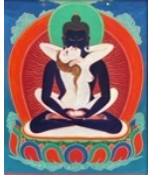


## James Low: Urygen Menla Zoom, 17 May 2023<sup>1</sup> Explanations and Instructions of the Practice.



So, we have a very interesting event tonight, especially for me, because I am sick and I'm going to give you this empowerment of the medicine Buddha, so that you as medicine Buddhas can heal me. This is a very proper way of proceeding. We should never take our condition too seriously. Life is full of surprises and provocations. Whatever ideas we have about ourselves, these are based on moments of the past. Our body, our voice, our mind are patterns without any inherent existence, and so are easily disturbed. Now, especially from the view of *Dzogchen* our focus is always on the whole, it's on the complete, the unmixed, the uncontaminated.

Health is linked to the whole. So, the real health that we want is not just the transient balancing of the five elements in our body, but we are deeply healed by not straying from our own ground. The here and now, the immediacy of each moment, is the great site of healing. This health is lost sight of when we grasp on to the moment and go into attachment, because we like something, or aversion, because we don't like something. So, for us the great healing is the guru yoga of the white Ah, resting in the unborn mind and allowing the patterns of manifestation to come and go according to the various factors that move in them. If we can do this then the movements of the patterns of our experience in life is just something we are aware of. Of course, they are occurring, they have an impact, but they don't define who we are.

So this always brings us back to the relationship of the mind, speech and the body. As we read again and again in the texts, the true situation of our mind is the *dharmakaya*. The *dharmakaya* is a space of presence which is ungraspable. My mind is

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<sup>1</sup> This transcript was compiled by Robert Jaroslowski, finished on 8 June 2023. May it be helpful for all on the path! The little painting of Samantabhadri/Samantabhadra used at the beginning by courtesy of Holger Utta.

not a thing. Your mind is not a thing. All kind of appearances, some peaceful, some disturbed, arise and pass in the mind. They tell us about the flow of experience but not about the true nature of our mind. Similarly our speech flows out of us, it is our medium of connectivity, it is the way that we express sound, and sound is the subtle vibration which fills the whole universe. Sound is immediate – just here. In the same way the field of our experience through all the senses is just here. It's always complete, in this moment, as just this. Within this radiant field, according to the circumstances we respond to what's here. This is our body. Our body is not a way for getting into the world, our body is an aspect of the world – it's composed of the five elements just as everything else is. When these five elements are disturbed, then we tend to experience trouble.

So, there's already flooding and fires in various places – this is a lack of balance. In North Italy they had months of no rain, and then suddenly huge amount of rain, and they have flooding. It's difficult to know how to predict the seasons. So, this is so this is what happens when the five elements are disturbed, and they can be disturbed from outer reasons and inner reasons. Earth, water, fire, wind and space have an uneasy balance. The basic element is space, but it accepts everything, it doesn't have an intention. The three moving elements the wind and fire and water, they go according to the movements around them, they lack an internal stability. And then we have the earth element which tries to hold things in place. It can look very solid, as if it was something real. But of course the force of the moving elements can undermine it, causing landslides and swamps and so on. And of course, the five poisons in ourselves, our mental dullness, our desire, aversion, pride and jealousy, these are also linked to the five elements as disturbing influences. And according to tradition the environment we are in is not a possession of human beings; we share this space with many kinds of beings – some we can see, some not. And if these local gods and the owners of the land and the guardians of the water, if they become upset at our human bad behavior, then they tend to sow many different kinds of illnesses. This is a very simple principle: if I act in a disturbing way to what is around me, then it's likely that some of the factors in what is around me will act in a disturbing way towards me.

So, as soon as we see that there is an absence of inherent existence or of an internal definition in all the different varieties of phenomena, we see that the potential for movement, that we are labile, is something we can't get away from – we are influenced by what is around us. The delusion of being an isolated individual self makes us dull in relation to our actual dynamic participation in this moving field.

So, the text we're going to look at is a *terma*, a treasure text, discovered by Nuden Dorje Drophan Lingpa. C.R. Lama was his fourth incarnation. This is quite a short text. Its focus is on Padmasambhava in the form of the Medicine Buddha. Padmasambhava takes on many different forms. The essence of Padmasambhava is the non-duality of awareness and emptiness. He manifests according to circumstances. Now, when we are not aware that we also have as our ground or basis the non-duality of awareness and emptiness, we think that I am me, I exist as me, I am not like you, so I can only interact with you in quite a limited way, because we're not very similar. This narrow view creates a great barrier to manifesting in spontaneous kindness – as a participation, as a healing force in the field.

