healing the senses

Be in an easeful position, look at the colour of *lapis lazuli* blue stones on a blue cloth, focus on the actual stone. Feel drawn into the stillness of the blue, like merging into deep space. You are going to be bathing the body in blue light.

1. Start with imagining a source of *lapis lazuli* blue light above your head – it could be a cloud, or a big stone, use your imagination - showering the body like a waterfall, bathing the whole body in blue.
2. Then bathe the right eye in blue, then the left eye. Stay with each of the senses until you feel some change, a softening, a shift. You may need to stay longer with one side than the other. Then the same with the divine eye, the single eye. Right and left is dualistic; single is divine, going beyond the duality.
3. Then do the same with the ears: starting with the right ear, then the left ear, and the divine, the radiant ear which is located between the two ears in the centre of the skull. If you listen with this ear, you hear in a way you have not heard before; listen for subtle sounds, the movement of insects.
4. The nose, bathe the right and the left nostrils. A small channel goes up from the nostrils to the top of the head, round the side and down alongside the spine, gathering at the *hara* below the navel. Then do the tip or bridge of the nose, whichever feels stronger, for the single smell.
5. Then taste, bathe the lower lip and base of the mouth below the tongue in blue, and then the upper lip and roof of the mouth. For the single taste, center at the tip of the tongue or the whole tongue.
6. Bathe the whole right side of the body with blue, then the left side – this is the sense of touch. For the inner spine, center at the spine, or the central channel running inside the body.
7. Bathe the right side of the brain in blue, then the left side, and then the whole brain; this is contacting the sense of mind. As we go from the more gross senses to the most subtle the mind comes last.

8. To finish, shower the whole body a couple of times with *lapis lazuli* blue light, as a final cleansing. Then come back to the rise and fall of the belly and on the third out-breath come out of the meditation

Do a short review, take five minutes to look back on experiences and remember. When lying in bed, practice this casually to calm the body before falling asleep. Some may not see the colour, so stay with the vibration. From time to time hold a blue cloth, look at it, and feel the vibration.

How did this feel for you?

Q: Lots of memories were coming up and dissolving.

A: That is very good, you felt safe and calm enough for these to arise.

Q: A relief at the calmness of my mind, it stopped chattering – A moment of victory!

Put a stone of *lapis lazuli* in water for a while then drink the water, taking in some of the stone's properties.

Deep Blue meditation

Always bring the mind home, to the body, to the movement of the body. Gently but firmly, bring the mind home.

1. First place a cloth on the floor, the colour deep *lapis lazuli* blue. Come closer to the cloth, to sit beside it, and you look at it. We focus on the colour blue and the changes that the colour brings into your body. So at the moment just look at it; from time to time close your eyes, look at it again, and see how gradually it is changing how you feel in your body, your mind. And to stay focused you may mentally say 'deep blue', or '*lapis* blue'.
2. And now imagine that you breathe in the colour blue, and when you breathe out, imagine the colour spreading through your body; breathing in the deep blue, breathing out spreading the blue. When you breathe in, imagine breathing in slowly like you are sucking the colour in, sucking it strongly through the nostrils; breathe out slowly letting the colour spread through your body. Do that seven times, then return to normal breathing for a short while, then seven times again. Do three cycles of seven breaths.
3. Now I would like you to lie down on your back with your head touching the blue cloth and your legs up with bended knees. Position your hands near your navel forming a triangle with your two index fingers and thumb, the thumbs touching the navel, the index fingers touching each other. The hands are flat on your belly. Imagine in your triangle below the navel *lapis lazuli* blue light.
4. Imagine a beam of light, of blue light. Feel the blue entering your body through the triangle. Your hands are soft on your belly but imagine them going deeper into your belly, almost touching the spine as you go deeper into the blue. Establish a strong presence of the blue in the triangle, let it go deep into your body.
5. And now notice in your body where the blue wants to travel to, where does it go next? Again to stay focused you may want to say mentally 'deep blue, *lapis* blue'. With each out-breath, imagine your hands as if going deeper into your body, almost touching your back and notice where else the blue travels to in your body.
6. Now imagine the *lapis lazuli* blue flooding your body. Imagine or feel the presence of the deep blue everywhere in your body: in your head, in your arms, chest, pelvis, legs, feet and in all the internal organs.

In your own time, take ten minutes outside processing the practice.

Medicine Buddha Practice ***Awakening the Healing Potential Within***

For stability of posture and spine breathe in blue up the spine from the base of the spine to the base of the skull, and breathe out blue through the spine downwards to its base. Do this a few times.

Medicine Buddha Sadhana

Motivation

Reflect on your own illness and pain and of the illness and pain experienced by others and generate a strong desire to be free of pain and suffering and to help others to be free of their pain and suffering. As an effective means to do this, I will commit myself to invoking the healing forces within me embodied in the Medicine Buddha, to the means of actualising these forces and to those who are able and willing to support me in this process.

Taking refuge (3x)

I go for refuge to the Medicine Buddha, the means to actualise healing and to those who support me in my healing.

By the creative potential I accumulate through this practice, may I heal myself for the sake of healing all others.

The Four Immeasurables

May all beings have healing and the causes of health

May all beings be free of illness and the causes of illness

May all beings never be parted from the complete well-being, free of ill-health

May all beings abide in equanimity, free from attachment and anger that hold some close and others distant

The Seven Limb Prayer

Reverently, I pay homage with my body, speech and mind,

And present clouds of every type of offerings – those actual and imagined.

I acknowledge all my destructive actions, accumulated since beginning-less times,

And rejoice in the skilful deeds of all holy and ordinary beings.

Please, remain until the end of cyclic existence,

And turn the wheel of Dharma for all living beings.

I dedicate the skilful actions of myself and others to the great awakening.

Visualisation

Now visualise your body hollow, empty from the top of your head to the tip of your fingers and toes. Imagine just space inside yourself. Empty your mind of any distraction, pre-occupation. Just relax in the natural state.

From this place of emptiness visualise the Medicine Buddha either above the crown of your head or in front of you ‘). He is sitting on a lotus seat on top of which is a moon cushion. He is radiant, translucent, blue in colour and is alive and vibrant. His right hand is in the gesture of supreme

generosity and holds an Aurora (myrobalan) plant. This conveys the meaning of giving supreme medicine. In the gesture of concentration, his left hand holds an alms bowl, outside colour blue, inside white, which contains medicinal nectar – the ambrosia of life containing thousands of different herbs and minerals. He is the embodiment of all the powerful dormant forces of healing within you.

Imagine the place where we are meditating as a beautiful scenic place. The whole of space is filled with rainbow lights and offering dakas and dakinis who hold objects of offering – everything that is pleasing to the senses and mind. Imagine the place in a way that is beautiful and nurturing for us.

Prayer of request

I strongly request you o Medicine Buddha, please grant me your blessing, that I may be able to fully turn to the dharma and that my practice will yield realisations and insights.

I strongly request you o Medicine Buddha, please grant me your blessing, that I may Purify my body, speech and mind and thus heal myself by developing my own innate Medicine Buddha nature.

I strongly request you o Medicine Buddha, please grant me your blessing, that I may completely alleviate the suffering, both mental and physical, of every single sentient being.

