

# Introducing the Padmasambhava Practice

Extract taken from ‘The Happy Twins: Dzogchen and Mahamudra’<sup>1</sup>

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I am going to introduce this *Padmasambhava Practice* and then we will practise it together.

Generally, in dzogchen and mahamudra, we need to have respect for the practice but faith and devotion are not so important. However doing this tantra practice we have to gather ourselves into the practice so that all of us is there and we really believe that this is going to work. So then when we enter into the stages of the practice, we can really start believing that they are happening, and that this is the truth of our life situation. For this kind of practice to work it is very important that we have faith and devotion.

It is not make-believe, although it starts in that way, but rather it is for us to realise that *everything* we do is make believe – that samsara is a belief system. Samsara is our interpretation. Just as an actor can believe that they are the role that they are playing, and through their commitment to the role - through their embodiment in

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<sup>1</sup> Two texts were studied on this retreat. The Mirror of Luminous Revelation (from Nuden Dorje Drophan Lingpa) and The Mahamudra Middle Way of the Ganges (from Tilopa).

posture, gesture, tone of voice and so on – they can bring an authenticity of performance so that the audience believes that the actor is indeed the character in the play.

This is the quality of energy that we need to bring to this kind of practice. It is only by investing the practice with our energy that we can start to see for ourselves, 'I believe that I am me and this is a belief.' I need to keep believing that I am me in order to function in the world because I am living in a world of belief. This is what samsara is: we all believe that this is the case. Just as we were looking earlier, belief and power are inseparable. If an immigration official believes that my passport is a forgery then they will take me into a little room and question me in more detail. I want them to believe that my passport is authentic and then they will believe that I am who my passport says I am.

Identity is concerned with belief and representation: it is not that you have to change how you are in the world; it is not that you are designed to become somebody else, but more that you see that there is no intrinsic truth to your own identity. You are who you think you are because that is who you think you are, *and* you can change how you think you are.

For example, that is the basis for change in psychotherapy. People have core beliefs about themselves and on the basis of these beliefs they sometimes get pulled towards self-destructive behaviour or self-abandoning behaviour. If they change that core belief they find that as they come forward into a social situation they see it differently; instead of taking their habitual pathway, some new avenues open up to them. If you believe that people don't like you, you are likely to become shy or socially avoidant, or you might become troublesome and problematic for other people. If I let down my defences and try to be friendly to you even though I know that you won't like me and are going to reject me, then I am an idiot. Why would I make myself vulnerable to you?

As we interpret the world we position ourselves in different ways: friendly or relaxed or uptight and defensive. This is the theatre of our identity. We can observe this if we think back to being a teenager and how we were anxious about our identity and whether people liked us or not. We can scan the different stages in our life this way. In each of these stages our access to our own potential was opened and closed by our beliefs about ourselves, which were often reinforced by how we imagined other people were imagining us.

- 'Oh, I can see you don't like me. I know you don't like me.'
- *What is the basis for somebody not liking you?*
- 'Well, look at how they look at me.'

– But look at how you are looking at them. Do you think they are going to like you when you look at them like that?

The function of the practice is to give us the opportunity to see how the creativity of the mind emerges from emptiness and takes on different formations, and through realising that, we realise everything is the mandala of the buddha. The term 'mandala' used in this sense, means that everything is the field, or the world, or the pure land of the buddha, which is another way of saying that it has the nature of emptiness.

### **Padmasambhava Practice text: Comments**

*To the precious jewel who is our unfailing refuge, Compassionate Padma from Ugyen, we pray for your blessing — may whatever we request be quickly accomplished.*

In this we are making a statement that Padmasambhava is the truth, or the embodiment, or the presence of all the Buddhas. Whatever Buddhas there are, whatever their qualities and abilities, all are present inside Padmasambhava.

Padmasambhava exists on many different levels. We can see him as a historical figure who grew up in the land of Ugyen in the north west corner of India. After many different adventures he came to Tibet and he introduced tantric buddhism into Tibet, establishing the lineages which continue to this day as the nyingma lineages. Nowadays, all the different schools of Tibetan buddhism are quite respectful to Padmasambhava.