So, I'm going to first of all read through the text, give you the *lung* for the Tibetan, and then I'll give you a brief empowerment for the text so that you can truly and deeply enter into the practice. When we receive an empowerment we're not being introduced to anything other than ourselves. That is to say that Padmasambhava is yourself; Tara is yourself. Who is not yourself is who you think you are. Our ordinary identity as James or Robert or Mary – these are imagined forms, these are delusions. Our actual form is Padmasambhava, because he is a form of light. And truly we are radiation of light from the unborn ground. In this practice text there's a description of this form of Padmasambhava. But this form is one of Padmasambhavas' many forms. It's not his true form, it's his relational form, the one he shows to help people to protect themselves and others from unnecessary illness. So, when we do the practice we are entering into a relationship with a form of ourselves. Or rather we might say, we're starting to realize that we are forms of Padmasambhava. So I read through the text [*lung for the text*]. So, hopefully we'll have time for me to explain some of this, but basically it's very straightforward.

So, we request Padmasambhava to come and be with us. We recite the seven line prayer three times. This is probably familiar for most of you. And then we recite a verse from the *Prayer in Seven Chapters*, the *Le'u Dunma*, which is collected from the speech of Padmasambhava when he was in Tibet. And it's very simple and very powerful. He says, "*When diseases arise which destroy the insubstantial bodies of sentient beings and we are oppressed by unbearable great misery, we must pray without doubt or uncertainty.*" Doubt and uncertainty are experiences which fragment our energy. They interrupt the easy flow of connectivity, which is the actual nature of non-duality. So, it's very important that we trust Padmasambhava. Because if we remain in our doubting conceptual dualistic mind, we will be comparing this with that, and we won't meet Padmasambhava, and we'll only meet more and more of our own opinions. So,

then he says, *“For then you (to whom we are praying), for then you, Padmasambhava, who are one with the Buddha of Medicine, will most certainly dispel all the obstacles that create untimely death. Padmasambhava of Urgyen, we pray to you, please bless us that our wishes may be fulfilled without effort.”*

When we pray with one-pointed devotion we thin and thin and thin the distance between ourselves and the one we pray to. All obstacles dissolve in emptiness. They have always been empty, but they are made something seemingly strong and powerful because of our belief in them. So, when we get a difficulty, a disease or whatever, we can say, *“Oh, my life is controlled by this disease”*. But when we pray to Padmasambhava, and we dissolve with him, merged into emptiness, then we see, oh, there is nothing real does. Then different kinds of experiences arise from that open ground. In fact, everything arises from that. Happiness and sadness, health and sickness – sickness is part of the radiance of the mind. So, it’s vital if you are a meditator not to enter into a dualistic position with sickness and say, *“Oh, this bad thing is happening to me!”* That is your thought. The nature of sickness is movement and transformation. As the Buddha said, all compounded things are impermanent, including our body. It’s our egotistical attachment that turns a neutral phenomenon, arising and passing, into a tragedy.

So, then we take refuge and develop Bodhicitta for all sentient beings. So, when we see that everything has already the nature of emptiness and is already within the vastness of the open mind, then we see that the whole, everything, the dharmadhatu has a place for everything. So we can be fully present in awareness and be sick, be sad, be lonely. If you develop an image of enlightenment and say, *“But I know that enlightenment is always happy, always good, and I don’t feel like that”*, then you are trapped by your own thoughts. Everything arises from the pure ground; in a more symbolic way we can say, everything is always already within the mandala of Padmasambhava.

So, if you have a copy of the text (I don't know what it is in different languages but in English it's page eight), so we together recite this Refuge and Bodhicitta and imagine Padmasambhava in front of us, surrounded by all the many deities, Chenrezig, Tara and so on, many different dakinis, and we say three times, *“We take refuge in all the places of refuge; we manifest our aspiration to lead all beings to enlightenment; we offer the outer, inner and secret offerings; we pray that we may attain unsurpassed enlightenment.”* When we offer these outer, inner and secret offerings, we are offering all the phenomena of the world that we might be attached to, whether it's a possession, or a skill that we have, or a memory – because we see that all that we are attached to, even when it seems very attractive and important, in fact this limits us. [Again] *“We*