Now imagine that the Medicine Buddha is delighted by our 7 limb practice, offerings and requests and he emanates and radiates WHITE light from his heart and the pores of his skin and alms bowl. The light pours like rain into our crown and completely fills our body and mind. The light completely purifies all our diseases, afflictions, negative karma and mental obscurations. In the nature of light and radiance, my body becomes as clean, clear and pure as crystal. #)

Whilst visualising this purification, recite the Medicine Buddha mantra 21 or 108 x:

Mantra Recitation

Tayata Om Bhekhandze Bhekhandze Maha Bhekhandze Randza Samungate Svaha (short mantra)

Om Namoh Bhagawate Bhekhandze, Guru Bendurya Prabha Randza, Tathagataya Arhate Samsyaksam Buddhaya, Tayata Om Bhekhandze Bhekhandze Maha Bhekhandze Randza Samungate Svaha (long mantra)

Then visualise the Medicine Buddha emanating BLUE light from his heart, the pores of his skin and alms bowl which pours like rain into the crown of our head, completely filling our body and mind. The light completely destroys all illness and disease and energises our whole being. In the nature of light and radiance, my body becomes energised, strong and clear. # *)

Whilst visualising this transmission of energy, recite the Medicine Buddha mantra 21 or 108 x

Now imagine that the Medicine Buddha comes to the crown of your head and reduces in size to about the size of your thumb. He enters into your crown and travels down the central channel to your heart. At that time you dissolve into emptiness and arise as a perfectly enlightened Medicine Buddha. “)

From your heart, from your entire body and from your alms bowl, you send out purifying white light and healing, energising blue light to all sentient beings in all the ten directions. Imagine that all

sentient beings are purified and transformed into Medicine Buddhas and are completely healed of all illness, pain and suffering.

Whilst doing this visualisation, recite the Medicine Buddha mantra 21 or 108 x

At the end of recitation of the mantra, be free of the concept that beings and Buddhas are different. Buddhas and beings all dissolve in emptiness as water dissolves in water, as space in space. Remain in the inexpressible state, which is free from thoughts and concepts, mingling with the nature of Buddha's body, speech and mind.

Dedication

By the creative potential I have accumulated through this practice of the Buddha of Healing, may I become a skilled physician, a health-giver of medicine and a caring nurse in order to heal all the world of its illness and pain.

May I quickly become a Buddha of Healing and lead each and every living being to the awakened realm through these skilful actions.

May the supreme jewel of the Awakening Heart that has not arisen, arise and grow,
And may that which has arisen never diminish, but increase more and more.

#): we can imagine all other sentient beings (or someone to whom we want to send purifying and healing energy) seated around us and receiving this light in the same way

*) : if we are using or giving medicine, we can imagine that this blue light from the Medicine Buddha's alms bowl flows into the medicine and empowers it, transforming the medicine into a nectar that bestows freedom from illness. This blesses the medicine and we can give it, or take it with the thought that it has the added qualities of the ambrosia of immortality and exalted wisdom, bestowing freedom from illness. We can also visualise when taking medicine, that it transforms into the nectar of the Medicine Buddha, and as we take it, the nectar fills our body purifying our illness and healing our body.

‘): an alternative visualisation is to absorb the Medicine Buddha into your heart and visualise him sitting on a moon disc at your heart

‘): When visualising the Medicine Buddha in front of us, we include a throne supported by 8 lions (the throne symbolises renunciation). On top of the throne sits a lotus cushion, sun disc and moon disc.

While doing massage or other healing practice, we can think that the Medicine Buddha is in me and light goes from my heart through my hands into the person. We can also do this long distance by visualising ourselves as the Medicine Buddha, or Medicine Buddha at our heart, or in front or above the crown of that person and visualise nectar flowing into the person whilst reciting the mantra.

May all beings be well, happy and skilful

With love, thanks and appreciation to: Ven. Zasep Tulkyu Rinpoche, Ven. Geshe Sonam Rinchen and Ven. Jampa Gendun

Commentaries on the sadhana

Motivation

We return to the beginning of the *sadhana*¹ where we are asked to:

Reflect on our own illness and pain and of the illness and pain experienced by others and generate a strong desire to be free of pain and suffering and to help all others to be free of their pain and suffering.

As an effective means to do this, I will commit myself to invoking the healing forces within me embodied in the Medicine Buddha, to the means of actualising these forces and to those who are able and willing to support me in this process.

The first part is very important, it is about our motivation for doing this practice, we call it to ‘adjust our motivation’. To ask ourselves ‘why am I doing this practice?’, ‘what is the reason, what is the drive?’ What is your first reaction to this, does it appear to be too much? The idea is not to be discouraged by the illness and pain but to be moved just enough to want to do something about it. So we use human emotion to propel ourselves to do something better and bigger, to generate enough energy. The sentence ‘*and generate...*’ is about your intention, to generate compassion: ‘I want to do something about it’; first for yourself, then for others.

The second part starting with ‘*As an effective...*’ we are asking for the help of the Medicine Buddha. We need a strong support otherwise we get discouraged, or are burnt out, tired, distressed. So we ask someone wiser, the Medicine Buddha, for help.

While the first part of the text is about intention, the second part is all about how to do it, about skilful means, about practising.

Visualisation

The hollow body is all about emptying. The spirit of this is you start with a blank page, an empty vessel to be filled again, to construct the imagery. The void is the foundation of everything, then to construct the Buddha field of the Medicine Buddha.

Symbolism in the *sadhana* is knocking at the level of the senses. The rectangular lion throne is a solid foundation, stability, the ground of being. The white moon disc represents *bodhicitta*, the drive for awakening. The lotus, a beautiful flower, is a positive energy field. The lotus grows from deep in the mud on a long stem, representing evolution, from your own history and from the general ground of being to awakening. As you go into the meditation it touches on your individual consciousness as well as collective consciousness. So you can bring in anything that relates from our culture – it could be a magnolia, a water lily instead of a lotus.²

For inspiration get a picture, a postcard of the Medicine Buddha.

Prayer of Request

The Prayer of Request is in three parts:

1. motivation and request for help to be able to ‘fully’ turn towards the dharma, to be not just part-time practitioners
2. purification, from that place (of full-time practice) you have the possibility of purifying yourself. Purification means letting go of the unwholesome and cultivation of the wholesome - only then can you be in a position to help others

¹ *Sadhana* is the text followed for a particular deity practice such as the Medicine Buddha

² See Appendix-2: student’s contribution

3. you are doing everything you can to get into the position to help others

Mantra

Emanating white light is purification, eliminating the unwholesome, pacifying. But pacification is not enough, you need the blue light is to energise, build up the positive, to balance.

When you are visualising white light pouring through the crown of your head – name what it is you want to purify in your body or mind, so it is washed away and transformed into a crystal. When blue light is pouring through the crown, think ‘my body becomes energised, strong and clear’, feel the strength; the blue light is strengthening so name something in you that you would like to be strengthened. Try alternating white and blue light – visualise this, find your own way.

The *sadhana* is not just words to read out, make it personal. So when the text says the ‘*body becomes clean and clear as crystal*’, visualise that.

You can keep your eyes open and get involved with the shrine objects, to remain alert and sharp. It is intended to have beautiful objects to keep your attention, a beautiful room.

The power of the *mantra* is purification and strengthening. Remember this practice works on the unconscious level. With your mind and with your *mantra* you have invited the presence of the Medicine Buddha in this room. This is what this practice is, with the mind and with the vibration you are in the presence of the Medicine Buddha. Did you feel the presence of the Medicine Buddha above your head? Just an impression, it doesn’t have to be detailed. I know you are all Medicine Buddhas now, I can feel the stillness in you, in the room. The power of the *mantra* is your mind intention and the *mantra* supports that. There is some power in the words but more important is your intention, your motivation. When we use a *mantra* we join in the energy of everybody else who has used it. You join the ‘club’.

Saying the *mantra* is a technique for training the mind. It uses three senses: body, through posture, breathing and working with the rosary/*mala*; speech, through working with the words, with the *mantra*; and mind, through the visualisation.

