

## Core Meditations on the Path of Mahāmudrā

### Śamatha

#### Mindfulness of Breathing

- *The Primary Tantra of Mañjuśrī (Mañjuśrīmūlatantra)*: “By resorting to mindfulness of the respiration, ideation is calmed. Since the mind is completely inflamed, fasten it firmly to one meditative object.”
- *The Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra in Ten Thousand Stanzas*: “Śāriputra, take the analogy of a potter or a potter’s apprentice spinning the potter’s wheel: If he makes a long revolution, he knows it is long; if he makes a short revolution, he knows it is short. Śāriputra, similarly, a Bodhisattva, a great being, mindfully breathes in and mindfully breathes out. If the inhalation is long, he knows the inhalation is long; if the exhalation is long, he knows the exhalation is long. If the inhalation is short, he knows the inhalation is short; if the exhalation is short, he knows the exhalation is short. Śāriputra, thus, a Bodhisattva, a great being, by dwelling with introspection and with mindfulness, eliminates avarice and disappointment towards the world by means of non-objectification; and he lives observing the body as the body internally.”
- *The Sūtra of the Ten Wheels of Kṣitigarbha*: “How do you correctly note, with the power of mindfulness, the in and out movement of the breath? You count them correctly...”
- Buddha: “Breathing in long, one knows, ‘I breathe in long. Breathing out long, one knows, ‘I breathe out long.’ Breathing in short, one knows, ‘I breathe in short.’ Breathing out short, one knows, ‘I breathe out short.’ One trains thus: ‘I shall breath in, experiencing the whole body. I shall breath out, experiencing the whole body. I shall breathe in, calming the composite of the body. I shall breathe out, calming the composite of the body.’ Thus, one trains.” (*Ānāpānasati Sutta, Majjhima Nikāya* III 82)
- Buddha: “Just as in the last month of the hot season, when a mass of dust and dirt has swirled up, a great rain cloud out of season disperses it and quells it on the spot, so too concentration by mindfulness of breathing, when developed and cultivated, is peaceful, sublime, an ambrosial dwelling, and it disperses and quells on the spot unwholesome states whenever they arise.” (*Samyutta Nikāya* 54.9)
- Buddha: “In this manner, monks, the wise, experienced, skillful monk abides in happiness here and now and is mindful and introspective as well. What is the reason for that? Because, monks, this wise, experienced, skillful monk acquires the sign of his own mind.” *Samyutta Nikāya* [*Samyutta Nikāya* V 152]
- Buddha: “I know of no other single process which, thus developed and made much of, is pliable and workable as is this mind. Monks, the mind which is thus developed and made much of is pliable and workable. Monks, I know of no other single process so quick to change as is this mind.... Monks, this mind is luminous, but it is defiled by adventitious defilements. Monks, this mind is luminous, but it is free from adventitious defilements.” (*Ānguttara Nikāya* A.I.8-10)
- Arhat Nāgasena: The “ground of becoming” (*bhavaṅga*) is like the radiance of the sun, for it is naturally pure and radiant. It is the resting ground-state of consciousness which is

not turned towards the senses, and it acts as the foundation for the process of non-karmically-active life, of which it is the characteristic factor: the state it returns to when not doing anything else. (*Milindapañha*, pp. 299-300)

- *Eight-Thousand-Verse Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra (Aṣṭasāhasrikā Sūtra)*: “The mind is devoid of mind, for the manifest nature of mind is luminosity.”
- The five dhyāna factors remove the five obscurations
  - The factor of single-pointed attention removes the obscuration of hedonism.
  - The factor of well-being removes the obscuration of malice.
  - The factor of coarse examination removes the obscurations of laxity and dullness.
  - The factor of bliss removes the obscurations of excitation and anxiety.
  - The factor of precise investigation removes the obscuration of uncertainty.
- Water similes of the five obscurations that prevent one from seeing the reflection of one’s face in a pool of water (*Saṅgarava-sutta*, AN, III 230)
  - Hedonism is like water mixed with various colors.
  - Malice is like boiling water.
  - Laxity and dullness are like water covered over by moss.
  - Excitation and anxiety are like agitated water whipped by the wind.
  - Uncertainty is like turbid, muddy water.
- Buddha: “So long as these five obscurations are not abandoned one considers oneself as indebted, sick, in bonds, enslaved, and lost in a desert track.” (*Sāmaññaphala Sutta* in *Dīgha Nikāya* I 74)