*take refuge in all the places of refuge; we manifest our aspiration to lead all beings to enlightenment; we offer the outer, inner and secret offerings; we pray that we may attain unsurpassed enlightenment.” [And again] “We take refuge in all the places of refuge; we manifest our aspiration to lead all beings to enlightenment; we offer the outer, inner and secret offerings; we pray that we may attain unsurpassed enlightenment.”*

Now, Padmasambhava is sitting in a relaxed way, in his left hand he has a skull cup with amrita in it, and his right hand he holds the *arura* plant, which is the most essential healing medicine in the Tibetan system, and he is in front of us, but we can't clearly see him, because we are not yet able to enter the mandala. You can't see the mandala if you're a day tourist, just going in and popping out again. And this is why we make a vow to maintain the view based on what we see when we enter the mandala. It's as if you go to the optician and he says, *“Okay, I can make these special lenses for your eyes, but I remember I made similar glasses three years ago, and you haven't worn them. So, if I give you glasses, put them on and wear them; then you'll be able to see clearly.”* So, this is what it means to go into the mandala: get your eyes checked!

When we see how difficult samsara is, when we see how much sickness and poverty and war there is, and that even when we might try to help other people we all often create more problems, then this is a reminder that we need to pray to become enlightened, because then we will be free from suffering and we can also help others be free from suffering.

**[After the initiation:]** So, that's the main part of the initiation, and that allows you to fully enter into the practice of Padmasambhava as the Medicine Buddha.

So, now we return to the practice text which you have; you just visualize as I read this through. *“Ah (the symbol of emptiness). From the very beginning all phenomena have been completely pure.”* That means, there is no solidity in them, no internal definition, nothing which makes them truly different from any other of the many phenomena. So in this open space of emptiness filled by illusory forms, *“In a rainbow sphere within (which) the radiant blue is Padmasambhava in the form of the Medicine Buddha.”* So, the blue sky has this ball of rainbow light, and inside that is Padmasambhava, and he is in the form of the medicine buddha, so he holds this healing plant. *“He is blue in colour, with one head and two hands. His right hand holds the stem of a myrobalan plant and his left rests in his lap holding a bowl full of nectar. He's dressed in the upper and lower dharma robes and*

*displaying all the major and minor perfections. This Nirmanakaya form sits smiling peacefully."*

So, *"At his heart there is a moon disc is wearing the letter HRI around which the root mantra revolves"*, and as it revolves around the HRI rays of light come out from the mantra, *"which rises up as an offering to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas."* They then take the light, they receive it and send it down as bestowing empowerments, blessings and attainments on me. And then the light radiates down from this mantra in the heart of the Medicine Buddha, and it touches myself and all other beings in samsara, *"Purifying the illnesses caused by demons, (by) our sins and obscurations (and) arising from karmic activity driven by the three poisons. I meditate on the spreading of the wisdom of great happiness."* So, when you're doing the practice yourself, you imagine this *mantra* going round, the rays of light going up and down while you're reciting the *mantra*.

At first it can seem very complicated, but you know that you can cook while you're talking to someone. You can drive the car while you're talking to someone. So, the practices is functioning to bring clarity and emptiness into the complexity of manifestation. And these light rays are entering into the bodies of all beings and purifying them of all that is negative. This is also the heart of the Dzogchen teachings. Whatever arises is inseparable from its own empty ground. Due to unawareness of the ground we imagine we are seeing things. So, in the practice we're calling on the power of Padmasambhava as the Medicine Buddha to purify our belief that there might be real entities. By reciting the mantra, Nudan Dorje writes, it *"... results in curing disease and removing obstacles during this life, and finally one will be reborn in the Medicine Buddha's pure land."* And then Nudan Dorje writes that when he was in pilgrimage in Bhutan and he was doing many prayers and practices and prostrations, he had a direct vision of the Medicine Buddha.

So it's both, the treasure that he discovered and the means by which he got this specific blessing of the Medicine Buddha. So, whenever you can you do the practice. When we do the practice, we should include all sentient beings in it. Many animals get sicknesses now; there are many cancers in dogs and cats; many animals like deer have large worms living inside them, which cause them much pain and distress, and they become sick. So, it's very important not to separate this practice from your bodhisattva vow. When we awaken to our own mind as empty, we relax. Nothing that occurs can alter this even, equal, happy emptiness. We don't need so much energy and thought for ourselves. Now our manifestation, both the manifestation of our inner visions and

thoughts and memories, and the manifestation of our outer activity, all of this is for the benefit of others.

