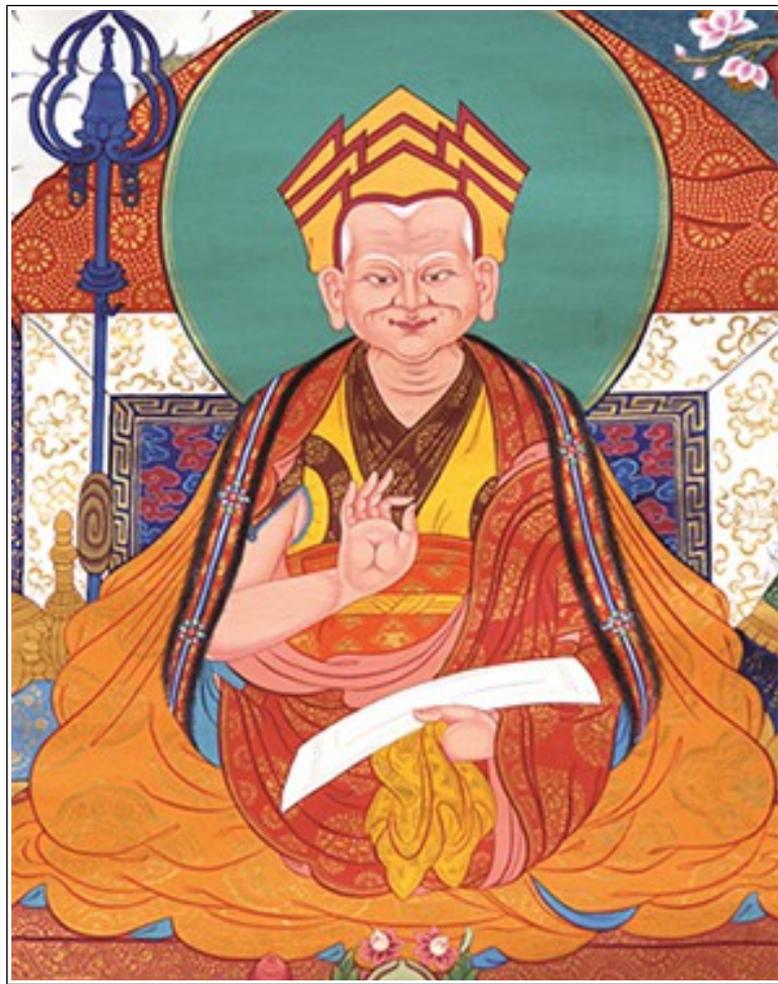


THE MAIN PATH OF THE VICTORS

A ROOT TEXT FOR THE PRECIOUS GELUG/KAGYU TRADITION OF MAHAMUDRA



PANCHEN LOSANG CHÖKYI GYELTSEN (1567-1662)

Here, in explaining the instructions on Mahamudra from the tradition of the holy beings who are scholars and adepts, there are three outlines:

- 1) activities for entering into the composition,
- 2) actual explanation of the composed instructions and
- 3) dedication of virtue arisen through having composed the instructions.

1. Activities for entering into the composition

NAMO MAHAMUDRAYA

I respectfully bow at the feet of my peerless guru, master of adepts, who directly exposed the great seal of Mahamudra, the all-pervasive nature of everything, the indivisible, inexpressible and indestructible sphere of the mind.

I shall now write down instructions on Mahamudra coming from the Gelug/Kagyü tradition of the supreme adept Dharmavajra and his spiritual sons, a tradition of excellent instructions having gathered the essence of the ocean of sutras, tantras and oral instructions.

2. Actual explanation of the composed instructions

Regarding this, there are three outlines:

- 1) preliminaries,
- 2) actual practice and
- 3) conclusion.

2A. Preliminaries

In order to have a doorway for entering into the Dharma and a central pillar for the Mahayana, sincerely go for refuge and generate bodhicitta, without these being merely words from your mouth.

In general, as a preliminary to giving any profound instructions or engaging in meditation, all the holy beings of the different traditions in Tibet concord in doing what is called "The Four Guiding Instructions":

- 1) Going for refuge and generating bodhicitta,
- 2) Vajrasattva meditation,
- 3) Mandala offering and
- 4) Guru yoga.

And in particular, having first meditated on loving-kindness, compassion, bodhicitta, renunciation, karma, death and impermanence, the supreme disciple of highest yoga tantra, the lord of yogis, Milarepa also gave advice saying:

Being very afraid of the eight states of non-leisure
I meditated on impermanence and the disadvantages of samsara,
Meticulously followed the principles of karma, the law of cause and effect and
Constantly entrusted myself to the three jewels of refuge.

Having trained my mental continuum in the method of bodhicitta
I cut the continuum of the obscurations and their latencies
And realized that all appearances are like illusions.
I am now without any fear of the three lower realms.

Similarly, as said by the great vajradhara Dragpa Gyeltsen in *Parting from the Four Attachments*:

If there is attachment to this life, you are not a dharma practitioner.
If there is attachment to samsara, you do not have renunciation.

Gelug/Kagyu Tradition of Mahamudra

If there is attachment to self-interest, you do not have bodhicitta.

If there is grasping, you do not have the correct view.