### Śamatha Focused on the Mind

- Maitrīpa (*The Essential Instructions of the Mahāsiddha Maitrīpa*)
  - Śamatha in which the attention is focused on conceptualization: “In relation to the excessive proliferation of conceptualization, including such afflictions as the five poisons or the three poisons, thoughts that revolve in subject/object duality, thoughts such as those of the ten virtues, the six perfections or the ten perfections — whatever wholesome and unwholesome thoughts arise—steadily and non-conceptually observe their nature. By so doing, they are calmed in non-grasping; clear and empty awareness vividly arises, without recognition; and it arises in the nature of self-liberation, in which it recognizes itself. Again, direct the attention to whatever thoughts arise; and without acceptance or rejection, let it recognize its own nature. In this way implement the practical instructions on transforming ideation into the path.”
- The Lake-Born Vajra, Padmasambhava (*The Enlightened View of Samantabhadra*)
  - “Here is the way for them to enter upon the grounds and paths. One should practice by abiding in consciousness and recognizing the movements of thoughts, as follows: Like people watching a show of optical illusions, by meditating diligently with keen enthusiasm, all the subtle and coarse assemblies of thoughts will be *calmed* in the ocean of the primordial ground, they will abide in a state of unwavering *stillness*, and there will arise the experience of *śamatha*. At this time there will arise bliss like the warmth of a fire, luminosity like the breaking of dawn, and nonconceptuality like an ocean unmoved by waves.”

- “When you have identified *śamatha* as a meditative experience and then naturally sustain it with mindfulness, free of attachment and clinging, the appearances of meditative experiences will naturally vanish, and *single-pointed mindfulness* will manifest.
- “Recognizing meditative experiences for what they are, remain without hope or fear, and sustain the flow of mindfulness. By doing so, these meditative experiences disappear by themselves, coarse thoughts naturally subside, consciousness rests in a spacious and loose state, and without doing anything to modify all the roving thoughts that arise, your consciousness is sealed. This is called *self-liberated mindfulness*.”
- “Then, without mindfulness even being aware of itself, as a result of the subtlety of this mode of apprehension, you remain in a wakeful vacuity devoid of roving thoughts, which is the ethically neutral substrate. This is called *collapsing into empty mindfulness*.”
- “A sense of luminosity will manifest in this vacuity, and with the cessation of roving thoughts, activities and speech will become indistinct and muddled. At this time there is a prominent sense of bliss, luminosity, and nonconceptuality, and indeterminate visions of gods and demons may arise. These are expressions of the luminosity of the substrate consciousness, so this is called *self-illuminating mindfulness*.”

### Śamatha Without a Sign

- Buddha: “One contemplates the emblem of consciousness, above, below, transversely, undivided, all-permeating.” (*Kasiṇa Sutta, Aṅguttara Nikāya* 10.25)
- Padmasambhava [*Natural Liberation: Padmasambhava’s Teachings on the Six Bardos*, revealed by Karma Lingpa, 1326–1386]
  - “While steadily gazing into the space in front of you, without meditating on anything, steadily concentrate your consciousness, without wavering, in the space in front of you. Increase the stillness and then relax again. Occasionally seek out “What is that consciousness that is concentrating,” steadily concentrate again, and then check it out again. Do that in an alternating fashion. Even if there are problems of laxity and lethargy, that will dispel them. In all your activities rely upon unwavering mindfulness. Do that for one day.
  - “Then position your body like before. Cast your gaze downwards, gently release your mind, and without having anything on which to meditate, gently release both your body and mind into their natural state. Having nothing on which to meditate, and without any modification or adulteration, place your attention simply without wavering, in its own natural state, its natural lucidity, its own character, just as it is. Remain in clarity and rest the mind so that it is loose and free. Alternate between observing who is concentrating inwardly and who is releasing. If it is the mind, ask: what is that very agent that releases the mind and concentrates the mind? And steadily observe yourself. Then release again. By so doing, fine stillness will arise, and you may even identify pristine awareness. Do that, too, for one day.