TAYATA, OM BHEKANDZE, BHEKANDZE MAHA BHEKANDZE RANDZA SAMUNGATE SOHA

The meaning of the *mantra*:

- *TAYATA* is a name for the Buddhas, or sometimes translated as ‘thus it is said’ – usually to say only once at the beginning of the first *mantra* recitation
- *OM*, in this context, is just a sound
- *BHEKANDZE* is a name for the Medicine Buddha, meaning healer – the first repetition is inner healing, the second is outer (healing others)
- *MAHA* means great so *MAHA BHEKHANDZE* is great healer, being the ‘secret’ dialogue between inner and outer. Again this you will not find in any book, it comes from Namgyal Rinpoche.
- *RANDZA* is king
- *SAMUNGATE* means going beyond suffering
- *SOHA* or *svaha*, means with joy

You can emphasise a different one of the *BHEKANDZE*’s – inner, outer, or dialogue – this helps concentration, to avoid distraction. Try to stay committed. Sometimes make the visualisation stronger, or the *mantra*, involving the two different sides of the brain (left and right). It is primarily an insight practice; the visualisation, shrine and the *mantra* are tools. The second *mantra* recitation in the *sadhana*, while receiving blue light, energises and strengthens after white light purification, letting go and emptying. The third *mantra* recitation is the union with the Medicine Buddha, when you are absorbed at the heart into the Medicine Buddha; ‘you’ disappear and what is left is the Medicine Buddha. You are now acting as the Medicine Buddha, you take on that role - this gives

you more impetus, puts you into a different gear, you grow into the Medicine Buddha, it encourages a sense of ‘you can do it too’, mirroring. That is the transformation phase, the embodiment of the Medicine Buddha. The first two phases are the preparation, after dropping obscurations, and energising so the dormant healing forces in yourself can come forth.

Question and answer

Q: What is the Medicine Buddha?

A: The Medicine Buddha is not unlike *Sakyamuni* Buddha, the historical Buddha that lived. The Medicine Buddha is rather a vibration, a manifestation of healing. Think of it as *Sakyamuni* Buddha, out of compassion he taught us the Medicine Buddha. So think of it as a part of yourself, an external expression of yourself, a symbol. So we use it to trigger our ability for healing, to trigger in yourself your own healing power. It is very important not to think of it as something outside of yourself, you are the Medicine Buddha, you have already arrived.

The healing takes place in the mind, so we need something to transform the mind – with the colour, the *mantra*, all this is transforming the mind.

Q: I have a problem with ‘being’ the Medicine Buddha, it feels that I’m light years away.

A: The Medicine Buddha invokes the potential dormant forces of healing within us – see the beginning of the *sadhana*. Pretend to be the Medicine Buddha, sow the seed – otherwise you can never get anywhere near it, and maybe some of it will stick! Namgyal Rinpoche said, ‘We are building images of ourselves all the time, so why not make it a positive one? Go for the big number!’.

Q: What were the origins of the Medicine Buddha practice?

A: It is an outer manifestation of the inner healer, a strong form of that manifestation given to help us. It is a teaching that comes from *Sakyamuni*, the historical Buddha that lived. The Medicine Buddha has the same posture (except for the right hand) as *Sakyamuni* Buddha, the same monastic robes.

The Medicine Buddha, when understood as an individual Buddha who once was a sentient being, predates the Buddha *Sakyamuni*. Therefore, our knowledge of him is based, at least initially, on the teachings that arose spontaneously out of the super-sensible cognition of the Buddha *Sakyamuni*

In conclusion, first and most important is motivation. Am I really capable of being the Medicine Buddha? The issue of worthiness. The whole practice is aspiration, training, inspiration. We have to aspire – we all have ego fabrications so why not have a really big one, really good one? Think of it as a training and grow into it. The healing forces that are dormant within us – knock at the doors of the senses to awaken the dormant quality. Whatever we are now, nothing is really ours; all comes from other sources, other people, other influences. You are contacting a deep stream of awareness within the being. We are worthy because we carry the seeds of wholesomeness, awakening responsibility is to awaken them. For a moment, a flash, you have the taste of really being the Medicine Buddha – turn the mind to it again and again and it will grow. May I be well and happy in order to support others to be well and happy. This work should not ‘dead-end’ at ourself. As soon as you have a tiny glimpse of awakening, of enlightenment, you share it – it has to overflow. Reflect on pain, illness, suffering in yourself and in others, and the feeling that it has to stop. You are training your mind, and the Medicine Buddha is one practice for doing it. The words of the *sadhana* don’t stop with the conceptual mind, they are a way into generating feelings. Practise even when you don’t want to, accumulating wholesomeness, and it will surge to carry you through. Apply yourself and through the application comes the understanding. Follow the text, don’t skip any bits – the text is constructed to prompt a chemical response in the body, it leads you through the door to liberation.

Homework

I want you to think about a time in your life when you were not so well, had maybe suffered a lot, something that was sufficiently tragic in some way. There is always a lot of teaching in every situation, especially in the ones where we have suffered a lot. So I want you to reflect on what that situation had brought you: the value of its teaching, the gift you received, e.g. the gift of wisdom, the gift of patience, the gift of feeling; the opportunity that the situation has given you to practise, to open your heart. Just think about it.

The Original Face

Instructions for guided meditation

I want to guide you into a very special practice. You need to keep in front of you a *lapis lazuli* blue stone, something to contact deep calm. As we are going to unmask the original face, going through the layers, bring just the face into focus. This meditation practice has the potential to release our tendencies, correct the hormonal imbalance, and balance the nervous system.

1. Take some time to look at a lapis lazuli blue stone in front of you, to breathe in the colour, establishing blue throughout your body. Imagine a source of *lapis lazuli* blue light above your head; then blue light or blue liquid entering your body and spreading throughout the body. At any point during the practice if you need to connect again with the blue, then open your eyes and look at your stone.
2. Now focus on your face and contact the expressions in your face; maintaining the deep blue, allow your face to go through different movements. Our face is usually a mask, it is not our true face. Allow your face to go through some movements, and contortions if that feels OK. You don't make it happen, it happens by itself, just watch your face going through different shapes, different movements and as you go deeper into the calm, deeper into the facial expressions, one shape, one movement will start fixing. One face will appear, one statement, that paralyses you. It happens all by itself, just observe. It can be very subtle or it can be more extreme. Our face holds many of our stories, many of our unresolved stories. One face that is still governing your life, influencing your life now. Don't go into the story, just the sensation.
3. When the face stops at this one statement just watch, maintaining the blue. See it clearly, don't be afraid of it, give it your full attention. By 'bare looking', 'staying with it', it will free the demons, your tendencies and so release a lot of potential for you. You need to meet it without fear, without hope; just meeting it, in deep calm. And of course at some point it will start loosening up, start freeing itself, liberating itself. Again, you don't do anything, it does it by itself. Maintain throughout the blue, deep calm, deep trust. To meet, to look at the face that paralyses you, that still has a great influence in your life, this is very deep healing work. To meet it, to stay with it, and to allow it to liberate itself. Stay in touch with the depth, the deep blue. The depth will dissolve this mask, this paralysed state. This is the resolution phase.
4. Know when the process is finished with you and just relax, just enjoy your new face. Recognise the liberation that has taken place, and the loosening that has taken place. It will free your potential – of course it will, because you are no longer possessed.

Take some time outside.

Explanation

Let us go through the steps of the practice. When you do this practice you should not look into a mirror. Also you should not stare at bright light, outside and don't practise near running water.

First you establish deep calm. You can use any method, technique that works for you. It is important to connect with the deep blue, to have the blue colour in some way in front of you and allowing the blue to enter in the body. Then you focus on your face only, connecting with the feeling, the sensations in the face, from the inside; don't imagine looking at yourself in the mirror. And again, you stay very relaxed, very calm and you can notice the different movements, contortions that the face will go through, sometimes in a flash. You see the different faces that you have.

Then you will come to one face that fixes itself, set in concrete, you are seeing what paralyses you. We call this the one statement. It may be the face of shock, of grief. The point is there is no movement, it is set. So you experience the physical paralysis in your face. And then you may be able to see how this influences your life; this face, this expression, how this is shaping your life. It is very important to come to this point of having a fixed face, a set face. Look into it. You come to insight practice – just looking, not making stories, not taking sides. And if you look deep enough, calm enough, it begins to change, to transform. It is not something you fabricate, it is something that happens by itself, you don't make it happen. And with the loosening of the face will come some tears, some emotion, some shaking in the body, other changes in the body. It is a very special practice that Namgyal Rinpoche taught us in a Medicine Buddha retreat.