Because there are many different practices within Tibetan buddhism you can easily end up doing a bit of this practice, and a bit of that practice, and a bit of another. They all have different functions, different ways of doing things and different lineages. What Padmasambhava is saying here is that this is not necessary — just doing this one practice will be sufficient because it has within it all the key elements of the practice. We have to trust that this is enough. We say: 'Please fulfil my intention and my aspiration. I want to become awakened. I want to see my own original face. I want to awaken to the ground of my being. Please help me.'

Then we have the *SEVEN LINE PRAYER*, which is the main prayer to Padmasambhava.

*HUNG. Where north and west meet in the land of Oddiyana, upon the stem and stamen of a lotus, are you who have the marvellous supreme accomplishment, Lotus Source of great renown, with a retinue of many dakinis around you. Following and relying on you we do your practice, therefore, in order to grant your blessings, please come here! Guru Lotus Source grant us accomplishment!*

It is a prayer and an evocation and as we recite this we have the sense of Padmasambhava coming and being with us. When we recite it at this stage, we recite it three times. The first time is to call him here because he is in Zangdopalri just now. The

second time we recite it we believe he is here smiling and looking at us. The third time we recite it he instantly dissolves into us because the function of the practice is to remove the delusion from us that we are small limited beings, imprisoned inside our limitations and the Five Poisons. Padmasambhava liberates us from the delusion that we are who we think we are. Getting close to him is like the key to our heart; he is the one who can open the pathways of restriction.

Next we have the *Refuge and Bodhicitta*.

*Salutation! You are my noble guru encompassing all the sites of refuge. From now on until enlightenment is gained, I and all sentient beings wandering in the six realms of samsara take refuge in the mandala of our aware guru.*

Each of these we recite three times. We need refuge because we don't want to go astray or get lost. In the basic Shine practice all that is required is to keep our attention on the breath on our nostrils – but it is difficult – our mind wanders off and we get lost, and that is very scary. So we say, 'Padmasambhava you are big and strong, hold me and keep me safe because I can't do this by myself.'

The worst attitude to have when doing this kind of practice is to be heroic, to imagine it's all up to me to do this transformation, because then we remain lost in some wilderness of ourself. All such practices are relational since everything arises together as dependent co-origination. Don't have the attitude that you are some weak distressed creature pleading, 'Padmasambhava, save me.' There are times when we *can* bring that tone, like a lost child crying out for its mother or father, to evoke a mood. 'Hear me. Save me. Don't abandon me.' We also have buddha nature. We are not nothing. We are not just our faults and limitations. However because we find it difficult to settle into the openness of our being we get caught in the turbulent waves of life, and that is why we have the refuge.

Then we develop bodhicitta or the altruistic intention to help others.

*Ho! In order to benefit all sentient beings, aware guru, I will do your practice, and, removing the sufferings of all beings in the six realms, I will establish them on the level of the aware guru.*

We want to bring all beings on to the stage or the mandala of Padmasambhava because that is where they will be safe. The mandala of Padmasambhava is our own original nature; we have never strayed from that original nature, but we don't know it.

Chatral Sangye Dorje gave me a popular example of this when I was just beginning. It is as if there are two brothers or sisters in a bed: one is asleep and one is awake. The one that's asleep is having a nightmare. The one that's awake can see him twitching and moving around, caught up in the nightmare. The one that's awake says, 'Hey, brother,

*wake up. You are safe. You're safe in bed and there is no problem.'* But as long as you are in your nightmare you think you are in real danger and that people are going to do bad things to you; it is all terrible and you get all kinds of excitations. But where are you really? You are safe at home in your own bed.

We are already inside the mandala of Padmasambhava; we are already safe at home. It is not that we've got to go from here to there, it is just that we have to wake up to where we actually are and stop dreaming and deluding ourselves with our paranoid fantasies of being lost, hopeless and worthless. However, if we believe the transient content of the mind which never stops, we end up with the conclusion we are a small lost person.

When we walk outside, we can see cloud after cloud. It is very easy to come to the conclusion that the sky is grey in its true nature. We live with clouds. We think, *'I am a cloud. I am not such a bad cloud, in fact I am quite a nice cloud but anyway, I am a cloud.'* We don't find the sky. But as we know we don't get clouds without the sky. The sky is there and that is how we have clouds. The mind itself is there and that is how we have thoughts, feelings and sensations, but if you don't see the mind itself all you have got are the thoughts, feelings and sensations, and then you have a cloudy life moving through the six realms of samsara.

Then we have the *Seven Branch Practice*.