- “Alternately sharply focus your attention, wholly concentrating it without wavering, and then gently release it, evenly resting it in openness. Again concentrate, and again release. In that way, meditate with alternating focus and release. At times, steadily direct your attention up into the sky. Steadily focus your awareness with the desire to be without anything on which to meditate. Relax again. At times, steadily, unwaveringly, direct your awareness into the space on your right; at times, direct it to the left; and at times, direct it downwards. During each session, rotate the gaze around in those directions.
- Occasionally inquire, “What is that awareness of the one who is focusing the interest?” Let the awareness itself steadily observe itself. At times, let your mind come to rest in the center of your heart, and evenly leave it there. At times, evenly bring your mind into the expanse of space and leave it there. Thus, by shifting the gaze in various, alternating ways, the mind settles in its natural state. As indications of this, if awareness remains evenly, lucidly, and steadily wherever it is placed, *śamatha* has arisen.” The ultimate *śamatha* of maintaining the attention upon non-conceptualization: “Direct the eyes into the intervening vacuity. See that the three conceptualizations of the past, future, and present, as well as wholesome, unwholesome, and ethically neutral thoughts, together with all the causes, assembly, and dispersal of thoughts of the three times are completely cut off. Bring no thoughts to mind. Let the mind, like a cloudless sky, be clear, empty, and evenly devoid of grasping; and settle it in utter vacuity. By so doing there arises *śamatha* of bliss, luminosity, and non-conceptuality. Examine whether or not there enters into that attachment, hatred, clinging, grasping, laxity, or excitation, and recognize the difference between virtues and vices.”

### Vipāśyanā

- Karma Chagmé (*A Spacious Path to Freedom*): Geshes dwell in the monastic colleges for many years and study both Madhyamaka and the Prajñāpāramitā. They memorize many volumes, and, spending their lives in explanations and discussions, they cut through conceptual elaborations from the outside. That way is difficult to learn, difficult to understand, difficult to know, and difficult to realize; and among those who study and acquire knowledge in that way, there are many who fail to realize the meaning. The entire point of all that education is included in this examination of the mind. This cuts through conceptual elaborations from within, so it is easy to learn, easy to understand, easy to know, and easy to realize. Cutting through conceptual elaborations from the outside is like wanting dried pine wood, and cutting off the pine needles and branches one by one, and drying them. So it is difficult. In contrast, cutting through conceptual elaborations from within is easy, for it is like cutting the root of the pine tree so that the branches dry up naturally. Tilopa says: “For example, if you cut the root of a tree having a trunk, branches and leaves, its many thousands of leaves dry up. Similarly, by cutting the root of the mind, the leaves of the cycle of existence dry up.”
- In “The Future of Fundamental Physics,” October 4, 2010, theoretical physicist Nima Arkani-Hamed states: “. . . many, many separate arguments, all very strong individually, suggest that the very notion of space-time is not a fundamental one. Space-time is doomed. There is no such thing as space-time, fundamentally in the actual, underlying

description of the laws of physics. That's very startling, because what physics is supposed to be about is describing things as they happen in space and time. So if there is no space-time, it's not clear what physics is about. That's why this is a hard problem. That's a serious comment . . ."<sup>1</sup>

- Physicist Steven Weinberg: "In the physicist's recipe for the world, the list of ingredients no longer includes particles. Matter thus loses its central role in physics. All that is left are principles of symmetry."<sup>2</sup>
- Physicist Richard Feynman: "It is important to realize that in physics today, we have no knowledge of what energy *is*."<sup>3</sup>
- Physicist John Archibald Wheeler:
  - "We find that nature at the quantum level is not a machine that goes its inexorable way. Instead what answer we get depends on the question we put, the experiment we arrange, the registering device we choose. We are inescapably involved in bringing about that which appears to be happening."<sup>4</sup>
  - "'Elementary phenomena' are impossible without the distinction between observing equipment and observed system; but the line of distinction can run like a maze, so convoluted that what appears from one standpoint to be on one side and to be identified as observing apparatus, from another point of view has to be looked at as the observed system."<sup>5</sup>
  - "It is wrong to think of that past as "already existing" in all detail. The "past" is theory. The past has no existence except as it is recorded in the present. By deciding what questions our quantum-registering equipment shall put in the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cornell.edu/video/nima-arkani-hamed-quantum-mechanics-and-spacetime>.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in K. C. Cole, "In Patterns, Not Particles, Physicists Trust," *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> R. P. Feynman, R. b. Leighton, M. Sands, *The Feynman Lectures on Physics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1963), 1-9.