Don't look for results. It is important to do the practice, not to look for results, because they for sure will happen at some point. For example there is a facial expression that says 'I want a result' so you can take this into the practice, investigate this. You want to go deep into insight practice, not into the discursive mind. It is very important to notice when the loosening is happening, don't hold onto the fixed face. There is a tendency to say 'oh I didn't get it, I want to do it again' but don't, let go of the wanting!

For the face meditation you need to be deep in the calm, deep into the blue, otherwise you are going to create more problems for yourself, more fear, more rejection.

I would advise you to do the face meditation at the beginning of the Medicine Buddha practice.

Q: A fixed face?

A: In each meditation it is only one face, but it can be a different face every time you do the face meditation. And after the resolution you should stop (not go on to other faces) and go into the Medicine Buddha practice. It is also very tiring to meet this very deep pattern, it makes you tired, you need to sleep, you need to rest.

Q: What if the face stays fixed?

A: The point is you need to look at the pattern the face throws up, not to hold on to it. Change, liberation will happen by itself, you don't need to make it happen. You may have a memory, an echo of the fixed face but it is not actually staying fixed.

Don't try to do this practice when you are tired, angry, or when you are too excited. You do it when you feel good, when you feel light, when you feel strong – then you look at your demons. It all comes back to establishing blue, to establishing calm. You watch it, you don't panic, you establish blue, you witness it and change will happen. You can say, 'Oh, thank you for showing yourself'. And you realise how much it has had a grip on you, you realise how much it is controlling you. It is like calling its name, calling its bluff, and it will go. It is insight practice.

Self-healing

The Blue Healer meditation

Be seated, or you could also lie down (but not if you are going to fall asleep). So settle your posture first. Contact the spine, imagine a cushion behind your back supporting you. Visualise your body hollow, empty from the top of your head to the tip of your fingers and toes. Imagine just space inside yourself. Empty your mind of any distraction, pre-occupation. Just relax in the natural state and contact the movement of your belly.

1. Now imagine above your head a source of *lapis lazuli* blue light. This blue light streams down like a fine mist, fine rain. Imagine this mist all around your body. From the source of *lapis lazuli* blue light above your head a strong beam of light flows into the crown of your head, entering your body. It flows into the central channel and from there spreads throughout the body, or it could be overflowing from the heart into the rest of the body. The intention of this preparation is to come to a state of deep calm, quietness – but awake, alert. Stay with this image until you feel that you are calm enough. Invite the blue healer only from a place of calm. You need to establish deep calm so you don't get disturbed by what is coming up: no fear and no expectation, no hoping, no agitation, no stirring of wanting, of pushing away.
2. Now imagine a small Blue Healer, a small Medicine Buddha, entering the body through any one of your orifices (which could include the pores of the skin), and invite this small healer to go to a place of discomfort in your body, a place of dis-ease. The first place it goes to is usually a place that you are already aware of, conscious of – though if you are familiar with the practice, it can go straight to a deeper place. Then from the heart of the Blue Healer, from his entire body, come rays of blue light, bathing this part of your body with deep blue. Notice the shift in that area of your body as the Blue Healer does his work. It could be a shift in the actual place in the body, or more general feeling of well-being, or even a change in attitude towards your discomfort and your life.
3. At this point of change, make sure you are still connected with the deep blue. The small healer may now move on to the second place in the body quite spontaneously - again have lots of patience, give it time. And from the heart, from the entire body of the Blue Healer, rays of light bathe the part of the body that is in need of healing. It is very important that you stay in touch with the deep blue. Notice if the healer moves on to a third position inside the body. You can ask the healer to scan your body for places of discomfort; this is the time to end the discomfort as the healer is now in the body. Go deeper and deeper. The deeper you go, the deeper the source of the disease will come to the surface. That is why you have to stay in contact with the deep blue, not to go into your head. Allow the healer to go to the places into the deep depth of your body, not consciously sending it there.
4. Now imagine, invite the Blue Healer to rest in the centre of the body, just above the navel. Then you and the Blue Healer become one, the same size – you either shape yourself to the size of the healer, or he becomes bigger to become the same size as yourself. Now comes the most important part of the practice – so it is important that you have deep blue, deep calm, no agitation. Take on the posture of the blue healer: your right hand is open on your right knee, palm facing up, in the *mudra* of generosity and your left hand rests upturned in your lap in the *mudra* of concentration.
5. Begin with moving with your eyes into your left hand, left hand first. Look deep into your left hand, and you are going to ask the question 'what is the root cause of my dis-ease?' Just drop the question in your left hand, like dropping a pebble in the water. Let it fall deep, deeper and deeper. Contact the blue, the deep blue, looking down in your left hand, dropping the question in your left hand, 'what is the root cause of my dis-ease?' It is very important to ask the question, the answer may come later. You are setting up the conditions for the depth to speak to you. Stay open in order to reach the depth – this is very important,

otherwise you are going to fabricate the answer and that is meaningless. No fabrication, no expectation, no fear. Start with the left hand because that is the feminine side, the wisdom side. ‘What is the source, the root cause of my dis-ease?’, and you watch. Don’t go into dialogue, conversation. The answer may come in a sound, in a sight, in a smell, in a touch, in a feeling, an image or a word. The answer may come up in a dream or later when you are in nature. If it comes from the depth it is sure, crystal clear, strong. Stay as long as you wish, asking the question up to three times.

6. Now look down into your right hand, contact the deep blue. The right hand is the male aspect: skill and means, technique, action. With your mind’s eye look down into your right hand. Then you ask the question, ‘what is the path for my healing?’ ‘What is the path, the method, for my healing?’ Again you drop the question like a pebble in water – let it go deep, deep. Do not expect a quick answer. There can be a certainty of resolution rather than a specific answer or a particular path, but a certainty that you will be following a path. But you have to come from a state of deep calm. This practice came from Namgyal Rinpoche; you will not find it in any books, from any other teacher, that is why it is so precious.
7. Now establish a dialogue between your right hand and left hand, move back and forth a few times. Looking deeply down into your left hand, right hand; left hand, right hand. It is a dialogue between the cause and the path. Play with that until you think it is enough. If you have wisdom but no skill and means, you cannot act on your wisdom. If you have skill and means without wisdom it is not very safe. So you have to have the two together.
8. Now bring the two hands together in your lap, right on left so the wisdom hand is more active, supporting the right. Still, with your mind’s eye, keep looking into the hands and maybe, as you relax more, something comes to the surface. Stay in touch with the blue, the deep blue and watch, notice, be present.

Go outside for ten minutes and do a review of your meditation. It would be good if you were to make some notes about where the Blue Healer went in your body: the first place, the second place, the third place; and did you get any signs when you asked the two questions? As you practise this more regularly you get more information, so to make some notes is very important. I suggest that you do this practice regularly, maybe twice a week, so you become more familiar with listening to messages – maybe a smell, taste, not just words. Become confident, begin to see a pattern emerging. That is why it is important to practise more than one time. It is wonderful to be able to do this practice and have the answer yourself, whatever that is – a flavour, a movement in the body, a shift in the auric body or in your attitude. If something is happening there will be a shift. The quality I want you to access is to go beyond fear; drop the fear, go deep and have access to the wisdom of the depths.

Looking into the hands – commentaries on the Blue Healer meditation

For doing this practice, my advice is to make sure that your back is leaning against something, a tree or a chair; you are leaning your back into your history. First you need to establish blue into your body, coming to deep calm. Otherwise I am afraid you are going to criticise, to be negative about it. Then to investigate, you ask the question and look into your left hand, right hand; so you bypass the discursive mind.