Thus:

- 1) as an antidote to attachment to this life, it is necessary to train in the practices of the initial capacity person such as reflecting on the freedoms and opportunities, impermanence and the sufferings of the lower realms,
- 2) as an antidote to attachment to samsara, it is necessary to train in the three higher trainings having understood that all of samsara is in the nature of suffering,
- 3) as an antidote to seeking peace and happiness for oneself alone, cultivate loving-kindness, compassion and bodhicitta, and
- 4) as an antidote to the self-grasping that is the root of samsara, it is necessary to meditate on the selflessness of person and phenomena.

Since in their treatises on authentic sutras and tantras, every Indian and Tibetan scholar and adept praised those paths highly, do not think that they are merely preliminaries, even though they have been explained in the context of the preliminaries, but rather practice them by integrating them into your actual practice.

Moreover, since seeing the ultimate nature of the mind is dependent upon having accumulated the collections and purified the obscurations, recite the hundred-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva at least a hundred thousand times, and in addition, as an essential practice, earnestly confess negative actions and promise to refrain from doing them again by completing the four opponent powers, through practices such as **making as many hundreds of prostrations as possible while reciting *The Admission of Downfalls*.**

Then, from the depths of your heart, make repeated requests to your root guru who is kind in three ways, seeing them as **inseparable from all the past, present and future Buddhas** or as the essence of the Three Jewels combined.

2B. Actual practice

Even though there are many ways of approaching Mahamudra, they can all be classified as either

- 1) Sutra Mahamudra or**
- 2) Tantra Mahamudra.**

Here I will explain the first one rather extensively, and since the latter one will be presented using very few words, I will explain that first.

2B1. Tantra Mahamudra

Furthermore, why is it called "Mahamudra"?

As said in the *Drop of Mahamudra*:

"*mu*" is the primordial wisdom of emptiness.

"*dra*" is the liberation from the phenomena of samsara.

"*maha*" is the union.

This describes "Mahamudra".

Tantra Mahamudra refers to the clear light mind that is the primordial wisdom of co-emergent **great bliss arisen through** the entering, abiding and dissolving of the winds into the central channel due to **skilful methods such as penetrating the vital points of the subtle vajra body**. This is dependent upon having received the four pure empowerments, having properly guarded the commitments and vows, and having familiarized oneself with the generation stage.

When such a primordial wisdom realizes emptiness by way of a generic image it is a similitude clear light, and when it realizes emptiness directly, it is the actual clear light. The clear light mind is taught using such terms as "definitive meaning short AH", "indestructible drop", "uncontrived mind", "ordinary mind" and "primordial mind".

It is the Mahamudra accepted by Saraha, Nagarjuna, Naropa and Maitripa. It is the innermost essence of the anuttarayoga class of tantra and is the principal subject matter taught in *The Seven Accomplishment texts* and in Saraha's *Three Cycles of Dohas*.

As said [by Sahara] in the Dohas:

By engaging in emptiness devoid of compassion
You will not find the supreme path.
Alternatively if you just cultivate compassion
You will remain here in samsara and will not attain liberation.
Whoever is able to conjoin those two
Will not abide in samsara and will not abide in nirvana.

Therefore it is necessary to join the subject – compassion which is the co-emergent great bliss – with the object – emptiness.

As for generating the realization of this Mahamudra, if the winds enter, abide and dissolve in the central channel through having trained in the preceding paths in previous lives or in the earlier part of this life, then such a person can actualize the clear light Mahamudra by observing any suitable object, like settling the mind in a non-conceptual state. Previous Kagyu masters gave this person the name "the simultaneous one".

For all other trainees it is definitely necessary to meditate on tummo and so forth in order to actualize the Mahamudra of this path. Accordingly, with respect to meditating on the Mahamudra indicated here, it is necessary to obtain the four pure empowerments and to train in the generation stage, the completion stage, the common paths and so forth. Such a person is given the name "the serial one". Thus, even most of the great adepts of this path entered into the lineage of empowerment of the various classes of anuttarayoga tantras.

2B2. Sutra Mahamudra

Sutra Mahamudra refers to the ways of meditating on emptiness as directly indicated in the Three Mothers – the extensive, middling and brief *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras*. As said by the supreme Arya Nagarjuna:

There is no path to liberation other than this.

Here I shall give instructions on Mahamudra in accordance with his thought, and describe ways to introduce the nature of the mind in accordance with the instructions of the lineage masters.

Why is that which is taught here called "Mahamudra"?

As said in *The King of Concentrations Sutra*:

The nature of all phenomena is a seal.

In that way, since emptiness is the nature of all phenomena it is a seal (*mudra*). And since when it is realized one is liberated from all degenerations, it is great or supreme (*maha*).

There are many lineages of practice each one having their own unique name, such as

- ***The Co-emergent Union*** [Karma Kagyu],
- ***The Amulet Box*** [Shangpa Kagyu],

- *The Five Parts* [Drikung Kagyu],
- *The Six Cycles of Equal Taste* [Drugpa Kagyu],
- *The Four Syllables* [Maitripa],
- *The Pacifier* [Padampa Sangye],
- *Chod – The Object to be Cut Off* [Machig Labdron],
- *Dzogchen – The Great Perfection* [Nyingma],
- *Instructions on The Madhyamaka View* [Gelug] and so forth.

However, when investigated by a yogi learned in definitive meaning scriptures, skilled in logical reasoning and experienced in meditation, they all come down to the same intended meaning.

This being the case, from among the two approaches within Sutra Mahamudra,

- 1) seeking to meditate after having gained the correct view and**
- 2) seeking the correct view after having meditated,**

here I shall explain in accordance with the latter approach.