<sup>4</sup> John Archibald Wheeler, "Law without law" in *Quantum Theory and Measurement*, John Archibald Wheeler and Wojciech Hubert Zurek, eds. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 185.

<sup>5</sup> John Archibald Wheeler, "Beyond the Black Hole" in *Some Strangeness in the Proportion: A Centennial Symposium to Celebrate the Achievements of Albert Einstein*, ed. Harry Woolf (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1980), 361.

present we have an undeniable choice in what we have the right to say about the past.”<sup>6</sup>

- Physicist Andre Linde: Without introducing an observer, we have a dead universe, which does not evolve in time, and this re-emphasizes the role of the participant in the self-observing universe of quantum cosmology. The universe becomes alive (time-dependent) only when one divides it into two parts: a subjective observer and the rest of the objective universe, and the wave function of the rest of the objective universe depends on the time measured by the observer. In other words, the evolution of the universe and everything in it, including life itself, is possible only with respect to the observer.<sup>7</sup>
- Physicist Thomas Hertog: “String theory gives you a multiverse, an ensemble of universes with different laws of physics which coexist in the theory simultaneously and which have certain relative probabilities determined by the laws of physics. You can think of that quantum reality a bit like a tree. The branches represent all possible universes, and our observations—we are part of the universe, so we are part of that tree—and our observations select certain branches, and hereby give meaning, or give reality, to our past in a quantum world...Quantum theory indicates we may *not* be mere chemical scum. Life and the cosmos are, in the quantum theory, a synthesis, and our observations now give in fact reality to its earliest days.”<sup>8</sup>
- The *Sūtra of Thirty-Three Questions*: “All the three worlds come into being from the mind. The mind never reveals itself. It is without form, ethically neutral, and like an apparition. The wise seek the nature of the mind. Whoever seeks out the mind does not see the nature of the mind.”
- The *Great Tantra of Sambhuṭṭa*: “You who wish to be freed from the bondage of types of suffering, and who desire the joy of perfect Buddhahood, carefully and diligently investigate whether the mind does or does not have a self-nature.”
- Buddha on the close application of mindfulness of the mind (*Satipaṭṭhāsutta*): “One lives reviewing the factors of origination with regard to the mind, or one lives reviewing the factors of dissolution with regard to the mind, or one lives reviewing the factors of origination-and-dissolution with regard to the mind.”
- The *Tantra of the Blazing Clear Expanse of the Great Perfection*: “In order to analyze the mind into its components, focus on this idea alone: awareness without elaboration is the Dharmakāya. In this there is no arising, remaining or going. Whence did this fluttering,

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<sup>6</sup> John Archibald Wheeler, “Law without Law,” in *Quantum Theory and Measurement*, ed. John Archibald Wheeler and Wojciech Hubert Zurek (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 194. See also Stephen W. Hawking, “Godel and the End of the Universe”: <http://www.hawking.org.uk/godel-and-the-end-of-physics.html>; Hawking and Hertog, “Populating the Landscape,” 123527; Martin Bojowald, “Unique or Not Unique?” *Nature* 442 (August 31, 2006): 988–90.

<sup>7</sup> Andrei Linde, “Choose Your Own Universe” in *Spiritual Information: 100 Perspectives on Science and Religion*, Charles L. Harper, Jr., ed. (West Conshohocken, PA, 2005), 139.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Hertog, “Humanity in the multiverse”: <http://www.tedxleuven.com/?q=2012/thomas-hertog>

churning, shifting, fleeting phenomenon called the mind initially arise, where is it located in the meantime, and where does it go in the end? What are its shape and color? See if you can break it down in terms of its being external, internal, or in-between.”