*By salutations, offerings and confession, and by rejoicing at the merit of others, beseeching dharma teaching and requesting the buddhas not to leave – whatever small amount of virtue I have collected by doing this, I dedicate it all for the enlightenment of all beings.*

This particular verse comes from the offering prayer of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra which is a very famous verse in the Tibetan tradition. We offer salutation and we make offerings to the Buddhas, and we confess our faults and limitations. We rejoice in the merit that other people have and we ask the Buddhas to continue turning the wheel of dharma teaching. We ask the Buddhas not to die and pass away. We have to remember that everything is impermanent. Even the Buddhas are also impermanent.

At the centre of the universe is just one letter 'A' and it is fading; it is emptiness. There is nothing to rely on, but also there is no-one to do the relying. The more you understand that your own mind's nature is emptiness, the easier life becomes. On a conventional level we don't want the Buddhas to die because we still need their help. By carrying out these seven functions of the Seven Branch Practice, whatever small amount of virtue we create, we dedicate for the enlightenment of all beings. This is the heart of the practice.

Every function we carry out is for the other. If our life becomes 'other' focussed we will become richer, deeper, more peaceful, more satisfied and happier. If our life is self-focussed we will become smaller, more anxious, and more confused. It is a very strange paradox that self-forgetfulness is the door that opens us to our truth, and self-remembrance and self-occupation blinds us to our actual situation. That is the meaning of endlessly gathering merit and sharing it, so that we become a site of participation and movement in the total field of connectivity.

Then we do a *visualisation* in front of us.

*Before me, on a lotus, sun and moon, I imagine Lotus Source the Aware.*

We imagine Padmasambhava in the form shown in the picture at the front of the practice text. He is smiling at us and he is holding a vajra and a skull cap full of amrita. He is holding the symbols of full enlightenment, and then we have a prayer.

*Ah! Worthy teacher, so rare and precious, all the Buddhas' body, speech, mind, and qualities are fully present in you. Please bless your child who prays to you and fulfil my wishes.*

This is a very good prayer for when we feel desperate, lonely and lost. You don't have to do the whole practice. If you have the time and the space of course you can do the whole practice, but you can also learn and recite this short prayer.

If you have difficulties or someone close to you is dying and you feel lost and confused, this is a good prayer. You pray like a small lost child: I have nothing. I don't know what to say. I don't know what to do. I am falling apart. I am all over the place. Help me. This is a very sweet way of asking for the help of Padmasambhava. He has no bad intention towards us; he is the presence of the Buddhas. It is very important that we become vulnerable as this means we are able to be hurt. We get hurt anyway in life but when you try to protect yourself against vulnerability by growing an exoskeleton like some shell around you, all you do is lose out on the possibility of relating to other people. Being sensitive, being vulnerable, being lost, being confused - all of this is me.

To do the practice we have to be honest. We have to remember that I may have promised years ago to do my meditation. I had this strong intention and I haven't done it. I look back over the years at all the practice I thought I would do and that I haven't done. The years have gone by. Where am I?

In that situation you see you are both infinite and finite. In my finite identity I am small, lost and confused and I just operate from that position, because if you are true to your limitation your limitation dissolves. But if you pretend and cover up and pretend you are doing better than you are, you just make another seal over it, and that makes you truly limited.

Many times we are lost. I remember being in India when a lot of Tibetan refugees were still coming across the border escaping their terrible persecution from the Chinese. They were saying these kinds of prayers all the time because they were desperate. They had to run and they had left family members behind; their houses had been pulled down, and they saw people being killed along the way. They lost everything, but what they didn't lose was their faith. They didn't come up and say, 'Oh, where was god in Auschwitz? If god was really real he would have stopped bad things happening.' They were not living in primary school. They had realised that this is samsara and this is a place where bad things happen.

When bad things happen Padmasambhava is there, but he is not going to stop the bad things happening, because this is your karma and it is what you get; it is your luck and your share. But Padmasambhava can be with you in your limitation, in your painful diagnosis, in the difficulties of your children, in your sadness and loneliness. These painful situations are not a sign that you have lost dharma, but this is how your life is manifesting for you, so it is very important.

With the visualisation of Padmasambhava in front of us we recite the mantra:

*OM AA HUNG BENZA GURU PEMA SIDDHI HUNG*

We recite this many, many times and then when we finish that recitation we receive the Four Initiations from him. The Four Initiations are the central focus of the tantric tradition because they are the meeting point of the intrinsic purity of the deity, in this case Padmasambhava and our situation.