Q: I am not sure how to do this.

A: You can start with anything, something small, then you ask the question. For example you can bring up a situation, people in your life and ask ‘Is this conducive to my growing, to my expanding?’ Sometimes we ask the question from a place of fear, wanting. So first you need to start from a place of calm then drop the question, and you wait because the answer may come from any of the senses. You want to ask from the depth in you, not with the discursive mind. Because the discursive mind can go ‘yes / no, yes / no’ endlessly. From the depth, with the intuitive mind, there is only one answer. I would like you to start with the small things in your life, not Big things. And

the intention is to drop the question, and see what happens. Use the two hands: left is the wisdom aspect, right is skilful means. You need to bypass the conceptual mind – it is like dowsing, or doing the *I Ching*. So some of you have questions about your future and you can ask this question. So you ask ‘Is this conducive to my happiness?’. Then you wait, in the waiting is the spaciousness. This is very important. Only when you are in deep calm, when the mind is more silent with not so much fear, hope – then the depth will touch you, will open to you. Don’t ask the question when you are so busy.

After each practice review the practice you have done and make a few notes for yourself. You can review in terms of what happened to the body, to the speech and to the mind; what changes happened in your body, in your speech and in your mental conversation.

Q: *I’m not getting answers but am still expecting them.*

A: Some answers will appear but not in the time you want; they may come in a dream, when you are going for a walk. The most important part is to ask the question with no fear and no expectation. I want you to go to the stream, asking the question like dropping a pebble in the stream, and leave it. No fear, no expectation, just drop it. The point is that when you ask the question, it should be almost casual, not caring for what is happening. You need to go for deep calm, to let go of all your agitation, concept, fantasy. For when you are in agitation, you will pull the question up, not allowing it to go to the depth. Have an image of the question being dropped like a pebble and for you to allow it to go deep. Watch your impatience, ‘I want to know now, I want it now’. The depth needs to trust you and for trusting you need to be silent, you need to shut up. This is the path of insight; it is how to deal with demonic possession, the second level of illness. This practice is very special, very precious; it is part of the Medicine Buddha practice. To repeat, you will not find it in any book, from any other teacher, it came directly to me from Namgyal Rinpoche.

I think for all of you, you need to establish much deeper calm. There is an edginess in the sitting. I want to spend the whole day on this part of the practice. So you need to continue much more with deep calm, and not just in the sitting, but outside the sitting too. The practice of looking into the left hand, right hand, is nothing more than insight, looking deeply. I would like you to experiment with being more aware of the left side of your body and the right side of the body. Catch the moment in everyday life, when you are casual and at ease and in that moment you just stop and look deep into your hands, left hand right hand, very softly. The left hand is the feminine side, the intuitive side, the wisdom side; the right side of the brain, a lot of feeling, it doesn’t need so much words, so much sentences. The right hand is the masculine side, the skilful means, the method, the technique. So you have always the left and right sides, two aspects of you, all the time.

It is most important to meet all your resistance. I am trying to set up conditions for you, an atmosphere which is supportive for you. When you do the practice throughout the day don’t ask any question, just look, just see what comes up. Try to go into a space where you are looking deep, contacting the depth of your being and let go of the wants, the shoulds / should nots. The answer is already in you, this is the sad thing, you are walking with it all the time when you are not asking it to come out. And when it comes it is so beautifully, so clear. So you need to do whatever you need to be calm – walking, look into the blue, whatever you need – and then catch the moment ‘now I am ready to go deeper’, and you look to the left side, right side and drop the question. It is like fishing. Have any of you been fishing? *I used to go fishing when I was a boy.* What is the mind state of fishing? *Very still and concentrated, still and alert at the same time.*

So remember how it is as a boy, fishing, and that is what you need to do! John Garrie Roshi used to send us fishing with a stone on a bamboo stick and a piece of string. Look at the mind state of that too, there will be a tendency to throw the stone. Rather than ‘you’ asking the question, you are waiting for the depth to ask the question. I want you to explore, to be more relaxed, more informal, more casual with this aspect of the practice. At the end of walking practice, when you are happy,

soft, casual, looking at the bird splashing in the pool, then you ask the question. Most of the decisions of my life were made from that place, very soft, very casual.

Q: So what do we do with our bamboo and string and pebble?

A: You are fishing in the depth of the being. You drop a pebble and you wait, and you wait and you wait, and something comes through. Then you try again, you throw a line.

Q: So you are asking the question as you put the pebble in, and the answer can arise?

A: Exactly, and you are not waiting for an answer with words, it can come through a feeling, a texture, a smell. I never get an answer in words, it is always through a texture in the body, a feeling in the body. You throw the line in the depth of your being.

Q: The answers, do they arise in the right side of the body or the left side?

A: In the centre, you feel very centred, very clear, different.

Q: Would watching clouds have the same effect?

A: The fishing is more focused, the contact with the water. You literally use the bamboo, string and pebble to touch the water with it.

This looking in the left hand and the right hand is a very important part of the Medicine Buddha practice,. In a few days time you are going to ask the questions for someone else, so you need to be able to do it for yourself. Use the situation to go back to yourself, look deeper into yourself and look deeper into your being. That is why I say an answer can come in your dream time when you are not so much caught up in your life.

Short practices

I have a wish for you, that tonight when falling asleep you have the Medicine Buddha above your head; then sleeping with your head, or your whole body, in his lap.

The *lapis lazuli* colour is anti-fear, anti-paranoia. It is the colour of space, of deep sleep. It is also the colour of deep calm. Tonight, when you are in bed, try to fall asleep resting, or imagining resting, on the colour blue and see what kind of sleep you have.

Visualise the little blue healer, maximum size four fingers width. Place it on part of the body that is in distress. See it as blue liquid, oozing into the place that needs healing.

You can also use the word *Bhekhandze*: with *Bhe* and breathing in you let the blue enter the area of distress; with *khan* you stay in the area bathing it in blue, feel it changing, feel the warmth; on *dze* and breathing out you leave the area..

Question and answer

Q: Between the left hand and right hand - what speed to go, because it was going quite fast?

A: You take it as you want and don't worry if you don't hear everything that I say, it happens anyway.

Q: I have a lot of questions about details.

A: In this meditation do whatever happens spontaneously, do not correct it.

Q: What to do if I get no answer?

A: If you get no information from this practice or it doesn't make sense, is confusing, too difficult, you take it into the next session. You make it the focus next time, to ask 'So what does this mean?'

Q: Sometimes I struggle with it, 'I can't do it with this question', some questions they don't fit. How to find a way to the right question?

A: It is also something you can ask to your hands, establish the blue and ask 'What is the right question?' Into your left hand and in the right, and you wait until the right question comes up – you have to go to the intuitive side first. If you start losing concentration or interest, go back to walking practice, spend as much time as you wish.

Q: What to do for someone who pushes for results?

A: You need to go to a stream of water and practise dropping the pebble in the water with no expectation for results. Choose the place in the stream carefully. When you have no expectation in dropping the pebble, then you are ready to ask the question.

Q: There are too many practices, it's too much; I feel a need to integrate, a need to go back to the very simple essence.

A: To the depth.

Q: Yes, to balance more.

A: It is important to feel that the Medicine Buddha is all around, in all life.

Q: I feel I've just put my foot on the path and I've such a long way to go. The part I could relate to best is balancing the blue.

A: The path is now, you must not think you have a long way to go, you are already there.

Meditation of the blue bowl in the hands

Make contact with your spine and with the cushion behind your back Visualise your body hollow, empty from the top of your head to the tip of your fingers and toes. Imagine just space inside yourself. Empty your mind of any distraction, pre-occupation. Just relax in the natural state.