Now it is true that there are the two different approaches, however the approach of seeking the correct view after having meditated, is in accordance with that said by the Protector Shantideva:

Vipashyana endowed with shamatha
Completely destroys the afflictions.
Knowing this, first seek shamatha.

And also said in the *Pile of Jewels Sutra*:

Through abiding in ethics, concentration is attained.
Having attained concentration, cultivate wisdom.

This being the case, what is the method for initially cultivating shamatha?

2B2A. Shamatha

Regarding this, there are two outlines:

- 1) preparation and
- 2) actual practice.

2B2A-1. Preparation

As said by Je Maitreya:

The place where the intelligent practice
Is a place with easy access, a safe place,
A place with good ground and good friends,
And the requisites for yogic practice.

It is explained that while remaining in such a place, it is necessary to rely on the prerequisites for shamatha by abiding in pure ethics, having few desires, being content and so forth, and it is definitely necessary to do the six preparatory practices.

On a seat comfortable for concentration, assume the sevenfold bodily posture and clear out any impure breath with the nine-round [breathing exercise]. Having refined the awareness, then begin with a virtuous pure mind by going for refuge and generating bodhicitta. Cultivate the profound path of guru yoga and then, after making hundreds of very strong fervent requests, dissolve the guru into yourself.

2B2A-2. Actual practice

The concentration to be accomplished here is a concentration possessing two aspects:

- 1) vivid clarity and
- 2) a non-discursive single-pointedness.

Such an authentic shamatha arises from a single-pointed concentration of the desire realm of one who has the basis of a non-equipoised mind. As said by the Protector Maitreya:

It arises from its causes. Relying on applying
The eight antidotes to abandon the five faults.

Thus it is taught that shamatha is accomplished through the nine mental abidings, arising from applying the eight antidotes to abandon the five faults. Moreover, in his treatises on the grounds, Arya Asanga states that the nine mental abidings are accomplished by the six powers and the four mental engagements.

Through focusing on what type of object of meditation does one cultivate concentration?

Although the Bhagavan taught that, in general, there are countless objects that are a suitable basis for accomplishing faultless concentration, since most of the previous gurus of these instructions accept focusing on the mind, here also this very method will be used.

Within that state of fleeting appearances, do not modify anything with discursive thoughts such as hopes thinking about accomplishing certain goals, **or fears** concerned about whether or not certain undesirable things will eventuate. **Without wavering**, that is without dwelling in the past, without anticipating the future and without moving around in the present, **settle in meditative equipoise** within that state **for a short while**.

When settling the mind in this way **it is not that you stop your attention like when fainting or falling asleep. Rather, station the guard of non-forgetful mindfulness so that the mind** that is unwaveringly still **does not become distracted**. In that way the observed object is bound by the rope of mindfulness. If however, mindfulness degenerates, there will be a great danger of the proliferation of thoughts that will move the mind. Therefore, it is necessary to **set up introspection** like a watcher **to be aware of** whether or not the mind is **moving** elsewhere, due to the strength of mindfulness having become weak. As said in [Bhavaviveka's] *Heart of the Middle Way*:

The elephant of the mind that is out of control
Is to be bound with certainty by the rope of mindfulness
To the firm post of the observed object
And gradually brought under control by the hook of introspection.

In brief, accomplishing faultless concentration does not go beyond the manner of sustaining mindfulness and introspection. Furthermore, mindfulness is principal, and if this is present then introspection, which is said to be the result of mindfulness, comes naturally.

Now **attentively focus** mindfulness **on the mind's nature of awareness and clarity, and observe it** single-pointedly and **nakedly**.

When observing in this way, **whatever thoughts arise simply recognize each one**. Such a technique relies upon introspection. **Or alternatively, just like the swordsman's battle with the archer** taught in the Vinaya scriptures, having generated strong mindfulness and introspection, as soon as **any thought arises cut it off completely**, not allowing it to continue.

When the proliferation of thoughts has been finally severed and you are unwaveringly still, then without losing mindfulness or introspection, immediately **loosen** your concentration **and relax** into a state of meditative equipoise. **As said** by Machig Labdron:

Focus attentively and loosely relax.

It is there that the mind can be settled.

Moreover as said by Saraha:

If you relax the mind that is bound by tightness

It will undoubtedly become free.

In this way, relax without becoming distracted.

If your focus is too tight and you think that excitement is arising, relax it a little. If your focus is too loose and you think that laxity is arising, tighten it a little. By finding a balance between the two, the mind is drawn away from the movement of thoughts. However it is necessary to be cautious of laxity whenever there is a factor of stillness. As said by Master Chandragomin:

If I rely upon exertion excitement will arise

And if I give it up laxity will occur.

Since it is difficult to find an appropriate balance

What should I do with my agitated mind?

Whatever thoughts arise, when you observe their nature they vanish and a pure vacuity dawns. Similarly, if you also investigate when the mind is still, there is an unobscured clear vacuity and vivid clarity. Seeing that there is no difference between the two is well known to the great meditators as "the fusion of stillness and movement".

Or alternatively, use the following method for sustaining the stillness of mind. **No matter what kind of thoughts arise, without stopping them recognize** when they move and **where they move. And by so doing observe and settle in the nature of those thoughts.** By settling in this way movement will eventually cease and there will be stillness. **It is similar to the analogy of releasing a bird that has been held for a long time on a ship** in the midst of a great ocean. Sustain this state in accordance with that said in a *Doha*:

It is similar to how a raven released from its ship

Circles in all directions and then settles back there again.