*At the guru's forehead, throat and heart light manifests in the form of letters OM ཨྎ, A ཨྎ, HUNG ཨྎ and flows into me. I receive the four initiations, my obscurations are purified, and the five kayas and the five original knowings manifest in me. Precious guru, please hear me!*

From Padmasambhava rays of white light stream out from his forehead where there is a white letter OM, then from his throat from a red letter Aa, and then from his heart from a blue letter HUNG. White, red, and blue light come into us in sequence filling us and purifying all the limitations of the body, empowering us to live in the translucent body of this illusory emanation. Purifying the limitations of our speech so that our speech arises as sound and emptiness, and purifying our mind so that we see that all the thoughts, feelings and sensations are nothing but the self-expression of emptiness. With this purification, how you are, and how Padmasambhava is, become very similar. Then these three lights manifest all at once and you have the fourth initiation which is your inseparability from the primordial Buddha.

Then in an instant Padmasambhava melts into your heart and your own awareness manifests as the letter Hri, which is the seed syllable of Padmasambhava, and in an instant you become Padmasambhava.

*Padmasambhava melts into my heart. My awareness becomes the letter HRI.*

Having dissolved the basis of your habitual sense of self you are now this open potential, and from this open potential where you are inseparable from Padmasambhava you manifest in that form.

As it says in another text, *THE ASPIRATION OF SAMANTABHADRA*:

*Ho! All the possible appearances and existences of samsara and nirvana have the same source, yet two paths and two results arise as the magical display of awareness and unawareness. By this evocation of Samantabhadra may all beings awaken to full enlightenment in the security of infinite hospitality.*

There is the ground which is the unborn basis of everything, and from this, two paths unfold. The path that leads to samsara and the path that leads to liberation, both have the same ground. Emptiness - the ground of our being - can give rise to our form in its limitations or it can give rise to us as Padmasambhava. It is the same ground; it is emptiness. We, our ordinary self, are empty, but because we don't realise our emptiness we feel we are not like Padmasambhava.

But the more you do the dissolving practice, the more you see that you are movement, you are the energy of awareness manifesting in different modes. You are the light of the buddha's mind and then you see that this form of the light of the buddha's mind, or the form of Padmasambhava, is not different.

Then we visualise ourselves in the form of Padmasambhava. Once again we recite the mantra many times.

*In an instant of recollection I become Padmasambhava, pink in colour with an expression that is both peaceful and angry. Holding a vajra and a skull cup, I wear a lotus hat. Dressed in a tunic, red dharma robes and a cloak, I sit on a lotus with a moon cushion. The form I imagine and the actual form are instantly inseparable.*

*OM AA HUNG BENDZA GURU PEMA SIDDHI HUNG*

We imagine ourselves as Padmasambhava. And then because this is a very short condensed anuyoga style text; in an instant from Zangdopalri - the pure land of Padmasambhava - he manifests in his actual form and dissolves into our visualised form so that we are the actuality of Padmasambhava.

Because you have the artificiality of imagining you are like this, you know that you are doing this. I am imagining that I am this but now it comes through like a kind of



epiphany and there you are fully as Padmasambhava, and it is in that state of feeling just this radiance of yourself that you are doing the mantra. We recite this many times, and if you are on your own you can do the Seven Line Prayer at that time.

Then we recite the general offering mantra:

*OM BENDZA ARGHAM PADYAM PUSHPE DHUPE ALOKE GENDHE NEWIDYE SHABDA A HUNG*

Then we recite the very famous praise to Padmasambhava:

*Hung. The guru without artifice or elaboration is the intrinsic mode. The guru of great happiness, master of dharma, is the enjoyment mode. The lotus born guru is the apparitional mode. We salute and praise Vajradhara with these three modes*

This indicates that Padmasambhava is the presence of these three aspects of the buddha: the dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, and nirmanakaya, and we are now Padmasambhava. We are saying the praise to ourselves in the form of Padmasambhava. In saying this, we honour our true nature and allow all our misleading identities to fall away. This is who I truly am. My mind is uncontrived and free of dependence on all limiting concepts.