1. Now imagine above the crown of your head a source of *lapis lazuli* blue light. Focus very much on the blue, the radiance, the brilliance of the blue. Imagine the blue entering the body through the crown of your head, and at this point you may imagine the blue as liquid, entering the central channel and spreading throughout your body, filling your body. Spend a good amount of time establishing the deep blue. It is not an idea, it is a feeling in your body, a change of chemistry in your body. The deep blue is the colour of deep space, of deep calm, of no fear. You want to go deeper, into the depth of your being letting go of thinking and of fear. By focusing on the blue you come to the silent mind. When you have a silent mind, the depth can begin to trust you, to show itself to you. As long as your mind is busy – full of fear, hope, expectation – the depth cannot show itself. The depth is always talking to you but you are so busy you don't give it space, to listen to its messages. So drop deeper into the blue, now. Have the courage to let go of your expectation and fear, and drop into the silent mind.
2. Now place your left hand in your lap palm facing upwards, in the gesture of concentration, touching your belly. Imagine that you are holding a blue bowl, made from *lapis lazuli* blue stone. Again, create an image of a very beautiful radiant blue bowl. Deep blue, shining with specks of gold. The *lapis lazuli* stone has specks of gold in it, it has stars. Feel the shape, the size, the colour, how deep it is. Now with your mind's eye look deep into the bowl, dive into the bowl deep, deep. Keep looking deeper into the bowl. The deep blue gives you the stability mentally, physically, to be able to ask the question from a place of emptiness, silence Only when your mind is silent the depth will start talking to you. Have the courage to look, just looking is sufficient.
3. Now, without disturbing the deep blue, the deep calm that you are experiencing now, very gently, very softly, drop a question in the bowl, e.g. "what is the cause of my discomfort?" Just drop it in the depth of the bowl, and get out of the way. To be present with all the senses, that is all you want to do. Just maintaining the blue..
4. Now place your right hand in the gesture of generosity resting on your right knee, palm facing up. Imagine you are holding a healing herb in that hand and look deeply into your right hand, again focusing on the blue, the deep blue. When you feel calm, when you feel ready, without disturbing the calm, the peace, just drop a question into your right hand, like a pebble into the stream, drop it in the depths, e.g. "what is the path to my healing?", and get out of the way. The depths want to talk to you, don't interrupt the depths with your busyness, with your ideas of what it should be like. Just stay with the blue, deep colour,

deep sense of confidence. The main part of this practice is to ask the question from a place of stability of body and mind, of calm mind, of silent mind.

5. If you want you can go back to the left hand for a short time, just look deep into the hand. You don't need to ask the question again, you have asked the question already. Then when you are ready you bring the right hand into the left hand, take your time. Now with your right hand in the left hand, imagine the hands being inside your body and look down with your mind's eye in the centre of the palms of your hands. Maintain the blue. If you notice a little pushing or wanting in your body or mind, just go back to the blue. Now you are in a state where healing is happening, get out of the way. Allow the potential healing medicine to do the work. It is happening now, just relax. Keep the contact with the hands inside your body, with the blue colour, and allow the transformation to take place. The quality of deep calm, deep healing that you are experiencing now, you can have access to this any time. Now you know how to get there! It is not something that can be taken away from you, it is within you.

Go outside for ten minutes.

I think you've got it! S., the fishing you did as a child, it came to help you now in your meditation! It is very important to have the hands inside the belly, it is called the centre of transformation. It is also a symbol of the bowl of the Medicine Buddha. The blue is a chemical change in the body, it is not just a colour. And you can all do it, you can all experience deep calm. – why don't you do it more often? So you know how to go deep now? You know how to get out of the way? Some of you are on the borderline. I can see it rising, T., in your chest: *I was so much, I had been holding onto so big a thing, and letting go I was filled with so much loving-kindness, it was amazing!* You have done it once, you can do it again; it is there, don't be afraid to loose it, you cannot loose it.

Opening the Heart

As the first step towards any healing, there has to be some loving-kindness, friendliness towards yourself. I could say that loving-kindness is awareness and warmth. Whenever you have discomfort in your body or disturbance in your mind, notice it and open your heart to it, so you are embracing it. This is loving-kindness in action, in daily life: first awareness in noticing the discomfort, not pushing it away, then 'Ah'. You could also as you breathe out send it some warmth, some kindness. Breathing in 'I know', I notice it in my mind; breathing out I send it some space, some softening. So my intention is to ask you to chant 'the Four Divine Abidings' (see appendix-3) in the evening and the morning. It is not just that it is nice to do, it is to cultivate friendliness towards yourself. It doesn't make sense to chant for ten minutes then in your 'activity' you get all angry and frustrated. We have to cultivate continuity. So welcome the disturbance, don't avoid what you don't like. On the contrary if you seek what is disturbing you, you make a big progress. I am sure that in the next few days during this retreat you will meet many situations you don't like. So for a short moment, meet them with friendliness, breathing in 'I notice the discomfort', breathing out, 'I soften'. Basically you let go of your opinion, you soften, you don't fight, and you don't want to achieve anything. A simple practice but not easy. So think of it as a homework for all the time. When you don't know what to do, you practise loving-kindness towards yourself.

Medicine Buddha in one's heart meditation

Adjust your posture, then make contact with your body. Imagine a cushion behind your back, a long cushion, the full length of your spine and imagine your hands inside the belly. Now bring the attention back to the breathing.

Visualise your body hollow, empty from the top of your head to the tip of your fingers and toes. Imagine just space inside yourself. Empty your mind of any distraction, pre-occupation. Just relax in the natural state.

1. Imagine the Medicine Buddha above the crown of your head, sitting. Feel his presence, his quality. Light, deep blue light, radiates out from his heart, his belly, his entire body. Bathing your body.
2. Now imagine this light, deep blue light or liquid, entering your body through the crown of your head; spreading through the central channel and establishing deep blue, deep serenity in your body and mind. Identify with this deep calm; any pain, any ache, any thought – dissolve it into the deep blue.
3. Then imagine the Medicine Buddha, above the crown of your head, melting into light and dropping into your heart. Have a sense of the presence of the Medicine Buddha at your heart. Your mind becomes one with the Medicine Buddha. Contact the sensation in your heart and allow it to open, to expand, from side to side. With the presence of the Medicine Buddha at your heart, expand the sensation from side to side, then from front to back and then up and down. In your heart is the Medicine Buddha and from his heart and his entire body light, or blue liquid, radiates out in the four directions.
4. Imagine the blue healer, the Medicine Buddha, touching your back at the heart level. Touching it softly, gently. And then placing a hand at the front of your body, also at the heart level. So you feel supported, held; from the back, from the front.
5. Now when you feel ready, imagine holding someone's heart from the front and from the back – someone in need of support. Softly touching the back at the heart level, then the front of the body. The Medicine Buddha is bathing you, and you in turn are bathing the other person in blue.
6. Now just come back to yourself, focusing on the hands in the centre of your belly. Know that you can always feel the presence of the Medicine Buddha in you, he is always in you.

Try to softly maintain the presence of the Medicine Buddha at the heart, and from time to time connect with it again, make it more of a habit.

In your own time I would like you to move outside in nature with the thought that you are being supported, held by the Medicine Buddha and that you are capable of helping others. So maybe you place your hand over some flower or tree and see what is happening for you.

Question and answer

Have you anything to share from your experience?

- *I'm more aware of the support that there is, I tend to forget about it*
- *To open the heart can be very difficult, to open the heart and let the pain go away. I know, but there is no other option.*
- *I feel overwhelmed, emotionally raw, I've been going back into the blue and closing down a bit. You need to emphasise your calm, being with the blue. Don't think that you are failing; feeling overwhelmed is normal; try to come back to the blue. So use a lapis lazuli stone to evoke blue, to evoke the calm, to cool yourself. It is the fear that makes us close the heart. This is an anti-fear practice, as you feel the blue in the body you can open again.*
- *There is so much suffering in the world. That is why we do the practice, to make ourselves stronger. You will be moved but the idea is to feel your emotion, to open the heart and to see how opening the heart gives you new possibilities, a transformation of the emotion. Opening the heart is not just an idea, it is a feeling.*

These meditations are very specific, and follow a specific order. Do you understand the importance of the order? It is to build up strength first for yourself, then you will be able to give out.