As said by Yang Gonpa:

Do not view discursive thoughts as faults

And do not intentionally cultivate non-conception.

Settle the mind in it's natural state and keep a distant watch

And the meditation will arrive at shamatha.

Furthermore, if the present-day trainees sustain this state by way of the six methods for settling the mind they will become kings of this instruction. What are the six methods?

As said:

Settle like the sun free from clouds.

Settle like an eagle soaring in the sky.

Settle like an ocean-going ship.

Settle like an infant looking in a temple.

Settle like the trail of a bird in the sky.

Settle like spread-out matted wool.

Through these methods of settling the mind

You will possess the meaning of yoga.

1. Just as the sun free from clouds remains extremely clear and bright, likewise by focusing on the clear light nature of the mind, it is not obscured by conceptions grasping to signs, laxity and excitement and so forth.
2. Just as an eagle soars through the sky naturally without much need to flap its wings, likewise without the mind being excessively tight or excessively loose, sustain this state with a sharp clarity and in a relaxed manner without losing mindfulness and introspection.
3. Even though a great ocean is buffeted by winds, the waves are not able to disturb a ship even a little, likewise when settling the mind on an object, settle without being disturbed at all by coarse discursive thoughts.
4. Just as when an infant looks inside a temple they do not investigate the fine details of the pictures, but rather they look without distraction at the overall scene, likewise when settling the mind on the object, settle it single-pointedly on the object, without investigating whether the objects of the five senses that appear are attractive or unattractive, and without generating attachment or aversion.
5. Just as there is no trail left by a bird in the sky, likewise settle the mind evenly so that whenever pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feelings arise, you don't allow yourself to fall under the influence of any of the three – attachment, aversion or confusion.
6. Just as when matted wool is spread out it becomes soft and pliable, likewise when settling the mind evenly it becomes free from the coarse contact of the manifest three poisons, laxity and excitement.

Through sustaining this state in that way what kind of marks of achievement will be seen?

The nature of meditative equipoise is lucid and extremely clear, not obscured by anything at all. And since it is not established in any way as a physical entity, it is a pure vacuity like space. Moreover, **whichever** of the good or bad objects of the five senses that appear they **dawn vividly** just like reflections in a clear mirror. And the experience that dawns is free of identifications such as “It is this” or “It is not this”.

No matter how stable such concentration may be, if it is not imbued with the bliss of physical and mental pliancy, it is merely a single-pointed mind of the desire realm, whereas concentration that is so imbued is said to be the mind of shamatha. It is the source of many excellent qualities, such as extrasensory perception and paranormal abilities and, in particular, the Arya paths of all three vehicles are attained in dependence upon it.

Well then, what is it like to get introduced to this very path in terms of its own nature?

In that way the ultimate nature of the mind can indeed be directly and clearly seen, however it cannot be grasped or indicated saying “It is this”. Rest loosely without grasping to whatever dawns.

The meditators of present-day Tibet are mostly of a single mind in proclaiming “These are oral instructions that put Buddha in the palm of your hand”. Nevertheless I, Chökyi Gyeltsen, say that this approach is a marvelous skilful method for beginners to accomplish mental stillness and is a way to introduce the conventional nature of the mind.

2B2B. Vipashyana

I shall now describe how to introduce the ultimate nature of the mind based on the oral instructions of my root guru Sangye Yeshe who, assuming the guise of a saffron robed monk, eliminated the darkness obscuring my mind.

With regard to this there are two outlines:

- 1) general presentation of the different ways to introduce the ultimate nature of the mind and

2) presentation having extracted the essence of those instructions.

2B2B-1. General presentation of the different ways to introduce the ultimate nature of the mind

The Teacher has said that when one realizes the mind, that is Buddha, therefore do not seek Buddha elsewhere.

Also as said by Saraha:

The mind alone is the seed of all.
It is that which elaborates samsara and nirvana
And that which bestows every desired result.
I prostrate to the mind that is like a wish-fulfilling jewel.

In this way, there is the great plight of samsara and the great reward of nirvana, through respectively not realizing, and realizing, the ultimate nature of one's own mind as it is. All the sacred sutras and tantras are in complete agreement on this point.

Ways to meditate by cutting through a basis or root to the mind:

1) Some state: "Within a state of meditative equipoise one investigates whether one's own mind is established as being inside or outside, or as something that arises, abides and ceases. When one sees that it is not established in any of these ways, then one has cut through a basis or root to the mind, one has been introduced to the nature of the mind and the goal of Mahamudra is attained." Because as said in a *Doha*:

When the mind and all appearances are sought
They are not found nor is there a searcher anywhere.
Since that non-existence neither arises nor ceases in the past, present or future
It cannot transform into something else.
It is the mode of abiding of natural great bliss.
Thus all appearances are Dharmakaya.

2) Others state: "One searches for the mind within the parts of one's own body, from the crown of the head to the soles of the feet. When one sees that it is not established as being any of these parts, that it is not established in any way as a physical entity having a shape, colour and so forth, then one sees the nature of the mind." Because as said by Shang Rinpoche:

The nature of one's own mind is the seed of all.
From the very beginning it is not different from the minds
Of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. It appears as Dharmakaya.
It is not matter and it is clear by nature.
Not established as a functioning thing, it has no colour or size.