Within this infinite awareness manifold luminous shapes, colours, sounds and vibrations arise. This is the mandala of the buddha. This is the sambhogakaya aspect arising from dharmakaya awareness. Then as we get up and move around responding to what we encounter this is the unfolding of our nirmanakaya potential. We and all that we encounter are illusory appearances arising like images in a dream. With these three aspects of the buddha we are not manifesting from a pure land somewhere else but we are experiencing the unveiling of, and direct experience, of the unchanging intrinsic truth.

With Buddha Shakyamuni, there is the outer telling of the story of Shakyamuni. He is born as Siddhartha in this rich, powerful family. He marries and has a child. He is pampered and indulged and he has some shocking experiences and he leaves home. In the mahayana version, the twelve deeds or acts of Buddha Shakyamuni have always been in the Tushita pure land. Although he manifests an illusory body into this world, showing the twelve deeds of a Buddha's life, he remains in the Tushita pure land. What that means in terms of our dzogchen understanding is that when we see the luminosity of appearances manifesting as colour and shape, we are not grasping it with our conceptual identification. Within this we move and talk, moving in a sea of light. We are light moving in light. We are movement in a sea of movement. It is not that we separate out and we leave the luminosity behind, the luminosity is showing itself as these particular formations.

The apparitional form - the nirmanakaya - is ourselves as we talk and eat and stand in a queue in the rain. This is how it is. So when you think you are getting wet and cold, where are you? You are in a sea of light. The lamp is shimmering from the rain, and the rain is shimmering down your face. Amazing! Wonderful! 'No, it's cold and miserable!' You don't have to tell yourself a fairy tale all the time because the thought 'it's miserable' and the thought 'it's wonderful' are both empty.

So that is the end of the small terma text discovered by Nuden Dorje Drophan Lingpa Drolo Tsal.

### Added verses from the Le'u Dun Ma: Comments

Our practice text follows with four verses from the text *LE'U DUN MA* [Tib.], The Seven Chapters of Prayer given by Padmasambhava at the time when he was leaving Tibet. He gave prayers to King Trisong Deutsan, Yeshe Tsogyal and Mutri Tsangpo and others. These lines are spoken by Padmasambhava himself, and they show us how to be when you come out of the visualisation of yourself as Padmasambhava. You can maintain yourself as Padmasambhava, or see yourself in your ordinary form; both are equally illusory. This is his advice on how to maintain the openness of meditation as you move into the world of experience.

*As regards the objects of our vision, the appearances of absolutely all the outer and inner entities that constitute the universe and its inhabitants, we maintain the state in which they can appear yet without being grasped at as something inherently real, for in fact they are the divine forms of clarity and emptiness, pure and by nature untainted by the false notions of graspable objects and grasping mind. We pray to the guru who self-liberates desire. We pray to Padmasambhava of Urgyan.*

Everything that you see is form and emptiness; this is the appearance of Padmasambhava. Whether you see a house or a car or people in the street, whatever you see, when you apply man, woman, car or house, this is your interpretation. What you see is light. These eyes see light; they don't see anything else. Everything you see is light.

Then due to causes and conditions, and speaking your own particular language, you formulate interpretive thoughts such as 'I wish I had an electric car like that.' - whatever bias your prejudicial thoughts bring you to, this is your mind, this is not about the car. When you see a car, you see your mind. When you see someone you like, you see your mind. When you see someone you don't like, you see your mind. This is your mind hiding the radiance of your mind from you; this is you making yourself stupid when you believe the car is a car. To say that problems generated by cars is an eco-crisis is just one interpretation of cars; there are many other interpretation of cars. These are thought patterns moving in the sky. Everything you see and hear is Padmasambhava.

*As regards the objects of audition, the audible matter comprising all the sounds that we grasp at as being pleasant and unpleasant, we remain in the state of sound and emptiness that is free of all conceptual interpretation, for they are in fact sound and emptiness, the unborn and unceasing speech of the Buddha. We pray to the Buddha's speech of sound and emptiness. We pray to Padmasambhava of Urgyan.*

If somebody is sweet to you or if somebody insults you, it is sound and emptiness. That is what you hear, but what you interpret is 'I don't agree with what you are saying. You're wrong. How could you say that? I feel really upset.' That is you - it is not them. Sound came into your ear and you interpreted it. What you get is you. So don't complain about the world; it is always your fault. Now you are a buddha, you shouldn't blame the buddha. Who is responsible then? No-one.