So, again we're saying this verse from the Prayer in Seven Chapters: *"Emaho! (wonderful!) When diseases arise which destroy the insubstantial bodies of sentient beings..."* – and anyway, this body is impermanent, it's a balance of the five elements; it will dissolve and death will arise. The relationship between the five elements and the eight consciousnesses will start to fall apart. But, while we have a life we have a chance both to practice dharma and to benefit others. Nobody lives forever, but diseases can bring us an untimely death; we can die or be crippled before our time. When this occurs and *"...we are oppressed by unbearable great misery..."* Misery is important to understand. When we have misery we want someone to comfort us. There are many kinds of lonely experiences in samsara. People thrown into prisons have no one to say a sweet word to them. Many people who are old are lonely; their friends have died and the children have moved away, and from morning till night nobody says hello to them. So it's important not to become sad, not to sink, not to become despairing or self-pitying. So Padmasambhava says, *"We must pray without doubt or uncertainty! For then you, Padmasambhava who are one with the Buddha of Medicine, Will most certainly dispel all the obstacles that create untimely death. Padmasambhava of Urygen we pray to you – Please bless us that our wishes may be fulfilled without effort!"*

Our wishes can be fulfilled without effort when we open to the unborn ground of our experience.

Then we have a verse which is spoken by Padmasambhava: *"You the hosts of protectors of places of practice, and you the friends of gurus and path deities, all you hosts of vow keepers and protectors must take care of all those who are under my protection. Hindrances caused by demons who inflict diseases must be pacified by your activities."*

When we become oppressed, when times are difficult, it is as if the skin around us becomes very thin and we absorb more and more. So, the dharma protectors and these forces – originally local gods in Tibet, but they're also present everywhere – these are the energies of the world which will protect us, because they are under the power of Padmasambhava. The protectors, they are the energy which has been disciplined. It's like the history of our life: When we're small children we just run around and do whatever we want to do, because someone else is cooking and cleaning for us. And then, as teenagers we jump out into the world and do things that are a bit unsafe, because we've got no clear sense of our purpose or how we could use our lives. Then,

when you find that you have some use in society, you can get a job and help other people, so this is the same with these dharma protectors: when Padmasambhava came to Tibet, these local gods were rushing around, causing avalanches and protecting their friends and attacking enemies – because they didn't really care. So, Padmasambhava used his spiritual power to make contact with their heart energy, their own seed syllable and he brought them into a commitment to work for the benefit of the dharma. So, this brought real value to the people who lived in the territory, but also to the dharma protectors, because now they had a use and a value.

So in the next verse he says, *“The cause of unawareness supports the secondary conditions of dualistic concepts...”* So, the primary cause of all the trouble in samsara is to be unaware of the ever-open, ever-available pure ground. This unawareness calls forth the secondary conditions of the dualistic concepts, good, bad, me, you and so on. And when the primary cause and the secondary conditions operate, then sickness is generated by the interaction of wind, bile and phlegm, as well as infections are pulled into manifestation. So, from this point of view there are no accidents. Because it's either in our karma or in the karma of those that we come under the power of. And both of these situations arise due to unawareness of the ground. So, all these disturbing conditions of imbalance in the body part, *“... these, along with the male, female and neuter (sometimes hermaphrodite) demons who give rise to similar harm, (these) must be pacified by your activity.”* Disturbances arise if there's no one to control them. So, the power of Padmasambhava is to calm everyone.

Then the next verse says, *“Demons deluded by co-emergent and defining unawareness,...”* Now what he's saying here is that the demons arise from the delusion, the mental confusion of these two forms of unawareness. Co-emergent unawareness is the arising of subject and object together as a kind of given. And defining unawareness is the naming of all phenomena in a way that apprehends them as being truly existent. You have to be clear that in Buddhism there is no notion of 'evil' as some kind of permanent condition, like the devil. All negative forms arise from the potential energy of the ground being trapped within a limited identity, which then is completely taken up with winning and not losing. Many people have been killed – if we're thinking just about the human condition – many people have been killed on the basis of their race, or their gender, or their religion, their nationality... *“You are one of those, and so you must die!”* So, that is the view of the demon – it's a kind of stupid simplicity. Then there are *“...three hundred and sixty trouble-makers summoned by black magic, and the (malevolent influences of the) planets, nagas, (the) gyalpo (rough demon spirits), disease*



*demons, perverters, predators and evil spirits – you must pacify all these deluding appearances within their actual emptiness.”*

So, it's not about becoming very powerful and defeating negative forces. We defeat the negative forces by seeing that they are intrinsically empty of self-substance. If we see the emptiness of all phenomena, then our fears become really thin. Having been born we are going to die. We don't know when we're going to die. So, there is nothing to be afraid of. Death is normal, it's part of our experience of life, but when we become afraid we imagine we are being attacked, and then we simply increase our dualistic bias – this is good, this is bad.