3) Still others state: "Without dwelling in the past or anticipating the future, rest serenely in a state of present awareness, fresh and uncontrived. In this way the nature of the mind will be nakedly and directly seen. At that time one has cut through a basis or root to the mind and has been introduced to the nature of the mind." Because as said by Saraha:

Rest in a fresh, uncontrived and relaxed manner.

And as said by Mahasiddha Lingrepa Padma Dorje:

When resting in an uncontrived and fresh manner realization dawns.
When sustaining this like the flow of a river, it will dawn even more fully.
You the yogi, thoroughly abandon all signs of fixation
And be constantly in meditative equipoise.

4) Others state: "No matter what type of objects dawn in the mind, such as visual forms or sounds, and also no matter what type of thoughts dawn in the mind, such as virtuous or non-virtuous, neither suppress nor pursue them even slightly. By looking nakedly at their nature they will vanish, and then rest in the vivid pure vacuity that cannot be in any way identified. Such seeing is a realization of the ultimate nature, and one has been introduced to the nature of the mind." Because as said in [Tilopa's] *Ganges Mahamudra*:

If you desire to realize the meaning beyond concepts, with nothing to be done
Cut through a basis or root to your own mind and rest nakedly in awareness.
Allow the water stained by conceptions to become clear
And rest naturally without suppressing or pursuing appearances.
Without abandoning and without grasping is Mahamudra.

5) Also many others state: "No matter what type of discursive thoughts arise, focus on them without making them vanish. And in addition to that, by allowing them to become more expansive they will become self-liberated. Thus their dawning and liberation will be simultaneous. However many thoughts there are, there are that many enumerations of the Dharmakaya." Because as said by Lama Shang:

When settling in such a state
And discursive thoughts suddenly arise
They are from the clear light Dharmakaya.
Do not think that they are something else.
Thus the proliferation of discursive thoughts
Is emptiness emanating from emptiness,
Dharmakaya emanating from Dharmakaya,
And unity emanating from unity.

2B2B-2. Presentation having extracted the essence of those instructions

As said in *The Sutra Requested by Rastrapala*:

Due to not knowing the way in which things are empty,
Peaceful and unproduced, migrators wander.
[The Teacher], possessing compassion for them,
Caused them to enter by skilful methods and hundreds of reasonings.

Thus it is taught that due to not knowing the profound emptiness – the way in which things are selflessness – migrators wander in samsara. The Teacher who possesses great compassion for those who wander in samsara, in order to liberate them from samsara, caused them to enter the path of realizing selflessness directly and indirectly, by skilful methods, for realizing selflessness and hundreds of reasonings for determining selflessness. Similarly as said by Master Shantideva:

All these branches were taught
By the Subduer for the sake of wisdom.

Furthermore, with respect to directly realizing selflessness, it is necessary to meditate having first determined selflessness through hearing and contemplating. Also, meditation by way of merely shamatha alone, like some non-Buddhists do, does not have the capacity to abandon the mental afflictions.

Although for such a selflessness there is no division into coarse and subtle by way of entity, there are two types, by way of a division into person and phenomena. As said by Glorious Chandrakirti:

In order to thoroughly liberate migrators, this selflessness was taught
To be of two types by way of a division into person and phenomena.

Although in the scriptures along with their commentaries the selflessness of phenomena is determined first, when meditating it is necessary to first meditate on the selflessness of person. As said in *The King of Concentrations Sutra*:

Just as you discriminate the self
Likewise that understanding is to be applied to all.
The nature of all those phenomena
Is utterly pure like space.
Therefore by one all are known.
Therefore by one all are seen.

With respect to meditating on the selflessness of person, initially it is necessary to identify the object of negation, that which is to be negated. As said in [Shantideva's] *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*:

Without contacting the thing that was imputed
You will not apprehend that thing's non-existence.

If the object of negation is not identified it is like shooting an arrow without seeing the target, and leading an army without identifying the enemy. Also, with respect to identifying the object of negation, if there is an over-pervasion then you will fall to the extreme of nihilism, and if there is an under-pervasion, since the subtle-most object of negation will not be refuted, you will fall to the extreme of eternalism. Thus the dangers are very great. As said in [Nagarjuna's] *Mulamadhyamakakarika*:

If their view of emptiness is faulty
Those of little wisdom will be ruined.
It is just like handling a snake in the wrong way
Or executing a vidya mantra in the wrong way.

Thus, knowing that for the weak-minded
This Dharma is difficult to fathom,
The mind of the Sage completely turned away
From teaching this Dharma.

Furthermore as said in *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Verses*:

Due to grasping to "I" and "mine" all sentient beings cycle in samsara.

The final root of all faults is innate self-grasping, the innate grasping to an "I". With respect to an awareness apprehending "I" in general, there are three ways of apprehending "I":

- 1) an "I" qualified by being truly existent,
- 2) an "I" qualified by lacking true existence or being a mere name, merely imputed by thought and
- 3) an "I" that is not qualified by either of those two.

The third one is a conventional valid cognition positing the mere "I". The second one only occurs in the continuum of those who have gained certainty with respect to the madhyamaka view. It does not occur in others. The first one is the grasping to a self of person.

The grasping to true existence, having taken another person as the observed object, is a grasping to a self of person, however it is not innate self-grasping. Innate self-grasping, the view of the transitory collection, is an afflicted wisdom that grasps its observed object – the "I" within one's own continuum – as inherently existent. That is produced by its own cause, the subtle grasping to a self of phenomena. As said by the Protector Nagarjuna:

As long as there is grasping to the aggregates
There will be grasping to an "I" with respect to those aggregates.