*As regards the objects of our mentation, these restless movements of the five afflictive poisons' thoughts, no matter what arises, we do not enter upon the intellect's unnatural activities of awaiting future thoughts and following after past thoughts. By leaving the restless movement in its own place we are liberated in the natural mode. We pray to the guru of self-liberating awareness. We pray to Padmasambhava of Urgyan.*

With regard to the mind he is saying many different thoughts, memories and future plans arise. Don't chase after them as they will take you away from being here. Don't go after past thoughts and don't wait expectantly for future thoughts - just stay present with whatever is here. What is here is the openness of awareness. If you stay with that everything which arises is self-liberating. But if you get entangled in thoughts, feelings and sensations and you bring them into some shaping of who you think you are, then that enmeshment, that grasping, that attachment, binds you into limitation.

These verses are very beautiful and extremely helpful, and in most nyingma monasteries they are recited every day as a reminder that this is how it is. What he is saying here is you are not trying to establish something - if you are trying to do anything it is to stop covering over that which is already open. You don't have to make yourself enlightened - you have to stop unenlightening yourself. You have to stop obscuring yourself. Our own busy mind makes us dull. This is such a shocking understanding that we can come to see I, myself, by my intoxication with all these thoughts blind myself to the simplicity of this openness.

*With the purification of all that appears, all the outer objects of grasping, and the liberating of the grasping mind within, and simultaneously, the natural luminosity of seeing our own natures, may I and all beings be blessed with the liberation of our experience by the compassion of all the buddhas of the three times.*

When these outer forms are in their simple clarity, and the mind itself is relaxed and self-liberated, the inseparability of inside and outside, of subject and object, is exactly the experience of all the buddhas of the three times. These four short verses are a very good guide to our basic view of how to proceed.

And then we have this wonderful short prayer *THE CALL OF IMPERMANENCE (Mi-Tag Gyu-Kul Ni* [Tib. Mi rTag rGyud bsKul Ni]), which again is more like a contemplation. This comes from Rigdzin Godem who was a tertön of the Northern Treasures lineage [Tib. Byang gTer]. There are different versions of it.

One version is that it was inherited by Rigdzin Godem when he was one of the twenty-five close disciples of Padmasambhava, and Padmasambhava himself taught it. Another version is that Rigdzin Godem wrote it when he was in retreat and it was not going very well, so he wrote this as a kind of cry to himself. *Kul-wa* [Tib. bsKul Ba] means to call and wake up, so he is trying to wake himself up to the understanding of impermanence because he becomes aware of how he is getting trapped. It is self-explanatory and very beautiful. The final verse is a little bit deeper, and we will look at some of the meaning of that tomorrow when we look at *THE MIRROR OF LUMINOUS REVELATION*.

*Body, Speech, Mind. Great Presence, grant me all accomplishment. Although I know worldly appearances to be illusory, grasping still arises towards these bewildering appearances as being something inherently real. My afflictions and their subtle traces are not yet finished. Please bless me by cutting the root of all hopes and desires. OM AA HUNG MAHA GURU SARVA SIDDHI HUNG*

*Body, Speech, Mind. Great Presence, grant me all accomplishment. Towards the impermanent manifestations of the bad actions of this debased period, renunciation arises and I discard the objects of my hopes and desires. Yet later on I am troubled by the sufferings of desire for the objects of my daily use. Please bless me by cutting the root of desire and craving. OM AA HUNG MAHA GURU SARVA SIDDHI HUNG*

*Body, Speech, Mind. Great Presence, grant me all accomplishment. Great methods for clearing away the afflictions of the three poisons have been spoken by the Buddhas in many teachings, yet I very strongly go under the power of subtle karmic traces that are so difficult to abandon. Please bless me by cutting the root of bad actions. OM AA HUNG MAHA GURU SARVA SIDDHI HUNG*

*Body, Speech, Mind. Great Presence, grant me all accomplishment. Outer causal situations, inner causal situations, and suddenly occurring situations, all arise from the root of belief in duality. I now know this, yet I am not free from the power of Mara. Please bless me that my mind may arise nakedly. OM AA HUNG MAHA GURU SARVA SIDDHI HUNG*

*Body, Speech, Mind. Great Presence, grant me all accomplishment. Please bless me with freedom from the fetter of belief in duality. My mind itself is unmade, easily present without effort. It is not made by the good deeds and qualities of the Buddha, and it is not bound by the prison of sinking, fogginess and wavering. With my awareness shining with its own brilliant, radiant light, actuality's vast mother and son will meet. So not being made stupid by the bad friends of lazy, relaxed situations, I will strongly and lovingly protect the good house of sunyata, and by that, actuality's mother and son will quickly meet. Then, from that time, I will strongly act for the benefit of those moving in samsara! I will perform the deeds of a bodhisattva! I will create a great stream of virtue for the benefit of others! I will gain the effective power to upturn and empty samsara!*

### **Tsog Practice: Comments**

Then we make some offerings.