Healing Others

Working with a Partner

We are now going to work in pairs: one person lying down, one person sitting at the head of the person lying down.

1. The person sitting: imagine above your head the presence of the Medicine Buddha; establish the awareness of this presence, focus on the colour, the posture, the hand position. Turn your mind to the qualities of the Medicine Buddha: the aspect of wisdom, the aspect of skilful means, together with the commitment to help all beings to be free from physical or mental suffering. Take your time to establish his presence – vibrant, radiant and open your heart to the Medicine Buddha and to the benefits that come from practising this meditation.
2. Now imagine from the heart of the Medicine Buddha, from his entire body, blue light streaming out and bathing the outside of your body, like a shower, like a waterfall. You feel bathed, you feel supported, protected by this blue light. Then imagine also the light entering your body through the crown of your head, travelling down the central channel, and resting at the heart. From there the light spreads out through the whole of the body so that outer and inner are bathed in the blue. You and the Medicine Buddha become one, you have the same qualities, insights, as the Medicine Buddha.
3. Now from your heart, your entire body, you shower and bathe your partner with the blue light, all the way down to their toes. Offering them protection, support. See the light streaming out from your body. It is no effort, you are the Medicine Buddha, you are streaming blue light from your heart, from your entire body, you bathe your partner in blue light. ‘*You*’ are not here; the ordinary you, the limited you, is replaced by the wisdom of the Medicine Buddha. Imagine also that the blue light enters the body of your partner through the crown of their head, travelling down their central channel and resting at their own heart. Thereby you establish your partner as Medicine Buddha too. From their heart the blue light overflows to the rest of their body, to the internal organs. In this you do nothing, just are a vessel, a conveyor, an intermediary; the Medicine Buddha is your partner; there is no difference, no separation.
4. Now with your mind’s eye look down into your left hand and on behalf of your partner ask the question: ‘What is the root cause of their dis-ease, their distress?’. It is asked for your partner. Asking the question three times very clearly, place their name in your question: ‘What is the root cause of the dis-ease of (the person’s name)?’ Looking down into the left hand, stay at ease, free from expectation, free from wanting to know the answer. You are just the messenger of the Medicine Buddha. Asking the question is the most important part. Just ask the question, then relax and let go.
5. Now look down into your right hand and ask the question, ‘What is the path of (person’s name) healing?’ Ask the question three times while maintaining the presence of the Medicine Buddha above your head. You are not on your own, the answer does not depend on you; you are just a vessel, a translator, a messenger. You are creating the condition for the depth to speak to you, that is enough, don’t focus on the answer. In your own time, and only if you wish, go back to the left hand and then the right hand, back and forth a few times, looking deep into your hands. Out of the deep silence, deep stillness, something comes to the surface; it may be a picture, a message, a smell, a taste, an image, a sound, may be an impression – just stay wide open.
6. Now focus on the presence of the Medicine Buddha in the heart of your partner. Imagine in their heart a small Medicine Buddha perfectly formed, vibrant, alive. In this way you empower your partner, you give them the wisdom and the tools to do their own healing. Again, you are just the messenger between Medicine Buddha and your partner, the translator. There is a small Medicine Buddha deep in your own heart as well as in the heart

of your partner. Any time, anywhere, you can draw on the wisdom, on the skill and means of the Medicine Buddha, for yourself and for others.

In a moment I will ring my bell. Simply bow at the end of the session.

I would like both partner and person sitting up to go outside, to be in nature, to be quiet, not to talk about the session. Let the impression of this session go deep in your being when you are outside. Come back again in fifteen minutes and sit facing your partner and share what information, what impression, you received when you asked the question.

Feedback and answers

Do you have more trust now in yourself? Tell me. When the ordinary 'you' gets out of the way, the messages come very clearly.

- *It was one of the most wonderful experiences I ever had, having this constant supply of blue light waving through me, never ending. And I thought, 'Wow, this is me, this is it!'. I'll give this practice to all my acupuncture patients, it's perfect, it's complete, I can say no more. Your eyes look very different, the eyes are showing the emotional state, something is at peace in you. So was it worth coming all the way from Germany? I would have travelled around the world.*
- *I was not at ease asking this question for someone else. With me it was all right, with someone else I feel insecure. The messages you get in your body are the messages for the other person, so if an impression passes through your body it is relevant for the other person, it is different, it is not yours. And I was afraid I'd say the wrong thing. Again you are thinking too much of you on your own. If you maintain an open heart that feeling will disappear. It takes time.*
- *For me in a sitting position it was very freeing to just be a messenger and I could feel it very well in my body that this information does not have anything to do with me. I could feel that the messages have to do with my own contact with the Medicine Buddha and I could let go. You are just channelling. I've never felt it so clearly in my body. Of course I had ideas about it but I could let it go. And at the end of lying down it was so peaceful, such stillness – nothing to do, nothing to feel, nothing to think, just be there.*
- *As a receiver it gave me also more trust in the images that are coming up for me.*

In our mind we can create either heaven or hell. Here the mind is creating a positive attitude by inviting the image of the Medicine Buddha. This is why this practice works.

And here we join with all the people who have ever practised in this room.

Short Practice

This short practice involves working with another person.

Establish the blue inside the hollow body, blue light or liquid enters like a waterfall through the crown of the head and down into the heart which it fills, then overflows into the rest of the body, filled with blue light. Then hold blue light as a ball between the hands. Then open the hands and let blue light flow from them, passing over the body of the being to be healed (a few inches away from the skin) with a circular motion, creating a vortex of energy.

Distant Healing

Maybe you know it already but I want to go through it, to share with you what I do when I receive a request for healing or when I hear of yet another tragedy. First I make sure that I am in a wholesome state, not tired physically or mentally; that I am open-hearted and in a good frame of

mind. Depending on my circumstances I can choose from the various ways of sending support to those in need.

Throughout the day I hold the person in my mind-heart and from time to time I stop briefly and mentally say 'may this being be well and happy and free from suffering'; if I know their name then I say their name instead of 'this being'.

When you dedicate any practice that you do, you can focus on this person or persons that you want to offer support to. I find also in my practice that any time I experience a positive event or feel especially good, I dedicate this towards the welfare of someone who is in need.

Or, I do a full practice of the Medicine Buddha, dedicating and including those in need by name, repeating one to three *mantras* per name. So you could imagine doing the shorter condensed version of the *sadhana* (see App.-1) once a week: motivation, visualisation of taking in white light of purification and energising blue light, and sending out both to another being or all beings while reciting the *mantra*.

Q: Do we allow beings to come up, or to have a list? You can do both. It is good to have a list so you don't forget people or start wondering who to bring in. If you have a long list of names then instead of doing three *mantras* for every name, send lots of blue light coming out of the body bathing the whole list with blue light. When you do it for just one person, for example for someone in hospital you bathe that person in blue, imagining the Medicine Buddha above their head establishing calm, that they be well and happy, free from fear. That is formal practice. More informal, during the day, hold the person in your mind; bathe them in blue and mentally saying the *mantra* or simply saying 'may this person be well and happy and free from fear'. You can also imagine giving a session to someone. For example, if I know they have a shoulder problem, I imagine a small blue healer in their shoulder, bathing their shoulder in lapis lazuli blue.

In all these practices it is very important that you don't imagine it is 'you' that is doing the healing; you place the Medicine Buddha above your head and know that you are just the messenger. You have to feel connected to the Medicine Buddha in some way. So for me I imagine the Medicine Buddha above my head, his presence in my heart, and radiating out through my hands. We often receive requests for healing at the Orchard so I can choose any of these methods depending on my circumstances during the day. Again, you practise with your mind, you turn your mind, your intention, to someone in need. Once you feel connected to the Medicine Buddha you can find your own form, your own method; become more creative, more spontaneous.