And if there is grasping to an "I" there is also karma.

And due to karma there is also rebirth.

Since [self-grasping] is the root of samsara, without refuting the object of the mode of apprehension of that (the conceived object of that) you will not be able to abandon self-grasping. As said by Dharmakirti:

Without refuting its object

You will not be able to abandon [self-grasping].

Since the conceived object of grasping to the being, the "I", the person, as truly existent is a truly existent being, truly existent "I", truly existent person, it is necessary to refute that. Refuting that is to view the person as lacking true existence, because by ascertaining that the person lacks true existence, and then familiarizing oneself with that, grasping to the person as truly existent will be reversed.

For that reason, I will first explain with oral instructions the way in which the object of negation appears and the way in which it is apprehended.

Without wavering in the slightest **from the earlier state of meditative equipoise**, single-pointedly equipoised in the concentration of shamatha, **just as** for example **a small fish darts through** a lake filled with **clear water** without disturbing the water, **likewise use a subtle awareness to intelligently investigate the nature of the person**, the "I", **who is the meditator**. That is, investigate the way in which the person appears to the mind, the way in which the person is apprehended by the mind and the way in which the person actually exists.

When investigated is this way, the way in which things actually exist is that all phenomena – the being, the "I", the person and so forth – are a mere name, merely imputed by conception and merely labelled like "snake" onto a striped rope or "human" onto a cairn or pile of wood.

The person that appears to be [truly existent] does not exist since

- neither of the two individually – the body nor the mind of the person – is the person,
- the collection of the two – the body and the mind – is also not the person,
- none of the six elements individually is the person,
- the mere collection of the six elements is also not the person, and
- other than the six elements there is no person.

As said by the Protector Arya Nagarjuna:

The person is not earth, not water, not fire,

Not wind, not space, not consciousness.

Nor is the person all of these together.

Yet apart from them, what person is there?

Also said in a *Sutra*:

Form is not the self.

Feelings are not the self.

Discrimination is not the self.

Compositional factors are not the self.

And consciousness is not the self.

In that way none of the five aggregates of the meditator, or the individual six elements, or the collection, or the shape of the collection is the meditator. If that were the case then there would also be many faults such as

- the basis of designation and the designated phenomena would be identical,
- the appropriated and the appropriator would be identical,

- the parts and the whole would be identical, and
- if the aggregates were the self then since there are multiple aggregates there would be multiple selves.

In particular, if the consciousness were the person, then

- hearing, speaking, seeing, procreating and so forth would not be tenable and
- even though there is only one person, just as there are six consciousnesses, there would be six persons
- or alternatively just as there is only one person the six consciousnesses would be a partless one.

Also, apart from the five aggregates there is no person because [if they were different] then they would be inherently unrelated different, and the person would not possess the characteristics that characterize the collection of the aggregates. [If they were different] then would also be many faults. As said:

If [the person] were different from the aggregates
Then it would not have the characteristics of the aggregates.

Thus within that state of meditative equipoise, when you investigate using a subtle awareness and a complete vacuity arises, such that for you yourself there is no appearance of even a mere trace of the being, the person, the "I", who is in meditative equipoise, then when the generic image of that pure emptiness becomes clear, equipoise single-pointedly without any further elaboration or mental activity.

If your manner of apprehending that non-affirming negative, that pure emptiness, becomes a little feeble, then from within a state of meditative equipoise meditate single-pointedly investigating as before. This is the way to sustain space-like meditative equipoise.

It is said that when you initially ascertain this, if you have not previously familiarized yourself with the view, then fear will arise and that if you have previously familiarized yourself, then mental joy will arise.

Now setting out the presentation for post-meditation.

As said [by Arya Nagarjuna]:

**The person is not an ultimate
Since it is a collection of six elements.**

After arising from that meditative equipoise, if you investigate, it is true that the person that mistakenly appears to us due to our own mind being under the control of the demon of ignorance does in fact not exist. Nevertheless, the being, the person, the mere "I" definitely does exist.

Furthermore the way in which it does exist is that, like imputing "human" onto a cairn and "snake" onto a striped rope, "person" is a mere name imputed upon the mere collection of the six elements or the five aggregates. It is a mere sign, merely imputed by conception. And it is not an ultimate, it is merely dawning as a dependent-arising that is empty like an illusion. Develop that conviction and then meditate.

Thus when you have gained experience in cultivating the selflessness of person included within your own continuum then as said in *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Verses*:

Just as with the self know all sentient beings in a similar way.
Just as with sentient beings know all phenomena in a similar way.

Thus now indicating the way of meditating on the selflessness of other persons and phenomena.

As said [by Arya Nagarjuna]:

**Similarly, each of those elements are not ultimates
Since they too are collections.**

In accordance with that, when you search and you do not find even a mere trace of a meditative equipoise, a meditator and so forth, at that time sustain space-like meditative equipoise single-pointedly without distraction.

Furthermore, with respect to all the phenomena of samsara and nirvana – all ordinary and Arya beings, the outer and inner earth elements, and likewise the water, fire, wind and consciousness elements – individually and also collectively, when you ascertain those appearances in your own mind then determine how they actually exist, just as you did previously when having investigated the way in which the person appeared and the way in which it was apprehended, you then settled into meditative equipoise.