The reason for offerings is that they are a basic act of communication.

Traditionally, when you arrive in a place and you are tired people will give you some water to drink. That is why we said: OM BENDZA ARGHAM PADYAM PUSHPE DHUPE ALOKE GENDHE NEWIDYE SHABDA AA HUNG. We offer the forms of emptiness: drinking water and so on because these are the things offered to a guest who is arriving.

I remember being in the Sahara and arriving in an oasis, and immediately someone came out with some water to drink. Of course, if you have been travelling across the desert it is very hot, so that is what you do and how you relate. You give something. Giving is our way of relating.

We offer up the Buddhas and they offer their blessing down to us. We offer to the lower deities and they offer their power and blessing to us. We offer to the lowest groups and they offer us their gratitude. We offer to the very weak and frightened and timid, and they offer again their quiet gratitude. The tradition speaks of four orders of guests, but essentially it means that through gift-giving we link ourselves with everyone. Giving is society; there is no society without giving. We give gifts.

The thing about a gift is it is not an issue of exchange. 'I will give you my cow for three of your goats.' We would have to work out if that was the going market rate. Or should I get four goats for a cow because mine is a very good cow? We are not concerned here with barter or exchange. We are concerned with a gift. We give. Something may come back but it is about, how do we give? What is a gift? We give a gift because we want to give a gift. I want to be close to you and to share this with you; I want you to be happy. It is very helpful for looking at our personal attitudes to generosity, of me first, of profit orientation.

When we are thinking later this week about ecology this is all very relevant. I think it is beyond doubt that commodity fetish capitalism fixated on the profit motive is always looking for excess. It is not looking for parity of barter to work out what is fair. As soon as you have excess profit, and the profit goes to shareholders who do no productive work at all, you have a displacement and inequality in the whole economic system.

But we are looking at something much more basic than this. It is just: I want you to be happy, I want you to have this. I want to give, and when I give, this is for you. The nirmanakaya means I am for you; we are for the other, we are not for ourselves. The more we realise we don't have a fixed self the more the richness and variety of our self-potential is evoked by being for the other because we give different gifts to different people. Every interaction we have with the other we can see this is giving to ourself. We give a smile, we give a hug, we give our conversation, our thoughtfulness, and something is arising. We are in this pulsation of gift-giving so there is a complete system of relatedness in these small verses.

*The offering bowl of the emptiness of our open nature displays the offering of the clarity of our presence revealing our all-inclusive kindness. Three Jewels, three Roots, and three enlightened Modes, together with the Guru who encompasses you all – please come here and enjoy the great happiness of these assembled offerings. With our palms held together at our hearts, we confess all our many breaches of vows, lapses and faults. All deluding appearances and identifications are liberated within the infinitely hospitable ground, and displayed within the primordial purity of open awareness. The four classes of guests must be completely satisfied. With all our accumulations of merit and wisdom complete may benefit for self and other arise effortlessly. May all beings quickly awaken in the Buddhas' realm of the four enlightened modes.*

The first three lines are referring to the three aspects of who we are according to the dzogchen system. Our *ngo-wo* [Tib. Ngo Bo] or our essence, is emptiness. Inseparable from this essence is the radiance of the mind itself, the clarity which is the field of all our experience. Within that, the all-pervading compassion is how we are manifesting in different ways, at different moments, with different people.

When you are climbing up the stairs or coming down the stairs different muscles in your thighs, back and belly are operating as you negotiate the steps. This is also part of compassion - that your body is relating to the steps. The steps make you work. You have to be careful going down steps so that you don't fall, especially as you get older. You want to be in harmony with the steps. You want to be in harmony with the spoon, the knife, and the fork. The spoon won't do what the fork does, and the fork can't do what the spoon does, and the knife says, 'I am different too.' Your hand takes hold of the knife

in a different way from the spoon. When you hold the spoon, your thumb and your forefingers are bending. You are in relationship with the world.