You can also recite the *mantra* over your food or your drink to transform them into medicine.

It is not necessary for you to have a full shrine at home; just a picture of the Medicine Buddha, a lapis lazuli blue stone, the text, is sufficient. Keep it simple.

The *mantra* is a tool for the mind to stay focused, to maintain contact. It is a tool to train the mind. My understanding is that the power of many minds joining by their intention will support those who meet challenging times in their life. So just one thought coming from an open heart can be transformative. It is a natural response one has towards a loved one; here the practice is to extend the same loving attention to someone who you may not know. The property of this practice is also a protection, it is said that you will be protected from sudden death, untimely death.

I do the mantra for myself, not often for others. For others it can be very simple, e.g. when Ad and I are going out, I mentally put a blanket of blue around the car. It doesn't take much effort. I do it for myself first then for others. It can be very short, just a moment. It is the intention, opening yourself to the intention of supporting others. It comes back to feeling in yourself the presence of the Medicine Buddha, you feel connected, you are not so much on your own. Imagine how big is the Medicine Buddha, big big Big. So you can have a BIG Medicine Buddha above your head; sometimes when we are sitting I imagine just one Medicine Buddha, filling the whole Zendo. You practise with the mind. The mind can do anything so why not create something very big.

Q: Sometimes healing others feels overwhelming, depleting. Do we just do it when we feel able?

A: When you feel able, but you have to make a commitment, or it can be ‘Catch 22’. Sometimes I feel if you practise on others it can give you more energy to focus on yourself. The mind can get stuck in a groove, for example about a tendency to fall asleep, of not being able to do it. Again, it is about intention, and not about ‘I have a problem’. Sometimes we create a big mountain out of our problem. Remember the text of the First Karmapa (see App.2 in short *sadhana*) “*Bless me to clear my mind of grasping for true identities*”. You are fixing the mental states by thinking they are concrete, that they are ‘what I am’. They are not fixed, not permanent. They are just an image passing through the mind which we then fix through grasping, confusion or aversion. It is not to say that you are not going to experience those states, but give them space, come back to the moment, to the body, to the breathing.

You have to see when you are bringing up something like an emotion, an opinion, a thought, and how you are holding onto it. There are endless amounts of resistance and problems, it is never going to end, and we have to stop it. Resistance is basically aversion in your heart, so name it as aversion and walk on. Remember the three tendencies: attraction, aversion, confusion, name it and drop it. Otherwise, just imagine how tiring life is going to be by all the time avoiding, grasping, pushing and pulling. That is not a state of calmness at all, it is a state of busyness, of taking sides; for or against, all the time, it is exhausting. So we can define calm as not taking sides, for or against.

Dedication

*With wisdom and compassion as my lamp and my staff
may I help all beings to cross the ocean of the suffering of the worlds*

Sources

The seven Medicine Buddha retreats at The Orchard from 2004 to 2010

Notes

The intention has been to present Sonia's words as she spoke, to preserve the flavour and the spirit of her teaching. Anything else is in italics: contributions from students, texts, editing links, other languages (mainly *Pali*).

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Appendix-1 Medicine Buddha Practice - short version

Taking refuge and cultivating loving kindness.

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma-Sambuddhassa

Homage to Him, the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Fully Enlightened One (3 times)

*Aham avero homi, abyapajjho homi, anigho homi,
sukhi attanam pariharami.*

*Aham viya sabbe satta avera hontu, abyapajjha hontu,
anigha hontu, sukhi attanam pariharanru.*

May all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness

May all beings be free from suffering and the causes of suffering

May all beings never be separated from the Supreme Happiness which is free from suffering

Without loving dear ones only or being unfriendly to others, may all live more peacefully and abide in equanimity.

(3 times)

Visualisation.

Now visualise your body hollow, empty from the top of your head to the tip of your fingers and toes. Imagine just space inside yourself. Empty your mind of any distraction, pre-occupation. Just relax in the natural state.

From this place of emptiness visualize Guru Medicine Buddha above the crown of your head. He is sitting on a lotus seat on top of which is a moon cushion. He is radiant, translucent, blue in colour and is alive and vibrant. His right hand is in the gesture of supreme generosity and holds an Aurora (myrobalan) plant. This conveys the meaning of giving supreme medicine. In the gesture of concentration, his left hand holds an alms bowl, outside colour blue, inside white, which contains medicinal nectar, the ambrosia of life containing thousands of different herbs and minerals. He is the embodiment of all the powerful dormant forces of healing within you.

Prayer to the guru Six line verse of the first karmapa

I make request to the Precious Guru. Bless me to clear my mind of grasping for true identities.

Bless me to develop on my mind stream the insight to see all worldly thoughts as unnecessary.

Bless me that my non-Dharma thoughts shall cease.

Bless me to realise my mind has no birth.

Bless me that my deceptive notions shall dissolve in their place.

Bless me to realise all appearances of existence as Dharmakaya.

Prayer of request

I strongly request you o Medicine Buddha, please grant me your blessing, that I may be able to fully turn to the dharma and that my practice will yield realisations and insights.

Mantra Recitation

Tayata Om Bhekhandze Bhekhandze Maha Bhekhandze Randza Samungate Svaha

Whilst reciting the mantra, imagine rays of light emanating from the heart of the Buddha and from His entire body. This light pours like rain into the crown of our head completely filling our body and mind curing all the diseases and their causes.

Now imagine that the Medicine Buddha comes to the crown of your head and reduces in size to about the size of a thumb. He enters into your crown and travels down the central channel to your heart. Your mind becomes one with the mind of the Medicine Buddha and you arise as a perfectly enlightened Medicine Buddha.

From your heart, from your entire body you send out light to all sentient beings in all the ten directions.

Recite while concentrating on the rays of light, imagining them surrounding the being(s) in need of healing, entering their body and purifying all sicknesses and their causes. Imagine that all sentient beings are purified and transformed into Medicine Buddhas and completely free of all pain and suffering.

Absorption

After the mantra recitation, Guru Medicine Buddha melts into light in your heart. Rest in this state for a short while.

Dedication

Idam Te Punna Kammam Asavakkhaya Vaham Hotu

By the power of this wholesome action, may all unwholesomeness be removed.

Appendix -2 Student's contribution

Lotus seat and moon cushion

Imagine an open lotus flower, created from your imagination.

Imagine existence free from attachment and yet born from the watery mire, now floating free without stain or blemish, the essence of perfection and purity.

Imagine a seat of such wholesome beauty, completely free from the cycle of suffering, such potential for awakening, on which the Medicine Buddha sits.

Imagine now the moon in fullness, luminous orb reflecting light, pure and white. Breathing gently in your posture, softly feel this essence resonate.

Know this essence creates the movement towards all aspiration, a shaft of light, enlightenment, here symbolised now as a moon cushion on which the Medicine Buddha sits.

Written by three students at the 2007 Medicine Buddha retreat

Appendix-3 Chanting of the Four Divine Abidings – the Four Brahma Vihāras

First imagine your body hollow, empty from the top of your head down to your toes, only space. Establish this feeling of space inside your body. Now notice the movement of your belly. Notice the rising and the falling and be with that, simply noticing rising, falling. Rising, falling within space, within emptiness. If you become too distracted go back to the spaciousness, the hollowness of the body. Establish again the space within the body, then return to the belly.

Now chant the *Brahma Viharas*, in *Pali*, three times:

*Aham avero homi, abyāpajjho homi, anigho homi,
sukhi attānam pariharāmi.
Aham viya sabbe sattā avera hontu, abyāpajjhā hontu, anighā hontu,
sukhi attānam pariharantu.*

and for contemplation, spoken once in English:

*May I be friendly, calm and free from ill-will and may I live in happiness.
As I am, so may all beings be friendly, calm and free from ill-will
and may they live in happiness.*