It is said that at the time of not finding even a mere trace of inherent existence "not finding is the supreme finding", and "not seeing is the true seeing". So when the ultimate nature of the mind is seen, when the nature of the mind has been pointed out, then within that very state sustain space-like meditative equipoise upon the ultimate nature, the mere negation of true existence, single-pointedly without distraction.

Alternatively, since the extremely subtle wind-mind is said to be the subtle basis of designation of the "I", and also those who give oral instructions accept pointing out the mind when determining the ultimate nature of the mind, I shall instruct in accordance with that.

As said by Chandrakirti:

It is the mind itself that formulates
The many varieties of animate and inanimate worlds.

Since it is taught that the mind is the root of all animate and inanimate worlds, then if you cut through a basis or root to the mind, it will be unlike the other displays. Thus do the following.

Within that state of the previous continuity of meditative equipoise, if you investigate **the mind**

- **which is a pure vacuity not established in any way as a physical entity,**
- **is unobscured** like the sun free of clouds,
- **with diverse** discursive thoughts **dawning and thus proliferating,**
- **is unceasing** like a butter lamp that does not go out **and**
- **operates as an uninterrupted continuum of clarity and awareness,**

then to the awareness that apprehends one's own mind, **it appears to be** independent and **not reliant** upon anything else whatsoever, and **the conceived object is apprehended** to exist as it appears.

However, the mind that appears in such a way, is **as said in Master Shantideva's *Bodhisattvacharyavatara*:**

**Those things that are said to be a continuum or a collection
Are falsities, just like a rosary, an army and so forth.**

Having threaded together the individual beads of a rosary there is the mere designation "rosary". And having assembled together the individuals who carry weapons there is the mere designation "army". Other than that, they do not inherently exist.

By using such scriptures and reasoning, equipoise single-pointedly within a state where you ascertain that [the mind] does not exist in the way that it appears.

Furthermore, as said in *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Verses*:

There is no mind in the mind.
The nature of the mind is clear light.

This states that there is no inherently existent mind in the mind. The nature of the mind is clear light emptiness.

And as said in the *Pile of Jewels Sutra*:

The mind has never been seen, it is not seen now nor will it ever be seen,
Even by any of the past, present or future Buddhas.

Also Je Marpa, having ascertained the ultimate nature of the mind just as it is, coined the expression that in meditation “my mind blazed with emptiness”. He said:

I went to the banks of the Ganges river in the east
And due to the great kindness of Je Maitripa
I realized the ground, the unarisen nature of reality.
My mind blazed with emptiness
And I saw the primordial nature free of elaboration.
I directly met the mothers – the three kayas
And from that point on this man's elaborations were cut.

Also as said by the Protector of Migrators Pagmo Drupa:

The root of both samsara and nirvana is the mind.
The mind is from the very beginning pure suchness.
Since from the very beginning it is peaceful and unproduced
The mind is primordially free from the extreme of elaboration.

**In brief, as my virtuous spiritual friend, the truly omniscient Sangye Yeshe, has personally said:
“When you are fully aware that whatever dawns is that apprehended by conceptual thought, the
ultimate sphere of phenomena dawns without depending upon anything else. Place your awareness
within that state which dawns and equipoise single-pointedly. How wonderful!”**

"whatever dawns is that apprehended by conceptual thought..." means that when you are aware that whatever dawns is that merely imputed by conception, the ultimate nature of phenomena dawns as an object of awareness without depending upon any other conditions. It is as said in Chandrakirti's *Supplement to the Middle Way*:

Conventional truth is the method
And ultimate truth arises from the method.

"place your awareness within that state which dawns..." means that having single-pointedly unified the ultimate nature that dawns as the object of the awareness and the subjective consciousness, place your mind in equipoise. That is amazing!

In accordance with those last two lines that were taught, **as said by Padampa Sangye:**

**Within the state of emptiness the lance of awareness swirls around.
O people of Dingri, the view is without obstruction.**

All such statements have the same intended meaning.

2C. Conclusion

Dedicate whatever virtue that has arisen from having meditated on Mahamudra, together with your ocean-like collection of past, present and future virtue, towards unsurpassable great enlightenment.

Now the following, presenting in one place

- how to sustain the practice in post-meditation after arising from the meditative equipoise that is equipoised on Mahamudra,

- how to once again unmistakably ascertain the generic image of the object of negation at the time of returning to meditative equipoise and
- the elimination of doubts with respect to either meditative equipoise or post-meditation.

Having familiarized yourself in that way in meditative equipoise, then during post-meditation **realize** well, by investigating **with subtle** discernment **the way in which any appearances that dawn as objects of the six collections of consciousness are appearing**. Through such investigation, **the way in which they actually exist** as dependent-arising without an independent essence **will then dawn nakedly and vividly**. Through realizing that, your ascertainment of the ultimate nature will increase. As said by Je Mitra Yogi:

Recognizing whatever dawns is the essential point of the view.

In brief, do not grasp to any of those things which appear to you, even your own mind. Constantly sustain your practice by alternating the space-like meditative equipoise of **ascertaining the way in which they actually exist**, with the post-meditation of the undeniable dawning of dependently-related agents and actions.

Through knowing how to sustain meditative equipoise and post-meditation **in this way**, it is necessary to familiarize yourself in meditative equipoise having **unified the ultimate nature of all the phenomena of samsara and nirvana as indivisibly one**, and in post-meditation to familiarize yourself having unified their conventional nature as being illusory-like mere appearances.