This is also part of the nirmanakaya: the unfolding of all-pervading kindness. The English word 'kindness' is linked to kin, to family, to kind; we are in one family, not just with humans and other sentient beings, but with all forms. We walk up hills. We walk on muddy paths differently from being on a city pavement. What is meant here is that we are adapting ourselves to harmonise with the circumstances. The rich variety of all the different moves that we make are part of how the ground shows itself within the field of luminosity. This is very important. Nothing is meaningless in our world.

Then we offer the food to ourselves and any accompanying practitioners.

*Oh! This excellent assembled offering of food is an ornament to be used without rejecting the pleasure it brings. From this food many different accomplishments arise. Yogis, happily eat and enjoy these assembled offerings! The result of true accomplishment – wonderful!*

The food which we have offered now contains the blessings of the Buddha. That is to say, the food is texture and emptiness, colour and emptiness, shape and emptiness, smell and emptiness, flavour and emptiness; it dissolves in our mouth as form dissolving into emptiness. When we eat the offering, the richness of the world is dissolving into the self, and the self is opening to the richness of the world. As we are eating the food and taking the drink, the boundary between inside and outside - between self and other - is being dissolved, so that is why we should always eat and drink in a quiet meditative way. This is other, and this other is becoming me. If I, me, myself, am completely independent, how could I eat food? How could I take the 'other' into me? But 'other' becomes me and then me becomes 'other'.

You go to the toilet and you shit and piss. What was inside your body - what was self - is now not self. This pulsation goes on all the time. We breathe in and we breathe out. Our body is formed by the nature of whatever chair we are sitting on, by the nature of the knife and fork, and by the texture of the food we are eating. We are relational and this relation is non-dual in the field of clarity. That is the meaning of the offering.

### **Dedication of Merit: Comments**

Now we come right to the end: the final dedication of merit and good wishes for the continuity of the lineage.

*By this virtue, by doing your practice may all beings become inseparable from you, our guru. May we all enjoy the rich happiness of this world and have the good fortune of the Guru abiding in awareness.*

*When merely the thought of helping others is more excellent than the worship of the Buddhas, it is unnecessary even to mention the greatness of striving for the happiness and welfare of all beings without exception.*

*All difficulties without exception being pacified, and with harmonious conditions like the treasure of the sky, the powerful victor Padmasambhava's doctrines must live long and shine brightly! Indestructible three mode guru Padmasambhava, grant us accomplishment!*

We dedicate the merit because we don't want excess. Although in the mahayana tradition we talk about the two accumulations of merit and wisdom, the function of the accumulation is to disperse it: you gather it to give it. Whatever merit has been gathered through doing the practice you give it away; nothing is gained by hanging on - it is non-accumulative.

Why is this the case? Because moment-by-moment from the infinite ground all manifestation is arising. In the here and now, outside of the past, free of the future, in this ever-infinite instant moment everything is arising fully formed. This is the inseparability of primordial purity and effortless arising; because it is arising fully in this moment you don't need to bring from the past, into the present, into the future.

When you see this, the chain of the three times is cut, and you are always present with everything as it is. But when you are like a little squirrel gathering nuts in the autumn and burying them here and there so that they will be able to find some food in the winter, then you are a sentient being wandering in samsara because you are always thinking about tomorrow, being safe, and having enough.

Of course, it doesn't mean on an ordinary practical level that we don't try to have some money saved in the bank, but it is more the basic attitude. 'Give us this day our daily bread.' For the day, for the moment. The moment is the key thing, not the future, the future doesn't exist. We don't know what is going to happen. We dedicate the merit to stay fresh and open. This moment is gone - the next moment will be here and come full as it is - and then we will be with that moment and the next moment...

The more the pot empties, the more the pot can be filled. If this moment leaves half of itself in the pot, when the next moment arises you cannot be fully present because you have got half of the last moment available. We know that when we are preoccupied by memories and regrets about the past we are not fully here. When we are worried about the future, about what's going to happen and wondering how we will manage, we are not fully here. So that is the purpose of dedicating the merit. Fully here... all gone... here we are.

Okay, so now we share and enjoy the food and drink.