So, the next verse says, *“In this way, all the activities that we request and are blessed by Guru, Path Deity and Dakini must be quickly performed by you the ocean of dharma protectors and vow-keepers in remembrance of your vows.”* So, now we are telling these dharma protectors, *“Keep your vows!”* But we should not forget that we have also just taken some vows. We've taken the vow to remember that our mind is unborn from the very beginning, it has no fixed substance, it's not an identity, and the vow to remember, our speech is the ceaseless flow of connectivity, ungraspable connectivity. So, although I'm talking into a computer screen, I imagine you are there. As I speak my constitution, my formation is changing, it's dynamic; and you, as you hear the words, they are also moving in you, so you are changing. So, this is the blessing of speech. But it's not I am speaking to you, but rather that we are two dynamic movements and speech is pulsing between us. And our body also is mobilized according to the events that we encounter. The *dharmakaya* is untouched by any event, and the *sambhogakaya* and the *nirmanakaya* are responsive, connective, communicative.

So, we have the verse for the dedication of merit, *“By this virtue may I quickly gain the stage of Padmasambhava Buddha of Medicine. Then may I put all beings without exception upon that same stage.”* So, nobody is stopping us from being the same as the Medicine Buddha. Medicine Buddha says, *“Sure, you can be like me, because I'm not like anything”*. It's not a kind of Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise, so that somehow we all have to have the same ingredients. When you do the practice it will manifest through you as you with your unique specificity.

So, then we say *“All difficulties without exception being pacified...”* – this means sickness, poverty, war, theft, deception, *“...and with harmonious conditions like the treasure of the sky...”*, means health, happiness, good crops, friendly words, people

being helpful, no cruelty to animals, so with these two conditions, “...*the powerful Buddha Padmasambhavas’ teachings must live long and shine brightly.*”

And then we have this final verse from Shantideva, “*When merely the thought of helping others is more excellent than the worship of the Buddhas,...*” – this is very important for us: it means, being a Buddhist is not very important. I’m a Buddhist, I believe the Buddha is special, I light my butter lamp for the Buddha! But there is no limit to compassion. Compassion is for everyone, whether they are Buddhists or Non-Buddhists, communists, Muslims... doesn't matter. This is because all forms of identity are an illusion. They are formations which manifest for a while and seem to provide a sense of this is who I truly am – but that’s a delusion. Buddhism has been pretty much finished in many countries where it was a ripe 150 years ago. These are formations in the world, but the suffering of beings, that is always there. So day and night we should not separate ourselves from all sentient beings, because they are also in the mandala of Padmasambhava, the Medicine Buddha. Everyone we meet, every sound we hear – this is an experience within the mandala. It's not that we've gone into this sect formation of believing in some esoteric mandala. But with the empowerment you have the chance to truly awaken from the amnesia of forgetting your true nature. And one of the forces which can really help us awaken is to be ceaselessly kind to others. The development of the wisdom of emptiness feeds the energy of kindness, and the energy of kindness feeds the understanding of the emptiness of all phenomena.

He is saying that when just the thought of helping beings is more virtuous 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.*”

That brings this empowerment to an end. You're fully empowered and entitled to do the practice. Because of my own sickness I won't be doing question and answers for some time, but if you have any specific questions about the practice you can send them into the SB Sangha at [simplybeingsangha@gmail.com](mailto:simplybeingsangha@gmail.com) and I'll try to respond.

Then this coming weekend we have the final part of the *Radiant Aspiration Butter Lamp* by C.R. Lama, and then on the Sunday we're going to go through the *Aspiration for Pure Discernment* by Dudjom Rinpoche. It's a very, very beautiful prayer, and it's from the heart from Dudjom Rinpoche. I was fortunate enough to have him explain it to me when I translated it, so hopefully his profound spirit is to be found in the text.

So, now we come to the end I want to thank our translators, and of course Pedro for keeping this whole movement going, and of course to you. I hope the practice is

good for you and it speaks into your heart and warms you even when life is difficult. In this world of desolation we are very fortunate to be able to connect with pathways of deep meaning. So, I wish you good fortune with your practice... and this is the end, and maybe there'll be another beginning, so bye for now...