As Aryadeva has also said:

**Whoever is the seer of one thing
They are said to be the seer of all.
That which is the emptiness of one
That is the emptiness of all.**

Well then, to the face of meditative equipoise on the ultimate nature, do phenomena which are dependent-arising appear as a merely imputedly existent, as a mere name?

In that way, it is true that from the perspective of a correct meditative equipoise upon the ultimate nature, there is freedom from the elaborations of the extremes of existence and non-existence and so forth, with respect to samsara and nirvana.

Well then, if that is the case, are actions, results and so forth completely non-existent?

Since they do not exist ultimately and they do not fulfil the requirement of being non-existent, then actions, results and so forth are said to very much exist.

However after arising from that meditative equipoise, when you investigate it is undeniable that there are dependently related agents and actions that exist as being merely imputed by name and they naturally dawn as being like a dream, like a mirage, like a reflection of a moon in water and like an illusion.

Now indicating the way in which the excellent path of freedom from the extremes of eternalism and nihilism becomes manifest by meditating in that way.

When emptiness is not obscured by appearances and when appearances are not blocked by emptiness, at that time the excellent path of emptiness and dependent-arising being equivalent becomes manifest.

As said by Je Tsongkhapa in concordance with this:

As long the assertions of appearances being undeceiving dependent-arising
And emptiness are understood to be two separate things,
As long as they appear individually,

Gelug/Kagyu Tradition of Mahamudra

You have still not understood the intent of the Sage.
When without alternating, as soon as the ascertaining consciousness
Merely sees dependent-arising as non-deceptive
And all modes of grasping to the object are destroyed
Then your investigation of the view is complete.

Also said in [Chandrakirti's] *Supplement to the Middle Way*:

Similarly, even though all phenomena are empty
They are thoroughly produced due to that very emptiness.
Since there is no inherent nature in either of the two truths
Those [phenomena] are neither eternal nor annihilated.

Also said by the Protector Nagarjuna:

Someone who, through understanding the emptiness of phenomena,
Sees cause and effect as tenable
This is more amazing than amazing!
This is more marvellous than marvellous!

Through sustaining Mahamudra by riding on the horse of shamatha in that way, when a concentration imbued with the bliss of physical and mental pliancy is attained by the force of analysis focused on emptiness, then the heat level of the path of preparation is attained.

Some earlier Kagyu masters presented the path of Mahamudra in terms of four yogas:

- 1) the yoga of single-pointedness due to observing the mind single-pointedly,
- 2) the yoga of freedom from elaboration due to realizing the mind as free from elaboration,
- 3) the yoga of one-taste due to realizing the mind and appearances as one taste, and
- 4) the yoga of non-meditation due to it not being a meditation with signs.

According to Je Gotsangpa, the boundaries for the four yogas are:

- 1) intentional conduct [the paths of accumulation and preparation],
- 2) the path of seeing,
- 3) the second through the seventh grounds, and
- 4) the pure grounds and so forth.

3. Dedication of virtue arisen through having composed the instructions

By the virtue of I, Losang Chökyi Gyeltsen – a renunciate who has heard many teachings, having composed this text, may all migrators quickly gain victory over the two obscurations by means of this path as there is no other second gateway to the state of peace.

It is the supreme essence churned from the oceans of sutras and tantras.
It is the key point of the full intent of the scholars and adepts of India and Tibet.
It is the path traversed without exception by the holy mahasiddhas.
May the sun of Mahamudra teachings dawn here today.



[Colophon]

Moreover, this manner of introducing Mahamudra was compiled at the repeated requests of both Gendun Gyeltsen from Nachu, who holds the monastic degree of Rabjampa (Scholar of the Ten Fields of Knowledge) and Sherab Sengye from Hatong, who holds the monastic degree of Kachupa (Master of the Ten Difficult Texts). Having seen that the eight worldly concerns of this life are like the dramas of an insane person, they now live a straightforward way of life in remote solitude making this path their essential practice. Many of my own disciples who desire to practice the definitive meaning of Mahamudra also made such requests.

Furthermore, the great all-knowing conqueror Ensapa, distinguished master, lord of adepts, has said in one of his songs of realisation composed to instruct himself and others:

This is not a path that can be explained immediately after having given instructions according to the *lam rim* – the stages of the path from the Kadam tradition, beginning with how to rely upon a virtuous spiritual friend all the way up through shamatha and vipashyana. And since the final ultimate oral instructions on Mahamudra are not currently well known amongst Tibetans, I am not able to record them at this time.

Thus what was not recorded at that time due to the need for restriction was intended for a later time. This assertion is established through similar scriptures. For example, *The Sutra of the White Lotus of the Sacred Dharma* says:

In order to be able to thoroughly realize the exalted wisdom of a Buddha
This method was composed through self-arising
However you should never say to them
“You will become a Buddha”.
If you ask why, the Protector has regard for the time.

I, the renunciate Losang Chökyi Gyeltsen, who have an unbroken lineage of blessings for directly experiencing this path beginning from the incomparable Teacher, the king of the Shakyas, right down through to my root guru, the all-knowing and all-seeing Sangye Yeshe, who have entered into the lineage of not allowing the pledges to be lost and who upholds the oral instructions of the sacred sutras and tantras, have compiled this at Ganden Monastery.

Om svasti

Translated by Glen Svensson
Dharamsala, September 2008
Updated May 2016

Note: The root text is in **bold** while the non-bold text is a partial translation of *Lamp So Bright*, Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyeltsen's own commentary to this root text.