- Ratna Lingpa (1403-1479), *Heart Essence of the Clear Expanse (Klong gsal snying thig)*: “The initial investigation of the origin, location, and departure is as follows: Engage in discursive meditation and stabilizing meditation on each point. And regarding the initial arising of the mind, do discursive meditation on externally appearing objects: the external environment, its inhabitants, earth, stone, rocky precipices, grass, trees, forests, mountains, and hills. In short, whence did it arise? How did it arise? What was the manner of its origination? Investigate this with your intelligence, analyze it well, and meditate.

Then well investigate where it arises and how it is present throughout your own body, in the upper and lower areas, in the limbs, the vital organs, the heart, and in the outer and inner regions. Then practice stabilizing meditation, well examining the mind in your own being.

Well investigate your own nature, asking, “‘Mind,’ which recalls so many things and knows so much—whence did you arise? What are your characteristics?” Similarly, investigate its location and all the places it goes. In particular, for articulate people and beginners this is to be investigated meticulously.

Furthermore, examine the reason for the actual nature of the mind, this dharmakāya, this authentic reality, to wander around and be confused in the six types of sentient existence. What is its nature, its color, its shape, or its characteristics? And how did this dynamic conceptualization occur? Whence did it arise? Does it or does it not exist as a real entity? If it does, how did it come into being? If it does not—if it is emptiness—how is that so...?

Then again, once it has come into being, what are its characteristics, its form, color, and so on? If it is empty, how is it empty? Is it empty like space? Examine well how it could be empty.

Then again, are the mind and thoughts the same or different? If they are the same, how do appearances and emptiness, stability and movement become distinct? When do they become distinct, and where do you draw the demarcation between them? Whence arises the root of confusion? Who created the duality of self and others? Examine those issues well. In that way investigate until you have a clean, decisive question.”

- Padmasambhava (*Natural Liberation*):
  - Steadily place your mind in the space in front of you, and let it be present there. Examine well: what kind of an entity is this—your mind that you have placed today? Look to see if the one who is placing and the mind that is being placed are one or two. If there were two, there would have to be two minds, so one must be in Buddhahood, while the other roams about in the cycle of existence. So carefully, decisively observe whether they exist as two. If there is not more than one, is that one the mind? Observe: what is the reality of the so-called “mind”? It is impossible to find it by searching among external objects.
  - Due to differences in intellect, some may report that they find nothing within the parameters of existence and non-existence. Let them carefully examine the mind that thinks nothing is found. Is there something that is steady? Is there a clarity? Is

- there a steady emptiness? Examine! If they report that there is a stillness, that is śamatha, so that is not the mind. Seek out awareness, and come up with its nature.
- If they say it is an emptiness, that is one aspect, so let them seek out awareness. If they say there is a consciousness that is sort of stationary and sort of clear, but inexpressible, they have identified it a little bit, so they should come to certainty and identify it. Let this phase of spiritual practice last for one day or as long as necessary.

Padmasambhava (From *A Spacious Path to Freedom*):

Astonishing! The ongoing cognizance and luminosity called “the mind” exists, but does not exist even as a single thing. It arises, for it manifests as saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, and as a myriad of joys and sorrows. It is asserted, for it is asserted according to the twelve *yānas*. It is a label, for it is named in unimaginable ways. Some people call it the actual nature of the mind. Some non-Buddhists call it “the ātman.” The *śrāvakas* call it personal identitylessness. The Cittamātrins call it “the mind.” Some people call it “the middle way.” Some call it the perfection of wisdom. Some give it the name “*tathāgatagarbha*.” Some give it the name “Mahāmudrā.” Some give it the name “ordinary consciousness.” Some call it the sole *bindu*. Some give it the name “*dharmadhātu*.” Some give it the name “the substrate.”

To introduce this by pointing it out directly, past consciousness has disappeared without a trace. Moreover, future realization is unarisen, and in the freshness of its own present, unfabricated way of being, there is the ordinary consciousness of the present. When it stares at itself, with this observation there is a vividness in which nothing is seen. Awareness—direct, naked, vivid, unestablished, empty, lucid luminosity, unique, non-dual luminosity and emptiness. It is not permanent, but unestablished. It is not nihilistic, but radiantly vivid. It is not one, but is manifoldly aware and luminous. It is not manifold, but is indivisibly of one taste. It is none other than this very self-awareness. This is a real introduction to the primordial nature of being.

