

Part I - Sadhanas and Commentaries

Preface

The following comments apply to all the teachings in this collection

On Self Generation and Front Generation

It's traditionally taught that what's called 'self-generation' - where one visualizes oneself as the divine form, and maintains *Divine Pride*, should only be done by those who have received the initiation of a particular Bodhisattva Divinity, but that 'front generation' - where one visualizes the divine form in space above and in front of oneself - can be done by anyone.

In front generation, we visualize, and vividly see with the mind's eye above us, the Buddha or bodhisattva whose practice we are doing, and whose mantra we are reciting. At this time, it's taught that we should see the Buddha, ourselves and others, *as having bodies that are made entirely of light, like a hologram*. When doing this recitation and visualization, we can also see pure light and nectar streaming from the image we hold. These represent, or carry the blessings of the Buddha.

Traditionally, light goes out to the sources of benefit, making offerings out of respect, and prayerful requests, and then the light returns, bringing the blessings of these sources of healing benefit. These healing energies 'fall upon us as light and nectar', and dissolve into the front visualization and into us. We then have the thought and image clearly in our mind that all those we pray for, including ourselves, receive this positive energy, and that they are completely healed by it, and made entirely well and strong. This form of prayer is referred to in the Tibetan Tradition as 'gathering and spreading'.

Many teachers advise, too, when doing this kind of practice, that we see ourselves and others in a pure land, made of light, and to make the

meditation as beautiful, peaceful, perfect, and pure as we can. All this is called *Clear Appearance*.

Venerable Jigme explained that when we are visualizing we're working with our imagination... not only are we working with imagined sights, but we're also working with imagined touch and smells and sounds, physical sensations and feelings.

Of course, all this can be as detailed or as simple as we like. We can also do the practice without any elaborate or detailed visualization. For example, we can just see a healing sun, with beautiful light streaming down from above us while reciting. Or without any visualization at all, we can just recite the mantra. We should do whatever works best for us.

As Lama Lodro teaches, even if you just practice for a short while, try and practice as purely and as perfectly as you can. This means concentrating on the visualizations, if any are used, and the sound of the mantra, keeping in mind the meaning and the purpose of what we are doing. This is called *Clear Recollection*.

On The Refuge Tree

Sometimes when doing Vajrayana practice, what is called a Refuge Tree is visualized. All of this is seen to be in the nature of light. Around the central figure, whatever practice we are doing, one can visualize other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas or holy beings that we have a connection with.

For example, White Tara can have the wonderful effect of truly strengthening the constitution and the central nervous system. Among other qualities, I bring this quality of enlightened action to mind at times when doing the Medicine Buddha practice, and imagine that She is there in the retinue of the Healing Buddha, bestowing her blessings as well.

We can include any divine figures we have a connection with to the refuge tree, such as Jesus, Mary, Kuan Yin, Tara or Manjushri, Angels, and the Saints we have devotion to.

We can add to a single visualization simply, or we can just have the sense that those other Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and holy beings are there, whatever brings the best results.