In this the three embodiments of the buddhas are indivisibly complete. As utterly unestablished emptiness, it is the dharmakāya. As the clear radiance of emptiness, it is the sambhogakāya. Appearing everywhere without impediment, it is the nirmāṇakāya. Simple, singularly complete, it is the svabhāvakāya.

To introduce this by pointing it out forcefully, it is your very own present consciousness. When it is this very unstructured, self-luminous consciousness, what do you mean, “I do not realize the actual nature of the mind”?

There is nothing here to meditate on, so what do you mean, “it does not arise due to meditation”?

When it is just this direct awareness, what do you mean, “I do not find my own mind”?



When it is just this uninterrupted clear awareness, what do you mean, “the nature of the mind is not seen”?

When it is the very thinker of the mind, what do you mean, “it is not found by seeking it”?

When there is nothing at all to do, what do you mean, “it does not arise due to activity”?

When it is enough to leave it in its own unstructured state, what do you mean, “it does not remain”?

When it is enough to let it be without doing anything, what do you mean, “I cannot do it”?

When it is unified, indivisible clarity, awareness, and emptiness, what do you mean, “it is affirmed and unaffirmed”?

When it is spontaneously self-arisen without causes or conditions, what do you mean, “I can’t do it”?

When the arising and release of thoughts are simultaneous, what do you mean, “they do not occur together”?

When it is this very consciousness of the present, what do you mean, “I do not recognize it”?

The actual nature of the mind is certainly empty and without basis. Your mind is intangible like empty space. Is it like that or not?—observe your own mind!

Empty and void but not a nihilistic view, self-arisen, primordial consciousness is original, clear consciousness. Self-arisen and self-illuminating, it is like the essence of the sun. Is it like that or not?—observe your own mind!

Awareness, primordial consciousness, is certainly unceasing. Uninterrupted awareness is like the current of a river. Is it like that or not?—observe your own mind!

The dispersing thoughts of ideation are certainly not being grasped. This intangible dispersion is like a hazy sky. Is it like that or not?—observe your own mind!

Recognize all appearances as self-appearing. Self-appearing phenomena are like reflections in a mirror. Is it like that or not?—observe your own mind!

All signs are certainly released in their own state. Self-arising and self-releasing, they are like clouds in the sky. Is it like that or not?—observe your own mind!

### **Identifying Primordial Consciousness**

- The *Great Mound of Jewels Sūtra*: “Kāśyapa, by seeking the mind it is not found. Whatever is unfindable is unobservable. What is unobservable does not occur in the past, or in the future, or in the present.”
- Nāgārjuna (*Commentary on Bodhicitta*): “The mind is a mere label, and it is nothing other than a label. Recognize awareness as a mere label. Moreover, a label has no

intrinsic nature. The jinas do not find it inside, or outside, or in-between those two. Thus, the mind has the nature of an apparition, and the nature of the mind does not exist as a type of color or shape, as something apprehended or as an apprehender, as a man, a woman, or a neuter and so forth. In short, the buddhas have not seen it and they will not see it; they accurately see it as having the nature of being without an intrinsic nature.”

- Great Brahmin Saraha:
  - “My son, look! Observe your own mind! The mind is not verified by observation. How amazing that this ungrounded, actual nature of the mind appears in manifold ways! Your own unborn mind is the dharmakāya, and the dharmakāya is without birth or destruction. How amazing that this embodiment of unborn great joy is present in you! In the dharmakāya mirror of your own mind non-dual primordial consciousness arises as luminosity. From the moment it arises it is ungrounded, and it is connate great joy.”
  - “The root of all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is the nature of the mind. To realize this, without meditating on anything, rest in unstructured ease. When all that needs to be done is to rest in yourself, it is amazing that you are deceived by seeking elsewhere! Everything is of the primordial nature, without its being this and not that.”
- Tilopa: “Hey! This is self-knowing primordial consciousness. It is beyond articulation and is not an experienced object of the mind. It is nothing that can be demonstrated by me, Tilopa. Know it by letting your own self-awareness indicate itself.”
- Naropa: “This consciousness of self-awareness, bliss, and luminosity is the dharmakāya of nothingness. If it were grounded, this would be a structured awareness, but as it is ungrounded, there is no structure.
- Virupa: “Mahāmudrā, the equality of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, intrinsically unborn, pristine in nature, defying articulation due to having no mode of being that can be indicated, ineffable in nature, its essence free of all relativity, unanalyzable, incomparable, not even existing as something incomparable, it transcends the intellect.”
- The Mahāsiddha Maitrīpa: “The actual nature of the mind is free of the three extremes of birth, cessation, and abiding. It is released from the dualistic grasping onto “I” and “mine,” its essential nature is empty, its manifest nature is luminous, and its character is unceasing awareness that is without an object, yet appearing in numerous ways. This luminosity transcends objects that are grasped as the seen and the seer. It is released from the objects that are objectified as the topic of meditation and the meditator. Without bringing anything to mind, that very freedom from mental engagement is inactivity free of all action, set at ease and unstructured. There is no grasping, for whatever appears is not recognized. One is mentally vacant, for one is free of the structured contamination of the consciousness of meditative equipoise. There is pristine emptiness, for there is no grasping onto signs. It is luminous, for it is by nature clear light. It is unmediated, for it is not contaminated by the dualistic grasping of ideation. It is vivid, for it knows its own nature. Appearances and the mind are indivisibly, unimpededly homogenous, for the grasping onto subject and object has dissolved. It is ordinary consciousness, for awareness is settled in its own unstructured nature. It is ‘fresh

awareness,’ for the stream of ideation does not enter the heart, and this is the real essence of the practice of vipaśyanā.”

- Karmapa Rangjung Dorje: “The point that all the buddhas of the three times have in mind, that which is sought by the holy beings, the great sound and renown of the Dharmakāya Mahāmudrā, is called your own mind. If you do not know the essence of your own mind, it is just conceptual gibberish to think “my mind” or “this mind.” All the phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are nothing more than this awareness, and this is also the essence of the collection of the sūtras and tantras. There is nothing at all to practice or meditate on. Just leave this awareness in its own radiant state. There is no need to wonder whether or not this is Mahāmudrā. Have no hope of getting better and no fears of getting worse. Do not follow after many miscellaneous thoughts. Vividly leave awareness to itself. Set it at ease. There is nothing to meditate on. From the time that you meditate like that again and again, thoughts recognize their own face, and in an instant the darkness of latent propensities is utterly expelled. That is Buddhahood. The difference is made in an instant. Know there is nothing greater than a single word of essential speech on Mahāmudrā, the ultimate practical instruction of the holy gurus and siddhas.”
- Padmasambhava (*Natural Liberation*):  
“Oh, now steadily observe this consciousness at the time of placing the mind steadfastly and without modification. Oh, once you have calmed the compulsive thoughts in your mind right where they are, and the mind is unmodified, isn’t there a motionless stability? Oh, this is called *śamatha*, but it is not the nature of the mind. Now, steadily observe the very nature of your own mind that is being still. Is there a resplendent emptiness that is nothing, that is ungrounded in the nature of any substance, shape, or color? That is called the “empty essential nature.” Isn’t there a luster of that emptiness that is unceasing, clear, immaculate, soothing, and luminous, as it were? That is called the “luminous manifest nature.” Its essential nature is the indivisibility of sheer emptiness, not established as anything, and its unceasing, vivid luster—such awareness is resplendent and brilliant as it were.

This present, unmoving consciousness, which cannot be directly expressed in words, is given the name “awareness.” That which thinks is this alone, so it is given the name “mind.” It is this that is mindful of all kinds of things, so it is given the name “mindfulness.” While it is not seen, it is a special seeing that is clear, steady, unmediated, and steadfast, so it is given the name *vipaśyanā*. It is this that makes distinctions among all specific phenomena, like separating the layers of a mushroom, so it is given the name “discerning wisdom.” All terms such as the *sugatagarbha*, the sole quintessence, absolute space, primordial consciousness, the middle way, ultimate truth, Mahāmudrā, Dzogchen, and emptiness are names of this alone.”